BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY Volume 6: Romans - Revelation

Duncan Heaster

Carelinks Publishing, 49 The Woodfields, South Croydon CR2 0HJ United Kingdom
www.carelinks.net freebibles2000@gmail.com

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: ROMANS

ROMANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle*- Time and again Paul brings before us the fact he really is our example; thus he begins his Roman epistle with a description of himself as Paul... called to be an apostle, separated...", but soon goes on to point out that the Romans were "*also* the called of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1,6).

Apostle literally means one who is sent, and is translated “he that is sent” in Jn. 13:16. It could be argued that all who have received the great preaching commission [which is all of us] have received in essence the same calling and apostleship which Paul did- and he therefore can hold himself up to us all as an example, seeing we have in principle received the same calling which he did. He uses the term “apostle” in Rom. 16:7 concerning brethren who were imprisoned with him who were clearly not amongst the apostles originally chosen by the Lord Jesus. He says in 1:5 that *we* have received apostleship because our Lord rose from the dead; because He rose, all in Him are sent to take that good news to others. And he uses the same word for ‘calling’ in :6, suggesting his calling and apostleship are to be ours.

Set apart for the Gospel of God- A reference to Acts 13:2 where Paul was separated to go on a missionary journey; although he felt he had been separated unto this from the womb (Gal. 1:15). God has likewise separated each of us unto certain callings, but only later in our lives is this made apparent to us.

Paul was called to be a preacher of the Gospel, and yet he speaks of his work as a preacher as if it were a Nazarite vow- which was a totally voluntary commitment. Consider not only the reference to him shaving his head because of his vow (Acts 18:18; 21:24 cp. Num. 6:9-18), but also the many descriptions of his preaching work in terms of Naziriteship: Separated unto the Gospel’s work (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15; Acts 13:2); “I am not yet consecrated / perfected” (Phil. 3:12)- he’d not yet finished his ‘course’, i.e. his preaching commission. He speaks of it here as if it were a Nazarite vow not yet ended. Note the reference to his ‘consecration’ in Acts 20:24. His undertaking not to drink wine lest he offend others (Rom. 14:21) is framed in the very words of Num. 6:3 LXX about the Nazarite. Likewise his being ‘joined unto the Lord’ (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 14:6,8) is the

language of Num. 6:6 about the Nazarite being separated unto the Lord. The reference to having power / authority on the head (1 Cor. 11:10) is definitely some reference back to the LXX of Num. 6:7 about the Nazarite. What are we to make of all this? The point is perhaps that commitment to active missionary work is indeed a voluntary matter, as was the Nazarite vow. And that even although Paul was called to this, yet he responded to it by voluntarily binding himself to 'get the job done'. And the same is in essence true for us today in our various callings in the Lord's service.

1:2 *Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures*- Abraham was a prophet (Gen. 20:7) as was Sarah (Ps. 105:15). In line with Gal. 3:8, Paul may have the patriarchs in mind here.

1:3 *Concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh*- "Born" is literally 'made'. Gk. *ginomai*, to be made, come into being- a nail in the coffin for the idea of a personal pre-existence of Christ. The same Greek words translated 'Word' and 'made' in Jn. 1:14 occur together in 1 Cor. 15:54- where we read of the word [AV "saying"] of the Old Testament prophets being 'made' true by being fulfilled [AV "be brought to pass"]. The word of the promises was made flesh, it was fulfilled, in Jesus. The 'word was made flesh', in one sense, in that the Lord Jesus was "*made*... of the seed of David according to the *flesh*" (Rom. 1:3)- i.e. God's word of promise to David was fulfilled in the fleshly person of Jesus. The Greek words for "made" and "flesh" only occur together in these two places- as if Rom. 1:3 is interpreting Jn. 1:14 for us.

1:4 *Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord*- More strictly, "the resurrection *of* the dead". "From" would require *ek* , which isn't present. The Lord's resurrection is in this sense ours, and ours is His. There is in this sense only one resurrection- that of the Lord.

1:5 *Through whom we received grace and apostleship*- 'We' is usually used by Paul in Romans regarding him plus his readership, i.e. all of us. We are all sent ones, apostles- see on 1:1.

To obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake- A reference to the great commission, which was enabled and necessitated by the Lord's resurrection. John speaks of preachers going forth to preach for His Name's sake (3 Jn. 7). We are not to merely inform them, but preach aiming towards a response- our apostleship, our being sent ones, is "for", *eis*, elsewhere translated "to the intent that". We should preach

towards a response, expecting the ultimate obedience of at least some of our audience. In 6:16 Paul specifically associates obedience [s.w.] to the Gospel with baptism- this should be our initial aim and focus in witness. Peter likely does the same in 1 Pet. 1:2,22.

Paul makes a number of allusions to the great commission, in which he applies it to both himself and also to us all. The weak argument that it was 'only for the disciples who heard it' evaporates when it is accepted that Paul wasn't one of the 12, and yet the commission applies to him. Rom. 1:5 RV is an example: "...through whom we have received grace and apostleship, for the obedience to the faith among all the nations, for his name's sake". These words are packed with allusion to the great commission. And Paul is not in the habit of using the 'royal we' to refer solely to himself. He clearly sees all his readers as sharing in just the same calling. The early preachers travelled around "for his name's sake" (3 Jn. 7), even though they were not in the original band of disciples. Having alluded to the great commission, Paul goes on in this context to rejoice "that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:7 RV). He saw their example of faith in practice as being the witness that fulfilled the great commission; and goes on to speak of his sense of debt to spread the word to literally all men, hence his interest in preaching at Rome (Rom. 1:14,15). And here we have our example; "as much as in me is", we should each say, we are ready to spread the Gospel as far as lies in our power to do so.

Collective societies are all about submission and obedience to those above you in the hierarchy- yet repeatedly, Christians are exhorted to be obedient and submissive to the Lord Jesus and the new community in Him (Rom. 1:5; 6:16,17; 2:8 etc.). And even within the new community, Paul's own example showed that acceptance in the eyes of those who appear to be the pillars of the society of Christ is also of little ultimate value if they have fallen away from the understanding of grace (Gal. 2:9). To keep using the word "radical" doesn't do justice to the colossal change in worldview that was required on conversion to Christ. Reflecting on all this, it seems to me that the reason the Jewish people crucified their Messiah was above all because He so powerfully turned their whole worldviews upside down- and they just couldn't handle it, just as so many families today turn against the one who truly turns to Christ.

1:6 *Among whom are you also called to be Jesus Christ's*- We are also called to be apostles- see on 1:1.

1:7 *To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*- "To all" means not just the leadership. Paul valued everyone, including the illiterate majority of the ecclesia to whom the letter

would be read out loud, and upon whom the complexity and depth of much of his argument in this letter would likely have been lost.

1:8 *First*- the most important thing for Paul was that those he had expended spiritual effort for were strong in the faith. We sense the same in John's letters of 2 and 3 John. Our focus should be on helping others reach the Kingdom.

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world- The fact we praise God and come directly to Him *dia*, through the Lord Jesus, does not mean that our words come to the Father through the Son as if He were a sieve or telephone line. We come direct to the Father *dia*, on account of, for the sake of, the work Christ achieved. The following are a few of many examples which give the flavour of *dia*: John was put in prison *dia Herodias*, for the sake of Herodias (Mt. 14:3); the Pharisees transgressed the commandment of God *dia*, on account of, through, their tradition (Mt. 15:3); the disciples couldn't heal *dia*, for the sake of, their unbelief (Mt. 17:20); the Angels of the "little ones" *dia* , for their sakes, behold the face of the Father (Mt. 18:10); because the Pharisees pretended to be pious they would *dia*, on this account, receive greater condemnation (Mt. 23:14); the faithful will be persecuted *dia* , for the sake of, Christ's name (Mt. 24:9); *dia* the elect's sake, on their account, the days will be shortened (Mt. 24:22). "I thank my God *dia* (through) Jesus Christ my Lord" (Rom. 1:8) doesn't therefore necessarily mean that Paul prays to God 'through' the Lord Jesus as some kind of connecting tunnel; he thanks God on account of, for the sake of Christ. The very same Greek construction occurs a few chapters later: "Who shall deliver me...? I thank God, through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:24,25). He thanks God that his deliverance is possible on account of the Lord Jesus.

1:9 *For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son*- Frequently Paul uses the word "Gospel" as meaning 'the preaching of the Gospel'; the Gospel is in itself something which *must* be preached if we really have it (Rom. 1:1,9; 16:25; Phil. 1:5 (NIV),12; 2:22; 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:5; 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:8). The fact we have been given the Gospel is in itself an imperative to preach it. "When I came to Troas for the Gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:12 RV) has the ellipsis supplied in the AV: "to preach Christ's Gospel" [although there is no Greek word in the original there matching 'preach'] .

How unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers- The idea of the Greek word is of remembrance. Paul was bringing others to remembrance before God. Paul is surely alluding to Is. 62:6,7: "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in

the earth". Paul saw the Gentile believers in Rome as spiritual Jerusalem. It's not that God forgets and needs reminding, but rather that by our prayers for others we as it were focus His special attention upon them. Paul several times states that he is day and night, continually in prayer for others. He likely had the Isaiah passage in mind; his brethren in Christ were now for him the Jerusalem upon whom his hopes were set, rather than upon the physical city as had been the case in Judaism.

There is a mutuality between God and His children in prayer. We 'make mention' of things to God (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek word used has the idea of bringing to mind, or remembering things to God. And He in response 'remembers' prayer when He answers it (Lk. 1:54,72; Acts 10:31 s.w.). What we bring to our mind in prayer, we bring to His mind. Those who pray for Jerusalem "keep not silence"- and therefore they give God "no rest" (Is. 62:6,7). But the Hebrew word for "keep not silence" and for 'give no rest' is one and the same! There's a clear play on words here. If we give ourselves no rest in prayer, then we give God no rest. His Spirit or mind becomes our spirit or mind, and vice versa. And hence the telling comments in Romans 8 about our spirit / mind being mediated to God in prayer through Jesus, in His role as 'the Lord the Spirit' (Rom. 8:26,27). Yet God Himself had stated that He will not rest nor hold His peace for Zion's sake (Is. 62:1). Yet His doing this is conditional upon His prayerful people not allowing Him to rest due to their prayers.

"Unceasingly... always" is a double repetition to emphasize how constant was Paul's prayer for others. In case it seemed he was exaggerating, he calls God as a witness. His prayerfulness- the hours spent on his knees and the amount of mental energy in daily life- was amazing, and inspirational.

1:10 *Making request, if by any means now at length I may succeed by the will of God to come to you-* Or, "A prosperous journey". Realize that prayer may be answered in totally unexpected ways. Paul prayed that he would have "a prosperous journey" in coming to see the Romans (Rom. 1:10). Little could he have realized, sitting in Corinth as he wrote, that the answer would involve many months of imprisonment in Jerusalem, a shipwreck that lead to an ecclesia in Malta... and so much other grief. But from God's viewpoint, the prayer was answered. See on Rom. 1:14.

Paul felt that his prayers could influence or at least engage with God's will; he prayed that he might at some time [Gk.] be helped by God on the road [AV "have a prosperous journey"] to visit the Roman believer. He asks this not 'If it be God's will' but he asks this might be so *en* or in the will of God. He didn't see God's will as something to be passively accepted but rather engaged with in prayer.

1:11 *For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to strengthen you*- Paul so longed (the Greek is very intense, s.w. "lust") to see the Romans so that he could give them some spiritual gift. Why was his physical presence so necessary in order to give this gift? Perhaps he refers to a literal laying on of hands which would've been necessary to impart the Spirit gifts? But that gift was so that they might be "established", confirmed and set in their way. Was there, therefore, a gift of spiritual confirmation which could only be given by the literal physical presence of Paul? Or was the miraculous gift he intended to impart intended to be a part of establishing them as group?

1:12 *That is: that I with you may be comforted in you*- Some manuscripts add "However". Paul didn't want it to appear that he was viewing himself as superior to them in imparting a spiritual gift to them, so he goes on to speak of how spiritual strengthening is a mutual experience in which he also would benefit from them.

Each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine- The mutual faith, which seems to suggest that their strength of faith would affect Paul's faith and his faith would affect theirs. Hence the value of positive spiritual fellowship in Christ.

1:13 *And I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that oftentimes I intended to come to you (but have so far been hindered), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles*- "Hindered" is s.w. 'forbid' in Acts 16:6, where he was forbidden to preach in Asia. It seems Paul often worked against situations where He was forbidden to go somewhere- he still preached in Asia, still went up to Jerusalem, and still insisted on going to Rome. See on Rom. 1:15.

1:14 *I am debtor*- Paul had a debt to preach to all men. But a debt implies he had been given something; and it was not from "all men", but rather from Christ. Because the Lord gave us the riches of His self-sacrifice, we thereby are indebted *to Him*; and yet this debt has been transmuted into a debt to preach to all humanity. Reflection upon His cross should elicit in us too an upwelling of pure gratitude towards Him, a Christ-centeredness, an awkwardness as we realise that this Man loved us more than we love Him... and yet within our sense of debt to Him, of ineffable, unpayable debt, of real debt, a debt infinite and never to be forgotten, we will have the basis for personal response to Him as a person, to a knowing of Him and a loving of Him, and a serving of Him in response. If we feel and know this, we cannot but preach the cross of Christ. In Rom. 1:14 Paul speaks of his "debt" to preach to both "Greeks and Barbarians" as the reason for his planned trip to Rome- for in that city there was the widest collection of "Greeks and Barbarians". And yet he later speaks of our 'debt' [Gk.] to love one another (Rom. 13:8). The debt of love that we feel on reflecting upon our unpayable debt to the Father and Son is partly an unending 'debt' to loving share the Gospel of grace with others, to forgive the 'debts' of others' sins against us. We have a debt to preach to the

world; we are their debtors, and yet this isn't how we often see it (Rom. 1:14). Time and again we commit sins of omission here.

Both to Greeks and Barbarians- Paul felt a debt to preach to them, the total savages [from his perspective]. And so on the way to Rome, God arranged for him to be shipwrecked on Malta, and thus meet and convert such Barbarians- for the word occurs only four other times in the NT and two of them are in describing the people whom Paul met on Malta (Acts 28:2,4). See on Rom. 1:10.

Both to the wise and to the foolish- the Greek word is elsewhere always translated "fools" in the AV, and has the idea of stupidity, foolishness. Paul the intellectual felt a debt to preach to those who would have exasperated and irritated him in normal life.

1:15 *So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome*- Gk. 'As much as is in me'. A window into the totality of Paul's desire to spread the Gospel and upbuild the believers. But the phrase could also indicate an obsession with going to Rome, as was noted by Agrippa (Acts 26:32). See on Rom. 1:13. The "you" in the context is the believers in Rome. Paul wanted to build them up in their faith on the basis of the preaching of the basic doctrines of the Gospel. Thus there is a special emphasis in this letter on the implications of basic doctrine, as explained in our introduction to the letter on Romans 1:1.

The doctrines of the Gospel are power to all those who have already believed. Paul was going to Rome to visit the believers, and wanted to upbuild them by discussing the doctrines of the Gospel with them.

1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes- to the Jew first and also to the Greek*- Paul knew that his salvation partly depended upon not being ashamed of Christ's words before men; hence his frequent self-examination concerning whether he was witnessing as he should. Thus when he declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, he is expressing his certainty of salvation; he is implying that therefore Christ will not be ashamed of him at the judgment (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8,12,16 = Mk. 8:38). When Paul warns Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel, he is therefore exhorting him by his own example (Rom. 1:16 s.w. 2 Tim. 1:8,12). Note the theme of not being ashamed in 2 Tim. 1:8,12,16.

Paul could say that "the preaching of the cross *is* (unto us which are saved) the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Not 'it was when we were baptized'; the power of that basic Gospel lasts all our lives. To the Romans likewise: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (i.e.

I don't apologize for preaching the same old things): for it is the power of God unto salvation... for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith (i.e. faith gets built up and up by that basic Gospel)" (Rom. 1:18). The Galatians needed to keep on 'obeying the Truth' as they had done at baptism (Gal. 3:1); conversion is an ever ongoing process (cp. Lk. 22:32). It is "the faith which is in Christ", the basic Gospel, which progressively opens up the Scriptures and enables them to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

1:17- see on Rom. 4:13.

For therein is revealed a righteousness of God- a kind of righteousness which is given from God, given by Him; and Paul will go on to explain that is “of God”, given from Him to us, by our faith in Him and in the simple fact that He has indeed given us this gift in Christ.

From faith to faith- Having spoken of how the faith of the Romans is spoken of throughout the “world”, Paul goes on to comment that the preaching of the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God “from faith to faith”, or “by faith unto faith” (Rom. 1:17 RV). The righteousness of God is surely revealed in human examples rather than in any amount of words. Could Paul not be meaning that the faith of one believer will induce faith in others, and in this sense the Gospel is a force that if properly believed ought to be spreading faith world-wide? This means that spreading our faith is part and parcel of believing the Gospel. Whatever, there is here clearly inculcated the idea of an upward spiral of spirituality- from faith unto [yet more] faith. Faith, like unbelief, is self-confirming.

As it is written: But the righteous shall live by faith- the quotation from Hab. 2:4 is in the context of human pride: “Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith”. Paul is interpreting this verse as talking about faith in righteousness being imputed to us, which leads to us being just or justified before God. The practical result of this is humility- for we realize through this process that we have absolutely nothing to be “puffed up” about. Our uprightness isn’t because of our own works but because of God’s righteousness being imputed to us by grace through faith.

1:18 *For the anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*- it will be revealed from Heaven at the Lord’s return, and yet in a sense, judgment is now, God’s feelings about sin aren’t restrained or passive until judgment day, they are revealed even now.

Who hinder the truth in unrighteousness- Or, "hold". The point has been made that the Greek word for “hold” can mean ‘to hold down’ in the sense of repressing the Truth. But

apart from the fact that Truth can ultimately never be held down, the word does carry the possible meaning of holding fast, possessing, retaining, and is translated like this in places. It could be that there were some in the Roman ecclesia who did indeed possess the Truth, but did so in unrighteousness- and thus God's wrath was especially against such people. This would fit in with the impression we have from the other NT letters, including those of the Lord Jesus to the churches in Revelation, that there was serious, gross misbehaviour going on in the early churches- and Rome would be no exception. This group of people were those to whom God had shown the truth about Himself (1:19). The following verses go on to allude to Israel's perversions in the wilderness- and they were a people who knew God rather than ignorant Gentiles. This group know God but don't glorify Him (1:21).

If we insist on understanding 'hold' as meaning 'hold down the [conscience of] the truth' on account of their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18 Gk.), we can connect this with the statement that when this group come to know God, they darken their foolish hearts (1:21). And so it was with the preaching of the Gospel in Acts. Those who heard it were pricked in their conscience: some responded by wanting to kill the preachers (Acts 5:33; 7:54); others followed their conscience and accepted baptism (Acts 2:37). We too have our hearts pricked by the Gospel- and we either effectively shut up the preaching, or respond.

1:19 *Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it to them*- "Known" is Gk. *gnostos*. This may be a strike at incipient Gnosticism; for Paul says that such knowledge, such *gnosis*, is showed to people *by God*. There are only some things which God makes known to us about Himself; we do not have the total truth about God, we see but parts of His ways and hear only a little portion of Him (Job 26:14). Our perception and definition of "the truth" needs to bear this in mind. Absolute truth claims aren't simply ignorant, they lead to all manner of relationship breakdown, arrogance and deformation of spirituality both in ourselves and others.

1:20 *For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen*- a paradox, seeing the invisible. Such vision is only by faith. In the context, Paul is referring to those responsible to God. They are those who 'see' by faith, they are therefore inexcusable. One can have faith, even the faith that sees the invisible, and yet still 'not get it'. See on Rom. 8:19.

Being perceived through the things that are made. The translation here is difficult. The invisible things of God are clearly seen in the things He makes- but the only other usage of the Greek word is in Eph. 2:10: "We are His *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus". The idea could be that the things of God are made visible, the abstract things of His

power, personality and Name are made concrete and tangible- in us His people. We are living witnesses to His power and Divinity.

Even His everlasting power and Divinity- that they may be without excuse- A legal term. The court of Divine judgment is sitting right now, and we who are His people are without excuse for our sin. Paul is building up slowly towards the crescendo of presenting us all as serious, inexcusable sinners, who can be saved by grace alone.

1:21 *For although they knew God-* Only those who 'know God' have the potential to give Him glory and true thanks; but the problem is that some can know God and yet not go forward from that point to glorify God. Knowledge of God isn't therefore an academic matter in itself; it leads on to gratitude towards Him and glory of Him.

They did not honour Him as God or give thanks to Him- To "honour" here is to praise. Fundamentally praise is mental appreciation of Yahweh's Name, seeing His characteristics expressed in all things around us, e.g. food, weather, situations in life etc. Knowledge of God (and this doesn't *only* refer to abstract doctrine, but to an awareness of how He works and expresses Himself in our lives) is therefore proportionate to the quality of our praise (Rom. 1:21).

But they became futile in their thinking- Or 'Imaginations', Gk. *dialogismos*. Their internal dialogues with themselves, the internal self, the mind at its deepest and most personal level, became vain- when the true knowledge of God should have made them so much more dynamic, purposeful and productive. The focus of the Bible is so often upon the 'heart', the most intimate and internal thought processes.

And their foolish hearts were darkened- The foolish heart of Israel was darkened / blinded, the Greek implies (Rom. 1:21). God gave them a mind which wanted to practice perversion (v.28), and therefore they received a recompense appropriate to the delusion which they had been given (v. 27 Gk.) . Note that their punishment was to be given and encouraged in perverted tendencies (diseases like AIDS are the result of upsetting nature's balance rather than the recompense spoken of in Romans 1). Christian men in the first century gave themselves over to sexual immorality (Eph. 4:19), and therefore God "gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:24,26,28). "Blind yourselves and be blind", God angrily remonstrated with Israel; yet God had closed their eyes, confirming them in the decision for blindness which they had taken themselves (Is. 29:9,10 RVmg.). Later in Romans, Paul speaks of the Jews as the ones whose hearts were darkened (Rom. 11:10).

1:22 *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*- "Became" implies that this is all talking about the people of God, who once were wise, but *became* fools. S.w. Mt. 5:13 about the salt "which loses its taste", lit. 'becomes foolish'. However it is God who makes worldly wise people foolish (1 Cor. 1:20 s.w.), just as in v. 21 it is God who darkens eyes. There's a downward spiral, in which God is active and the dynamic within it.

1:23- see on Rom. 5:12.

And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God- Again a paradox is presented- the incorruptible, unchangeable God is changed by mere men. Perhaps the point is that the glory of God, the extent to and form in which He is glorified, is to some extent in our hands. We can in this sense deface His image by the distorted reflection of it which we give. Note how they turned the image of God into the image of man; whereas the Lord Jesus, as a man, became in the image of God (Phil. 2:7). The implication from Paul's reasoning is that whatever we worship becomes God to us, and therefore we have re-cast God into that image. In a world of obsessions, we are to 'worship' God alone, and not reduce Him to the petty things which people waste their devotions upon.

For the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted animals, and creeping things- The commands concerning Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land form a large chunk of the Mosaic Law, and thus these were only relevant to the younger generation and the Levites who were to enter the land of promise (note how only those who were numbered and over 20 at the time of leaving Egypt were barred from the land; the Levites were not numbered). This younger generation were in sharp contrast to those aged over 20 at the Exodus. The extent of spiritual despair and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of the children born to them then (Josh. 5:5,6), thus showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant. There is good reason to believe that Romans 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness; notice the past tenses there. Rom. 1:23 charges them with changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like... to four-footed beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:20 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "Changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom.1 is matched by Ps. 106:21 "They forgat God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom.1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps. 106:25), and "inventors of evil things" (Rom.1:30) to God being

angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29). A rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy with little law and order, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them is surely a frightening thing to imagine. The emphasis on sexual sin in Rom.1 is paralleled by 1 Cor. 10 stressing the frequent failure of Israel in the wilderness in this regard. Against such an evil and God forsaking background that young generation rebelled, to become one of the most faithful groups of Israelites in their history. As such they set a glorious example to the youth of today in rebelling against a world that mocks any form of true spirituality.

1:24 *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves*- "Gave them up" is s.w. Acts 7:42, where God turned from Israel because of their apostasy and "gave them up" to worship idols. Again, God works with His sinful people by propelling them in a downwards spiral. In this context He did this by giving them over to their own sexual lusts, which resulted in their dishonouring their own bodies. God can confirm people in their sexual lusting; and by implication, He can also hold people back. The perversions spoken of in v. 26 are all this come to its ultimate term- when people are made to feel that they were born to be perverted and abusive. Unbridled sexual lust leads to self-harm, a sin against self, in the sense that such behaviour is a dishonouring Gk.: shaming, despising of one's own body. This suggests that the body naturally has honour- Paul is attacking the view that the body is evil and to be despised, that God is angry with human flesh as flesh. We take that glory and honour away from our bodies by sexual misbehaviour. Paul uses the Greek word for 'dishonour' only once more in Romans, in 2:23, where he says that sin is a dishonouring *of God*. To dishonour ourselves, our own body, is to dishonour God. For we are made in His image and likeness. Lack of self-respect, an incorrect understanding and perception of who we are, is what so often leads us to sin.

1:25

1:25 *Because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie*- These people once held God's Truth, but exchanged it for a lie. The same word occurs in 1:26, where we read that women changed / exchanged "the natural use into that which is against nature". Sexual sin is a lie. The argument that we can sexually sin and it's all going to be OK, is one of the greatest lies.

And worshiped and served the created rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen- The context of this verse, both before and after, speaks in a sexual context. The 'created thing' may refer to the human body- for worshipping the created thing is

parallel with dishonouring the human body in v. 24. Praise and worship should be directed ultimately to God; sexual immorality seeks to break the connection between God and the human body, the awareness that the human being is made in the image of God. Treating people merely as bodies is to sever them in our minds from their connection to God. By perceiving their connection to God, we will never treat humans as merely bodies; nor will we perceive ourselves in that way either. The Creator is to be blessed by us for ever- and so we should start living like that now, rather than praising things He has created for what they are in themselves.

1:26 *For this cause God gave them up to vile passions*- "Vile" is s.w. 'dishonour', 1:24. The dishonouring of bodies by sexual perversion is a result of allowing 'dishonourable' lusts / thoughts to be worked out in practice; the performing of mental fantasy in the flesh. Paul teaches that God propels those who wish to give free reign to their fantasies- He gives them over to their own lusts. Paul is using the example of sexual perversion as part of a build up to a crescendo of demonstrating the depth of human depravity, and the subsequent depth of God's grace. He demonstrates the seriousness of human sin by showing that God pushes people downwards in a downward spiral of lust, if this is what they themselves truly wish- and Paul cites sexual perversion as the parade example of this, whereby God so confirms sinners in their lusts that they even feel that what is truly "against nature" is in fact normal and natural.

Their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature- These things are "against nature" (1:26); it is therefore impossible that by 'nature' some people are born with perverted desires which they are free to indulge. "Nature" is used in Romans in the sense of "God's creative order". It would be inappropriate and even cruel of God to create men with insatiable desires for perversion and then tell them that these are in fact not natural, and He holds them guilty for having them. "Nature" (Gk. *physis*) was used in contemporary Greek in the context of the God-designed, natural intention for heterosexual relationships; Strong suggests it refers to "natural production (lineal descent)". *Physis* is rendered "by birth" in Gal. 2:15 RSV. The sexual pervert is behaving "against nature", against the way in which he was born. Sexual perverts are behaving "against nature", against God's intended order at creation, and are thereby perverts of His way. The Greek *para* ("against") means just that. Thus Paul's accusers complain that he "persuades men to worship God *contrary* (para) to the law" (Acts 18:13); false teachers create divisions "*contrary* (para) to the doctrine which ye have learned" (Rom. 16:17).

1:27 *And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another*- Paul speaks of how sinful behaviour ends up in people doing

things ‘contrary to nature’; and yet he uses a similar phrase to describe how being ‘grafted in’ to the true hope of Israel, with all it implies in practice, is likewise “contrary to nature” (Rom. 1:26,27 cp. 11:24). We walk against the wind, go against the grain, one way or the other in this life. And, cynically speaking, it may as well be for the Lord’s cause than for the flesh. See on Mt. 3:11. The recompense refers not to AIDS but to God’s confirming of sexual perverts in their sin to the extent that they believe it is natural and somehow coded into their bodies.

Men with men working unseemliness and receiving in themselves that reward of their error which was due- “Error” is s.w. deception. The sin associated with sexual perversion is therefore the result of deception. Earlier Paul has said that God has given over such people to their own lusts, to the point they believe that their sin is natural; here he says that they have been deceived. The deception is also by God, just as He sends “strong delusion” s.w. “error” upon those who don’t love the Truth, so that they believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11).

1:28- see on Rom. 1:21.

And even as- The context is the last clause of 1:27, that sexual perversion is itself an appropriate punishment for the sin of sexual perversion. Paul here repeats that point- that God gave them over to that kind of “reprobate mind”. That God ‘gave them’ this mindset is laboured three times (1:24,26,28).

They refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not appropriate- The same Greek words only in Rom. 10:2, where Paul says that Israel do not hold or retain the knowledge of God. So here in 1:28 Paul seems to have his mind on Israel again, who didn’t any longer retain or hold God in their knowledge, and so their zeal became not according to knowledge (10:2). Of course the Jews would’ve insisted that they *were* mindful of God, they didn’t become atheists, far from it. But God wasn’t held in their knowledge, He wasn’t the defining reality in their thinking. *Retain* is the Greek word ‘echo’- our minds should be an echo of God’s.
Even in this life, those who will be rejected have “a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28)- they have the mind of the rejected, the unaccepted this is how the Greek word is used in every other occurrence in the NT. The mindset the rejected have in that awful day, is the mindset which they have now. This is how important our thinking is. Our thoughts, the thoughts of yesterday and today and tomorrow, will either accuse or excuse us in the last day, when God shall judge us according to our “secrets”, our inner thinking (Rom. 2:15,16).

The context of Rom. 1 is the power of the Gospel. Paul's discussion of sexual perversion is part of his demonstration that there is an antithesis to Gospel power; namely, the power of sin. He develops this theme later in chapters 7 and 8, where he shows that the

compulsive, ever growing power of sin in the unbeliever or apostate is the antithesis of the power of the Spirit at work in the faithful believer. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce this theme, and Paul is citing sexual perversion as an example of the power of sin at work within men, as the antithesis to the power of the Gospel. He makes the same point in 1 Tim. 1:9-11. Paul argues that the desire for sexual perversion is God's punishment for men's sinful lusts. The point is being repeated at least three times, such is the emphasis:

What men did	What God did
Thought they were wise	Made them fools
"Became vain in their imaginations"	Darkened their foolish heart (1:21)
Had evil "lusts of their own hearts"	*Through* these lusts God gave them over to dishonouring their bodies between themselves
Changed God's truth (i.e. His word, Jn. 17:17) into a lie	Gave them vile affections which resulted in them committing perverted sexual acts
They refused to acknowledge the claims of God (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.)	God gave them a mind "void of judgment" between right and wrong (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.), so that they committed perverted sexual acts
Inappropriately lusted for each other	Gave them an appropriate punishment for their error, i.e. perverted sexual desire.

It is clear from all this that God does something to the minds of men who justify perverted sexual lust; He makes them lust even more, and they therefore commit perverted sexual acts, and He then makes them want even more of such gratification. This is a classic example of the downward spiral an apostate believer enters; God pushes such people into ever increasing confirmation in their evil way. The fact some sexual perverts feel convinced they were born like it is an example of God confirming these people in their desires. It must be noted that the text of Rom. 1 is largely concerned with attitudes of mind; people have wrong sexual lust in their minds, and God confirms this by giving them a perverted mindset. This shows that it is not enough to simply abstain from perverted sexual acts; the perverted sexual mindset is in itself

sinful. "The lusts of their own hearts" is paralleled with "to dishonour their own bodies"; "vile affections" with sexual *acts*; "a reprobate mind" with *doing* those things which are abhorrent. For this reason alone it is impossible to accept the reasoning of Rom. 1 and also believe that some people are created by God constitutionally perverted, with these "vile affections" as part of their natural fabric. It has been pointed out by many commentators that Paul in Rom. 1 is alluding to passages in the Wisdom of Solomon; and those passages are saying that God confirms men in the unrighteous desires they have chosen to follow. God often punishes men by turning them over to their sin completely. For example: "In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts which led them astray to worship irrational animals... thou didst send upon them a multitude of irrational creatures, that they might learn that one is punished by the very things in which he sins... therefore those who lived unrighteously thou didst torment through their own abominations" (Wisdom 11:15,16; 12:23). Rom. 1:29-31 associates sexual perversion with a descending spiral of all sorts of other sins: envy, murder, inventors of evil things etc. This confirms that sexual perversion is part of a general picture of sinfulness which is in opposition to the system of righteousness developed by the Gospel.

1:29 *Being filled-* by God.

With all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity- One can only be filled with murder if we understand murder here as an attitude of mind, in the sense of 1 Jn. 3:15- hating our brother is murder. The context is speaking of how God is doing things to the *mind*, the mental attitude, of sinners.

The extent of spiritual despair, despondency and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of their children (Josh. 5:5,6), showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant with them. There is good reason to think that Rom. 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness. Rom. 1:23 accuses them of changing “the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to... four-footed beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:29 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "changed their glory (i.e. God) into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom. 1 is matched by Ps. 106:21: "They forgat God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom. 1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps. 106:25), "inventors of evil things" (Rom. 1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other, even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29).

They were a rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them. The children of that generation who later turned out faithful- indeed the generation that settled Canaan were perhaps the most faithful generation in Israel's history- must have had to violently rebel against the attitude of the world and older generation around them.

1:30 *Whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boastful, inventors of evil things*- the mind is creative, inventive, and must be channelled positively rather than towards the invention or creation of sinful things. Note that the origin or creation of evil in the sense of sin is within the human being, not in some cosmic Satan figure.

Disobedient to parents- this may appear a lesser sin compared to those which surround it. But Paul several times does this- listing what some would consider an apparently minor sin within a list of what some would consider major sins- to demonstrate that the apparently minor sin is indeed that serious.

1:31 *Without understanding*- This translates the Greek *asunetos*; "covenant breakers" translates *asunthetos*. The alliteration between the words is common in the Bible, and suggests that the Bible was recorded in such a way that it could be easily memorized by the initial hearers- for the majority of believers over history have been illiterate.

Covenant breakers- "Covenant breakers" and "without natural affection" may be understandable in a moral, sexual context. For in 1:27 Paul has written of sexual perversion as a leaving of the natural intent of the body.

With natural affection, unmerciful- "Implacable", Gk. 'without accepting a libation' suggests that unforgiveness, or being "unmerciful", is as bad as all manner of major sexual sin listed in the same list. Yet so often those sins remain unforgiven by those who consider themselves more spiritual than those who fail in such areas; yet such unforgiveness is of the same category as the grossest moral failure. Gk. 'without an offering', i.e. unwilling to accept a sacrifice in order to grant peace. This is a clear allusion to what God does for us; indeed most of the terms in v.31 are the very opposite of what God does in the atonement. His reconciliation of us must be the basis for our lives and mental attitudes.

1:32 *Who, knowing the ordinance of God*- the relevance of this verse is to those who know God's judgments, those who are responsible to Him. Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with

a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

That they that practice- Gk. keep on practicing, in an ongoing way.

Such things are worthy of death- Some of the "things" listed in the preceding verses might appear to some to be minor sins. But they are "worthy of death" if we live in them. We need to think through that list in 1:29-31. Disobedience to parents, lacking "natural affection", not being faithful to a covenant, implacable, not showing mercy- any one of those "things" if lived in as a way of life is "worthy of death". Refusing to fellowship one's brethren, refusing to forgive, ignoring elderly parents... is "worthy of death".

*Not only do the same, but also give approval to them that practise them- "*Give approval to" is Gk. 'to assent to', 'to feel gratified with'. We can so easily 'feel gratified with' those who commit those sins through vicariously participating in them through watching and reading of them, and psychologically feeling gratified by the sin. Paul seems to be speaking here directly to the online entertainment generation... Paul may have written this with his memory upon how when Stephen had been stoned, he had stood there looking on and "consenting" with the murder, stone by stone- without throwing a single stone himself (s.w. twice, Acts 8:1; 22:20).

Paul warned the Romans that those who "have pleasure" in (Gk. 'to feel gratified with') sinful people will be punished just as much as those who commit the sins (Rom. 1:32). But he uses the very word used for his own 'consenting' unto the death of Stephen; standing there in consent, although not throwing a stone (Acts 8:1; 22:20). He realized that only by grace had that major sin of his been forgiven; and in that spirit of humility and self-perception of himself, as a serious sinner saved by grace alone, did he appeal to his brethren to consider their ways. 'Feeling gratified with' such sins as are in this list is what the entertainment industry is so full of. We can't watch, read and listen to this kind of thing by choice without in some sense being vicariously involved in it- and this seems to be exactly what Paul has in mind when he warns that those who feel gratified in those sins shall share in their judgment. This is a sober warning, relevant, powerful and cutting to our generation far more than any other. For given the internet and media, we can so easily feel gratified in others' sins.

Paul reels off an awful list of sins in Romans 1, and builds up to a crescendo at the end of the passage. We're left waiting, with dropped jaws, for him to come out with some yet

more awful sin. And Paul fulfils that expectation by listing the sin of having pleasure in those who commit sin (Rom. 1:32). Immediately we who are not grossly perverted and immoral are shaken from our seats. For in our generation like no other, one can secretly view sin, in movies, novels and on the internet, and vicariously get involved with it whilst not 'doing it' with our own bodies. This sin really is serious. It tops and caps and concludes the list of awful sins. And yet the whole section goes on to talk about the danger of condemning others for such sins (2:1). It could be that Paul is suggesting that by condemning others, eagerly exploring their sins in order to pass condemnation upon them, we are thereby gratifying ourselves through vicarious involvement in those very sins. In this case, the psychology presented would've been 2000 years ahead of its time. Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Therefore you are without excuse*- s.w. only in Rom. 1:20, where sexual perverts are described as "without excuse", inexcusable. The whole point is that those who are judgmental, in the sense of condemning ahead of time, are in the same category. The point is very powerful and telling. Perhaps Paul purposefully talks about sexual perversion in Romans 1 because he knows it will shock and encourage his readers to condemn sexual perverts etc., and thus he has set them up for 'condemnation'. Remember that Paul isn't merely playing mind games with his readership- he's building us up to a crescendo of conviction of sinfulness, which will form the backdrop for the good news of God's amazing grace; and this, rather than ranting about sin for the sake of it, is the theme of Romans. "Inexcusable" is a Greek legal term, without defence / legal answer to make. As if whenever we judge others, we are ourselves standing condemned and speechless at the judgment seat of God. The rejected in the last day will be speechless, without any legal answer to make (Mt. 22:12). If we judge others, then we right now are condemning ourselves, speechless and ashamed before the Divine judgment seat. In this sense "wherein", or insofar as, we judge others- we condemn ourselves. We "do the same things", not literally, but insofar as by being judgmental or unmerciful (the context is Rom. 1:31), we are sinning in the same category of mortal sins which they are; for judgmentalism is as bad as the list of major moral failures Paul has been listing at the end of Romans 1.

O man, whoever you are that judge- Paul is writing with at least some reference to himself personally. To be judgmental and feel spiritually superior to others would've been frequent temptations for him. Paul often writes assuming his readers' response being in a certain way. Here he assumes that having read his talk of sexual perverts and a whole catena of other sins in 1:29-31, that we will be shaking our heads and judging those sins. But here in 2:1 he plays on that expected response from us

"Therefore..." is without referent unless it is to our assumed response to 1:29-31 and basically says: "Thou art the man". He confidently asserts that we who judge in the sense of condemn are doing the same things. He may mean that we all at times commit the sins of 1:29-31 and so are guilty. Or he may be saying that the very act of judging / condemning others is as bad as 'doing those same things'. We must of course 'judge' in the sense of having an opinion; but to condemn people in the way that only God can is just as bad as sexual perversion or whatever other sin in 1:27-31 we may wish to condemn.

For wherein you judge another- the implication could be that if you condemn a person for a sin in the sense of prejudging God's personal condemnation of them, then you are counted as having performed the very sin which you so despise and condemn.

You condemn yourself For you that judge practise the same things- By condemning others we are as it were playing judge, and whilst at it, we're reading out our own sentence of condemnation. The practical result of all this must be faced- there will, presumably, be some otherwise good living, upright Christian folk who come to the day of judgment and are condemned to darkness and gnashing of teeth simply because they in their brief lifetimes condemned some of the other sinners who are with them thrown out into condemnation. It may appear bizarre- hardened sinners like lifetime perverts are there on the left hand side of the judgment seat along with the upright, righteous pillars of church life who never smoked, got drunk, had a telly or broke the speed limit. But they condemned their sinful brethren, those with whom they share condemnation. And that's why they are there. This reality needs far more than some passing grunt of approval or sober nod of the head from us as we consider it. All this is not to say that we in this life can't tell right from wrong- that's the point of v. 2. We are indeed sure of what the judgment of God is about these gross sins, but we are sure of what *God's* judgment is- and that, surely, is where the emphasis should be: "the judgment *of God*".

We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us. We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10). We are *sure* of what the judgment of God is going to be against persistent sinners (Rom. 2:2); and yet if we condemn them, we can be equally sure that even now we are condemned of ourselves, seeing that if we condemn, we will be likewise (Rom. 2:1). The wrath of God is right now revealed, constantly disclosed, against sin (Rom. 1:18).

It is difficult to read Rom. 2:1 without seeing an allusion to David's condemnation of the man who killed his neighbour's only sheep: "Thou art inexcusable, O man, *whosoever thou art* that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself". Surely Paul is saying that David's massive self-deception and hypocrisy over Bathsheba can all too easily be replicated in our experience.

2:2 *And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those that practise such things*- Again, it is only the believer, the person who knows God's word, who is aware and certain of the judgment of God. We can be certain that judgmentalism, lack of mercy and all the moral sins in the list at the end of Romans 1 will all lead to condemnation; yet we still do them, especially the sin of condemning others. This is the paradox Paul is bringing out- that we can be sure, intellectually and spiritually persuaded, that sin [including judging and being unmerciful to others] will

result in condemnation- but this doesn't seem to mean we stop doing them. This is all part of Paul's build up to the crescendo of conviction of human sinfulness which so urgently necessitates our acceptance of God's grace.

"Practice" is Gk. 'to practice continually', rather than occasional failure. "Judgment... against them" is language of the law court, whereby a judgment [the contents of the judgment, rather than the act of judgment; a noun rather than a verb] is read out *against* a person. The oft made distinction between the person and the sin doesn't seem Biblical- God's judgment is against persons, not abstractions. It is individuals and not concepts which come before God's judgment.

2:3 *And do you think (O man who judges those that practise such things*- There is the strong sense in human nature that 'this won't happen to me, yes it will happen to most people who do that, but not to me'. This aspect of our nature is at its most acute when it comes to committing sin. Others will die, for sure, truly, definitely, for doing those things (2:2)- but I will not. No wonder the sin within us is at times described as 'the devil', a liar, a deceiver. Yet this whole process of thought is described here as a 'reckoning' [AV "thinkest…?"], a process of discussion with ourselves. But it all takes place deep in the subconscious; for we don't literally have this kind of conversation with ourselves. We see here how the Bible tackles sin at its root- deep in the heart, within the subconscious thought processes, rather than blaming some supernatural cosmic dragon. Such an explanation is utterly primitive and has no praxis, compared to the Biblical definition of sin and the devil.
And yet you do the same)- I suggested under 2:1 that this may refer to *effectively* doing the same, by condemning the individuals.

That you shall escape the judgment of God?- Gk. 'to flee'. The rejected will ultimately flee from God's presence at judgment day. Paul appears to be playing on that idea- they think they can run away from it, and in the end they shall run from it in condemnation. All the same, apart from this word play, Paul is highlighting the basic human tendency to think that 'It won't happen *to me*. I can do the same as *they* do, they may suffer the consequences of it, but in my case, I will not'. Paul is addressing himself to our deepest psyche and internal thought processes: "Do you think [*logizomai*, to reason out] this [within yourself], O man... ?". This sense that 'I in *my* case can get away with it and not pay the price' is especially pronounced in spiritual matters; the idea is that we can sin and not die because of it. The psychology of criminal behaviour has emphasized this facet of the human mind, but in fact we all have it.
The rejected going away into... (Mt. 25:46) is only a reflection of the position they themselves adopted in their lives. They thought that they could flee away from the judgments of God (Rom. 2:3 Gk.)- and so they will flee from His judgment seat, although so unwillingly.

2:4 *Or do you despise the riches of his goodness*- We can despise God's grace if we condemn others; for who are we to say that God in the end will not save the sinners of 1:26-31? By condemning others [which is the burden of 2:1-3] we are despising God's grace, limiting it, counting it as not very powerful nor wonderful. And by condemning others we fail to realize that God's limitless grace and goodness- the very grace we wish to limit by condemning others- is in fact leading us personally to repentance from the sins which will in their turn condemn us too.

And forbearance- Gk. self-restraint. God restrains Himself by His grace. Not condemning us is a struggle for Him, and we despise that characteristic of His, ignore and downplay His marvellous internal struggle, if we simply write people off as 'condemned'.

And longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you- Gk. 'is leading you', continuous present- all the while we are despising His grace, thinking others can't possibly be saved by it, He by grace is trying to patiently lead us to repentance. The only other time in Romans the word is used is in Rom. 8:14, where we learn that all the children of God are "led by the spirit of God" [just as God leads, same word, His children unto glory, Heb. 2:10]. This leading is therefore specifically to repentance, to actual concrete change in our lives in specific areas, not just a general sense that we are 'led on the journey of life'. It's amazing that God tries to lead even the self-righteous, proud and judgmental of others to repentance. In Rom. 8:14 we read that all God's true children are led of the Spirit. Here in Rom. 2:4 it is the goodness, the kindness, the grace of God which leads us- to the end point of repentance. We are being led somewhere- to change, not just led on some road to Wigan Pier, to nowhere, led for the sake of being led… a journey for the sake of a journey. It's common to speak of 'being on a journey', but the question is, are we arriving anywhere, are we coming to radical change, *metanoia*, or not?

To repentance- from being judgmental? For that is the context of 2:1-3.
The context of Paul's challenge about whether we despise God's rich grace is his plea for us not to be judgmental and unmerciful. If we consider our brethren condemned by God and refuse to show them mercy and sympathy, then we are despising God's goodness; we're saying that all the riches of His grace aren't enough to save that person. Thus our condemning of others is effectively a limiting and despising of God's saving grace. All the time we are despising God's grace like this, God's grace is leading [continuous present tense] *us* to repentance of the sins which shall condemn *us*. The implication is that focusing upon judging others results in little attention to one's own need for repentance. This would explain why those so publicly judgmental of others are so often exposed in due course as having hypocritically harboured some secret vice or moral failure in their own lives. Psychologically, this situation develops because their focus is so upon the failures of others that they perceive "sin" to be something purely external to themselves.

Paul summarises his argument of Romans chapters 1 and 2 by saying that there he has accused / charged (in a legal sense) all men and women, Jews and Gentiles, of being "under [judgment for] sin" (Rom. 3:9 Gk.). With typically devastating logic, he has demonstrated the universal guilt of man. Twice he stresses that whoever we are, we are without excuse (1:20; 2:1). All men have a conscience which is dynamically equivalent to the specific knowledge of God's law; in this sense they are a "law unto themselves" (2:14- although this phrase is used in a different sense in modern English). "By nature" (Strong: 'native disposition, constitution') they have the same moral sense that God's law teaches. This is why human beings have an innate sense of right and wrong- it's why, e.g., there is protest at ethnic cleansing. God is understood / perceived by what He has created, namely our own bodies. But through, e.g., sexual

perversion, man has distorted the image and glory of God which he was intended to be, and has worshipped the created body rather than the creator (1:20-23). Fashion, adverts and power clothing all do this, as well as the present obsession with sexual expression. The Lord Himself taught that because we are in the image of God, therein lies an imperative to give our bodies to Him. The goodness of God can lead *all men* to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God has set a sense of the eternal in the human heart (Ecc. 3:11 AVmg.). An awareness of judgment is alive as a basic instinct in people. God is "not far from every one of us…forasmuch as we are [all] the offspring of God" (Acts 17:27-29- stated in a preaching context), being created in His image.

2:5 *But after your hardness*- Judging / condemning others is because of hardness of heart. *Hardness* implies that the mortal sin being spoken about is a hardness of heart, a condemning of others (2:1-3). Later in Romans, Paul associates hardness of heart with Pharaoh, who was in turn hardened by God in response to his own hardness.

And impenitent heart- Continuing impenitently condemning others' impenitence is what will lead to our condemnation; for so long as we continue condemning, we are treasuring up condemnation to ourselves. The paradox is huge and crucially relevant. The wrath and indignation for which these people are condemned (2:8) is surely wrath and indignation against those whom they condemn, claiming to have the "wrath" of Divine condemnation against others, a wrath which only properly belongs to Him. God is leading people to repentance (2:4), but some remain impenitent. In this they fight against God. He leads people by His grace to repent of their judgmentalism and condemnation of others, but not all accept His leading.
You treasure up for yourself anger- Every continuance in condemning others and being unmerciful is a treasuring up of condemnation in the last day, adding to it bit by bit. Each act of condemnation, each incident of rejecting others, is as it were heaping up a piece of condemnation for ourselves in the last day. Our life is a laying up of treasure against the day of judgment (Mt. 6:19,20). The Greek *orge* translated "wrath" is elsewhere translated 'anger', 'indignation'. These are exactly the feelings of those who condemn others- anger and indignation. There is therefore a direct, proportionate correspondence between human condemnation, anger and indignation against the weakness of their brethren; and the anger, indignation and condemnation of God against those who condemn in this way.

In the day of anger- your wrath with others now (2:8) is going to be related to God's wrath against you at the last day. Again the implication is that it is because people have shown wrath, i.e. Divine condemnation, that they will suffer wrath in the day of wrath which is to come. The point is that the day of judgment is the day of God's wrath, not ours; and the day for wrath is then, and not now. It will be "revealed" only then- not now. The emphasis is upon the judgment and wrath being "of *God*", then- and not of man, nor now in this life.

And revelation of the righteous judgment of God- the Greek means 'the verdict', the judgment given. This will not be decided upon at the last day- it has already been created in this life, and we have created it ourselves- for we are our own judges. What happens at the last day is that it is revealed. The day of judgment is a metaphor- a human court sits down to assess evidence and pass a verdict. This isn't the case with Divine judgment, as God knows the end from the beginning, and isn't passive nor unaware of human behaviour and the reasons for it- all at the very time it occurs.

There are several allusions to Job in Romans, all of which confirm that Job is set up as symbolic of apostate Israel. A simple example is Elihu's description of Job as a hypocrite heaping up wrath (Job 36:13), which connects with Paul's description of the Jews as treasuring up unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5).

2:6 *Who will render to every man according to his works*- The emphasis is perhaps on "will", for Paul is addressing the subconscious mentality that we ourselves can escape judgment (see on 2:3). "Render" is the same word translated "to give account"- we shall "give account" at the day of judgment (Mt. 12:36; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5), "render" [s.w.] to God the fruits of our lives (Mt. 21:41). So God's rendering of account to us is really our rendering of account to Him- we are our own judges, we are working out the verdict now by our attitudes and actions. "Render" is 'to give account'. It would seem that in some sense, there will be a 'going through' of all our deeds, and an account given by God related to each of them. How this shall happen is unclear (e.g. through the past flooding before our eyes like a movie, which is frequently stopped for us to comment upon). But in some sense it will happen, in that not one human deed performed or thought by those responsible to Divine judgment will as it were slip away unnoticed. This isn't only sobering, but also comforting. It is God who will render to each person their account- therefore we should not sit as judges (the context of 2:1).

The judgement of works must be squared against the fact that we each receive a penny a day, salvation by grace. Our salvation itself is by grace, but the nature of our eternity, how many cities we rule over, how brightly we shine as stars, will be appropriate to our deeds in this life. Or it may be that in the context here, the "deeds" which will be judged are our condemnation of others. This, as explained in 2:1-3, is as bad as the "deeds" being condemned by us; and so there's a telling appropriacy in styling such condemnations "deeds", as if they are the actual deed performed.

2:7 *To them that by patience in welldoing*- s.w. "deeds" in 2:6. Yet how can the right deeds be rewarded with eternal life, given Paul's teaching about salvation by grace rather than works? Surely the answer is in the fact that salvation itself is by grace, the "penny a day" of the parable which all believers will receive; but our works aren't insignificant, and they will be judged and will affect the nature of the eternal life, the salvation, which by grace we shall be given. Or it could be that the "well doing", the 'good deeds', spoken of here are in fact a non-judgmental, merciful life. The good deeds are what we avoided doing, i.e. condemning others, which is the theme of this section of Romans.

Seek for glory and honour and incorruption- Or "immortality". To those who earnestly seek for perfection, who would so love to be given moral perfection, who would so love never to sin again- they will be given eternal life in that state. Note the difference between the "immortality" which we seek, and the "eternal life" which we are given in response. The Greek for "immortality" is also translated "incorruption", "sincerity"- it has a distinct moral sense to it. If we seek to live in moral incorruption, if our desire to be in the Kingdom of God is because we so yearn to live without sin and corruption- then we will not only be given that but also an eternity of life like that. But the essence is to seek to live in moral incorruption- and then the eternity will come as a natural part of that.

"Glory and honour" are terms frequently applied by Paul to the Lord Jesus. The righteous seek *His* glory and honour, and shall be given eternal life in which to do so.

Or should we seek glory, honour- for others? For love doesn't seek her own things (1 Cor. 13:5 s.w.). Paul could write of how he 'sought' others' salvation (2 Cor. 12:14). Paul tells the Hebrews [if he indeed was the author] and Romans to have the patient, fruit-bearing characteristics of the good ground (Lk. 8:15 = Rom. 2:7; Heb. 10:36).

The whole section in Rom. 2:7-10 is alluding to the LXX descriptions of the blessings and cursings for obedience or disobedience to the covenant in Dt. 27-30. But they are allusions, and the idea is that under the new covenant, those who e.g. condemn others (:1), or are factious (:8) or unmerciful (Rom. 1:31) are equivalent to those who broke the old covenant.

2:8 *But to them that are factious*- The section is talking about those who condemn others (2:1) and who are unmerciful (1:31). It is this which creates faction- for if one person condemns another, they expect others to condemn them too, and cause faction over it. It's significant that causing faction by being judgmental is chosen here as the epitome of wrong doing- despite Paul having spoken of sins such as sexual perversion in the context. His argument seems to be that condemning those who commit such sins and causing faction over the matter is in fact a far worse sin. To be contentious – to be divisive, endlessly creating strife (Gk.), is the very epitome of those who will not be saved. Yet sadly, contention against other believers is falsely painted as 'spiritual strength'. This category of people are later in this verse called indignant and angry- confirming the view that this group are people within the ecclesia who are angry, indignant and contentious against others whom they judge (2:1-3 sets the context).

Do not obey the truth- As we have shown in comments on 2:2 that Paul has in view here those who know the Truth. The emphasis should therefore here be placed upon their disobedience to the Truth which they know. And that Truth requires mercy, grace and non-condemnation to be shown to sinners. That is obedience to the Truth. Or "the truth" may be a reference to the Law of Moses, as in Rom. 2:20; 3:7? Or to the Gospel, as elsewhere in Paul's thought.

And do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, anger and indignation- Paul introduces the paradox he develops so strongly in chapter 6- that we are slaves, and we obey either the flesh or the spirit. For all our fiercely claimed independence, we are presented by Paul as slaves with only two possible masters to whom we can yield obedience. What's telling in the figure is that the 'master' of the flesh is actually our own internal passions of wrath, indignation, unrighteousness. "Obey" is from a Greek word which really means to persuade. We are persuaded either by our own anger, or by the Truth of the Gospel. The same word recurs in 2:19.

As commented on under 2:5, it is those who condemn others who do so with indignation and wrath, thus heaping upon themselves Divine wrath and indignation at the last day. We all have latent wrath and indignation within us- but we are not to obey those passions in a wrong way. When we encounter the sinfulness of others, it seems that indignation and wrath are aroused and this leads some to condemn others. But if we obey those passions- we shall receive God's wrath and condemnation. The rejected will want to be accepted. "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you (quoted in Rom. 2:8 re. the judgment). Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1:27,28).

2:9- see on Rom. 2:23.

Tribulation- We have the choice of tribulation now for the sake of living the truly Christian life (e.g. Mt. 13:21), or tribulation at the hands of God and His Son and their

Angels at the last day. *Tribulation* wasexactly what the apostate Christians were trying to avoid will come upon them at judgment day. The 'persecution' or 'chasing' is perhaps a reference to the Angel of the Lord chasing the rejected like chaff away from the judgment seat- the Angel will "persecute" the rejected along dark and slippery paths (Ps. 35:6).

And anguish- lit. 'narrowness of room'. They will have no place to run, compared to the sense of largeness and freedom which will be [and is with] God's accepted people. The anguish will not just be upon 'men' but upon every individual *psuche* (s.w. heart, life, mind) of man who has been disobedient. The suggestion is that the punishment will be psychological, a mental trauma.

Upon every soul of man that works evil- 1:32 has warned that those who don't so much do the evil but vicariously agree with it are just as culpable. The 'doing' is therefore as much mental as physical.

Of the Jew first and also of the Greek- Because the Jews have or had greater responsibility to Divine judgment?

2:10 *But glory and honour and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*- The Greek word for “honour” really refers to money, a financial price. There could be an allusion to the parable of the talents, whereby the faithful receives the one talent which the unfaithful hadn't used (Mt. 25:28). The 'working good' in the context of 2:1-3 is not condemning our brother.

2:11 *For there is no respect of persons with God*- i.e. both Jew and Gentile will be accepted in God's Kingdom. The spirituality of the Gentile believers will be rewarded just as much as that of Jewish believers. That the Jew-Gentile equality is such a theme in Romans would suggest that the ecclesia featured both Jews and Gentiles- hence Paul's many OT allusions in Romans, whilst at the same time making it clear in places that he is specifically addressing Gentiles ["ye Gentiles"].

2:12 *For as many as have sinned outside of law shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law*- i.e. in condemnation at the last day? For this is how the word is used in Jn. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 13:4. “Judged” is being used in the sense of "condemned". Not only those who knew the Mosaic law will appear at judgment day; some will be condemned there because of their disobedience to that law, but others will be condemned because of disobedience to other principles.

Watch out for the use of figures of speech. How we interpret the Bible accurately depends upon grasping these. Ellipsis and metaphor are the most common. Ellipsis is where as it were a gap is left in the sentence, and we have to fill in the intended sense. Thus: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall perish also without [*being judged by*] law" (Rom. 2:12).

2:13 *For not the hearers of the law are just before God*- there would have been a great tendency in the first century as in our own to think that regular attendance at a place of worship and simply hearing God's law read was enough for salvation.

But the doers of the law shall be justified- Yet Paul elsewhere teaches that no works can bring about justification, it is not of works but of faith in God's grace. I've observed several times in these notes so far in Romans that Paul tends to use the idea of 'doing' with reference to mental attitudes rather than deeds. Or it may be that Paul

is here quoting a rabbinic maxim, and agreeing with it only so far- to demonstrate that even passive religionists are all the same liable to a very real condemnation.
Mt. 7:21 = Rom. 2:13. Paul saw the "Lord, Lord" people of the parable as the Jews of the first century who initially responded enthusiastically to the Gospel.

2:14 *For when Gentiles that do not have the law*- Gentile believers in Christ. There's no article- it's not a reference to *the* Gentiles as a whole.

Do by nature the things of the law, these not having the law, are the law to themselves- Nobody seems to be naturally obedient to "the things contained in the law", rather is obedience and spirituality an hourly struggle. It's therefore tempting to seek to interpret this verse in the light of the immediate context- which is condemning some Jewish? members of the Rome ecclesia for doing that which is "against nature", i.e. sexual perversion (Rom. 1:26). The Gentile believers *in that context of sexual perversion* were "by nature" doing God's will in that area. Again, we see Paul teaching that nobody is 'born perverted', such behaviour is not natural. Perhaps it is in this context that we can understand the rest of 2:14 and 2:15, which seem to suggest that conscience naturally rebels against such things. This is indeed the natural reaction to such perversion.

It's easy to get discouraged in our preaching by the apparent lack of response. But all the witnesses that we make, the points we get across, the bills we distribute, adverts we place… the people who receive them *don't* treat them as they would say a commercial advertisement. *Everyone out there has a religious conscience*- let's remember that. They know, deep down, what they ought to be doing. And our preaching invites them to do it. If there is no immediate conversion, well don't worry. *You have touched peoples' hearts* by your witness. Paul describes our witness in terms of the burning of aromatic spices during the triumphant procession of a victorious general, in our case, the Lord Jesus. His victory train goes on and on and on; and each generation of preachers is the aroma. But in Paul's image, the aroma strikes the bystanders in only one of two ways: some find it pleasing and life-giving, whereas others find it nauseating and deadly (2 Cor. 2:14-16). The point is, the fragrance of our witness penetrates *everywhere* (2 Cor. 2:14), and it is an odour which *cannot be ignored*. It is either repulsive, or life-giving. Our hearers will react in only one of those two ways, whatever their apparent indifference to us.

2:15 *In that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith*- Along with the witness of God's law, their conscience also happened to agree with God's law about sexual perversion. 1 Cor. 4:4 warns that our conscience isn't so reliable as to justify us at the last day; but in the 'natural' revulsion of the conscience against sexual perversion, conscience is a joint witness with God's law. The reference is to the new covenant as described in Jer. 31:33; also alluded to in :21. The argument seems to be that the Gentile Christians are indeed under the new covenant, so there is no need to worry as to whether they are keeping the old covenant. The idea of the new covenant was that God was so thirsting for relationship with His disobedient people that He would actually write the essence of His law in their hearts. This idea of internalizing the spirit of the law was actually mentioned within the law itself, in Dt. 30:11-14: "this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off... the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it". This shows that the purpose of the law of Moses was not simply to set up Israel for failure by giving them a set of laws which were impossible to keep. The law was perfect, just and good.

Obedience to it would have led to the character seen in the Lord Jesus, who was perfectly obedient to it. And so the new covenant involves God putting His Spirit, the spirit of Christ, into human hearts, now that the old covenant has been abrogated. He writes that spirit there, as He wrote the commandments on rock. But that cannot happen if we are hard hearted and impenitent (:5). Repentance and soft heartedness towards God are therefore required for entry to the new covenant. And that is in short supply in a hard, arrogant, self justifying, postmodern world. Again, the law itself hinted at this by speaking of how a blessing for obedience would be that God would circumcise their heart (Dt. 30:6 "Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live"). The new covenant is of grace- that blessing for obedience is offered anyway to all who simply say yes.

And their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them- Gk. '*logismos*'. The internal words, the conscience, accused or excused both are legal words the behaviour; our internal words 'bear witness' as in a court, for or against us. Judgment is ongoing; and we are at times our own accusers.

2:16 *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ*- The focus upon our innermost thoughts and words spoken only within our own minds continues when we read that God will judge the "secrets" of men in the last day. It's our thoughts which are the essence of us as persons. These will be judged- and the context of 2:1-3 is of internal attitudes like judgmentalism being worthy of condemnation at the last day.
According to my [preaching of the] gospel- the Gospel as preached by Paul includes judgment to come as part of the good news. But the teaching about the judgment seat of Christ is only good news for those sure of their redemption in Christ, those who are now suffering, those who now in their thoughts and hearts are with the Lord but are condemned by others... for the day of judgment will be a turning of tables, a replacing of the external with the internal.

2:17 *But if you [singular] bear the name of a Jew*- It's as if Paul is in the middle of giving a lecture and then suddenly addresses himself to one individual in the audience.

And rely upon the law- The Greek idea is of remaining. Again it seems Paul is addressing himself to Christian Jews in the Rome ecclesia who had chosen to remain in the Mosaic law.

And boast in God- As in 2:23, a reference to Jewish glorying in having and obeying the Mosaic law. But Paul uses the same word another three times in Romans, about how "we" boast in our reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:11), in the hope we have of salvation (5:2), and also in our humiliations which prepare us for that time (5:3). Our witness to others is part of this confident boasting about God's grace. But we can only confidently boast of salvation and reconciliation if by faith we have assured ourselves that these things are present realities, and not merely possible futures for us.

Paul's rebuke of the Jews in Rom. 2 for their reliance on a mixture of worldly wisdom and that of the Mosaic law has many similarities with Job:

Rom. 2:17-23	Job
"Thou art called a Jew... and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and triest the things that differ (AVmg.), being instructed out of the law;	A fair description of Job before his trials. Cp. Job's constant reasoning with God about things which differed from his previous concept of God; "Doth not the ear try words?" (12:11)
and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an	"I was eyes to the blind" (29:15)
instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?	"Thou hast instructed many ... thy words have upholden him that was falling... but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest" (4:3-5).
Thou that preachest a man should not steal... commit adultery... (worship) idols... dost thou?	These were the 3 main things of which the friends accused Job.
Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God?"	Elihu, on God's behalf, says that Job's boasting of his righteousness implied God was doing wickedly in punishing Job (34:10)

Their belief that they possessed such great wisdom led the Jews to be self-righteous, in that they reasoned that if they were wicked, then their wisdom would reveal this to them. Job and the Jews were in this sense similar.

2:18 *And know His will and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law*- The very same Greek words which were spoken to Paul at his conversion by Ananias (Acts 22:14). This is yet another example of where Paul's conversion experience is alluded to him constantly, consciously and unconsciously, throughout his writings. Paul goes on to talk about how this individual Jew of whom he speaks could approve or prove or judge / discern excellent things- this surely is an allusion to the rabbinical process of casuistic interpretation of Scripture with which Paul had been brought up, and which dialectic is so evident in his Christian writing and reasoning. Surely the individual Jew whom Paul started addressing in 2:17 is in fact Paul himself. Perhaps he also has in mind the Lord's teaching (using the same Greek words) in Lk. 12:47, where in the context of responsibility to final judgment, the Lord warns that those who know His will shall be punished more severely than those who don't. Hence Paul's earlier comments about "to the Jew first".

2:19 This verse and 2:20-23 sound so similar to Paul. He is the Jew out of the audience whom he starts addressing in 2:17. Like Peter, his teaching of others is shot through with reference to his own failure and salvation by grace; and he is at pains to apply the exhortations, appeals and warnings he makes to himself personally.

And are confident you yourself- persuaded. The same word is [mis]translated "obey" in 2:8. There we read that we are persuaded either of the Gospel, or by anger, judgmentalism etc. Who did the persuading? Presumably Paul's own pride and / or the peer opinion of others in the Jewish peer group.

Are a guide of the blind, a light to those that are in darkness- This and the other similar phrases here and in 2:20 were all used by the Rabbis to describe their attempts to make Gentiles into Jews by proselytizing. However each phrase can equally be understood with reference to the true preaching of Christ as the light of the world. As the Lord was the light of those that sat in darkness (Mt. 4:16), so Paul writes as if all the believers are likewise (Rom. 2:19).

Paul points out the humility which we should therefore have in our preaching: there are none that truly understand, that really see; we are all blind. And yet we are "a guide of the blind, a light to them that sit in darkness" (Rom. 2:19). Therefore we ought to help the blind with an appropriate sense of our own blindness. See on Mt. 13:16.

2:20 *A corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth*- "Instructor of the foolish… teacher of babes" are Rabbinic terms used for Rabbis and Jewish orthodox missionaries bringing forth 'babes' of Gentile converts to Judaism. Such people had the "form of knowledge and truth" [another Rabbinic phrase] in the Jewish Law. Paul's hypothetical "O man" (2:1) is narrowing down to himself; for very few if any of the initial readership of Romans would've been former Rabbis, let alone Rabbis involved in missionary proselytizing. The only Christian former Rabbi and travelling proselytizer we meet in the New Testament is Paul himself. The allusion by Paul to himself rather than pointing the finger at any of his readership would've set them at ease, that there were no hidden messages nor hints that he was addressing a specific situation or person in Rome. He was applying his principles to himself, and by so publicly doing so he appeals to each of his readers to likewise personalize the principles to ourselves.

2:21 *You therefore that teach another, don't you teach yourself?*- Paul was teaching the Romans. Thus the allusion to himself is clear- he who teaches others must teach himself, must apply to himself the principles which pass his lips so easily. He may be referring back to his theme in 2:2,3- that we have a tendency to assume that Divine truths aren't relevant to us personally, that punishment for sin and condemning others isn't, actually, going to come *on me*, although we know it will surely come *on others*. And so Paul is saying that he too must be aware of this- that he places himself in the audience of those whom he is teaching. See on Rom. 3:19.

I noted on :15 that Paul at this point has in view Jer. 31:30-33, the new covenant. But part of that new covenant was that those under it would not need to be taught by

others nor would they teach others; because instead, God would write the spirit of His law on their hearts. So "you therefore that teach another..." would suggest the person in view is not acceptant of the new covenant. And there were clearly many Jewish Christians who had not really accepted it, just as there are many believers today who have not done so.

You that preach a man should not steal, do you steal?- Stealing was felt to be a crime which could and should be openly, publicly rebuked.

2:22 *You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?*- Sexual double standards is perhaps the most obvious example of hypocrisy. Remember the context of this passage- the list of awful sexual sins at the end of chapter 1 lead Paul in to a discourse on the sin of condemning others for their sins, his point being that to do so was a despising of God's grace; and that by condemning others for their sin we are in fact guilty of that same sin. And so Paul could be meaning that if we condemn individuals for adultery, it is as if we have ourselves committed adultery, for this would be in harmony with what he has taught earlier in this section (see on 1:32).

You that dread idols- Jewish Rabbis like Paul were well known for their obsession with making any image of God.

Do you rob temples?- The theme which connects the three examples given by Paul is that of stealing, taking that which isn't yours. 'Do you steal?' (v.21) connects with 'Do you commit adultery?' because adultery is a stealing of that which isn't yours but which belongs to your neighbour (1 Thess. 4:6); and robbing temples is likewise stealing. Stealing was and is seen in the Middle East as the social evil and crime which could be shouted out against the most. Indeed in many cultures there is some equivalent of the English "Stop thief!".

Temple robbery was something Jews were accused of (Acts 19:37)- according to Josephus they were renowned for it, justifying it on the basis that the gods who 'owned' the treasures did not in fact exist (*Antiquities* 4:8, 10). So it's appropriate Paul would choose this example- condemning others, in this case for idolatry, but to our own personal advantage.

2:23 *You who boast in the law*- Again, this is surely a reference by Paul to himself, who boasted of his Jewish roots and knowledge of the Law. The Jews boasted in God (2:17 s.w.) and in His law. Later in Romans Paul talks of how the Christian believer boasts in God on account of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:11 s.w.; AV "joy in God"). The Jewish boast in God was proven empty because of human sin and hypocrisy; whereas the Christian can boast in God because s/he is confident in His grace in Christ.

Actually dishonour God through your transgression of the law- The same word has been used by Paul in Rom. 1:24 about sexual perverts dishonouring their bodies. Relentlessly, Paul repeats his point- the apparently grosser sins such as sexual perversion are just as bad and 'dishonouring' as those who know the Law, even boasting of it, and yet condemn others for sins like perversion.

There's a definite link between shame and anger. Take a man whose mother yelled at him because as a toddler he ran out onto the balcony naked, and shamed him by her words. Years later on a hot Summer evening the man as an adult walks out on a balcony with just his underpants on. An old woman yells at him from the yard below that he should be ashamed of himself. And he's furiously angry with her-

because of the shame given him by his mother in that incident 20 years ago. Shame and anger are clearly understood by God as being related, because His word several times connects them: "A fool's *anger* is immediately known; but a prudent man covers his *shame*" (Prov. 12:16); A king's *anger* is against a man who *shames* him (Prov. 14:35). Or consider 1 Sam. 20:34: "So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce *anger*, and did eat no meat the second day of the month... because his father had done him *shame*". Job's *anger* was related to the fact that he felt that ten times the friends had *shamed* him in their speeches (Job 19:3). Frequently the rejected are threatened with both shame and anger / gnashing of teeth; shame and anger are going to be connected in that awful experience. They will "curse in anger... and be ashamed" (Ps. 109:28).

The final shame of the rejected is going to be so great that "they shall be greatly ashamed... their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Seeing they will be long dead and gone, it is us, the accepted, who by God's grace will recall the terrible shame of the rejected throughout our eternity. Their shame will be so terrible; and hence their anger will likewise be. Because Paul's preaching 'despised' the goddess Diana, her worshippers perceived that she and they were somehow thereby shamed; and so "they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:27,28). It's perhaps possible to understand the wrath of God in this way, too. For His wrath is upon those who break His commands; and by breaking them we *shame* God (Rom. 2:23); we *despise* his desire for our repentance (Rom. 2:4).

The chapter has been arguing against judgmentalism and condemning of sinners. This is perhaps the rank breaking of the Law which Paul is talking about.

2:24 The Jews were so sensitive to honouring God's Name that they wouldn't even pronounce it. And yet their hypocrisy led to it being blasphemed world-wide. This is Paul's point- that hypocrisy is as bad a sin as the crudest, most widely spread blasphemy.

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written- In Is. 52:5, where God says that Judah in Babylon had caused His Name to be blasphemed, but (the prophesy continues) because of that He would reveal His Name to His people as it is in His Son, and they would ultimately accept Him and thus the blasphemy of God's Name would cease. Yet Paul is writing in Romans to Jewish Christians. Clearly they had not really grasped Christ as intended.

2:25 *For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer of the law; but if you be a transgressor of the law*- The corollary of this is that Christ will "profit" [s.w.] nothing if we chose to be circumcised (Gal. 5:2). The analogy of a wedding ring is perhaps helpful to explain Paul's sense here. A wedding ring, a ritualistic external token, is helpful as a sign of marriage; but if one breaks the marriage covenant, the wedding ring [cp. Circumcision] becomes bereft of meaning and just a pointless external physicality.

Your circumcision has become uncircumcision- Humanly speaking in the first century, this was impossible. Once the flesh was cut off, this was irreversible. But in God's opinion- and that surely is Paul's point- circumcision no longer counts if the

covenant which defines the Law is broken. The Jew is therefore as the Gentile, the circumcised becomes uncircumcised because the Law, the old covenant which defined the whole relationship, has been broken.

2:26 *If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?*- Throughout Romans, the point is made that the Lord *counts as righteous* those that believe; righteousness is *imputed* to us the unrighteous (Rom. 2:26; 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24; 8:36; 9:8). But the very same Greek word is used of *our* self-perception. We must count / impute ourselves as righteous men and women, and count each other as righteous on the basis of recognising each other's faith rather than works: "Therefore we conclude [we count / impute / consider] that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law... Likewise reckon [impute] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 3:28; 6:11). We should *feel* clean and righteous, and act accordingly, both in our own behaviour and in our feelings towards each other.

The argument here is leading up to the statement in :29 [see notes there] that circumcision now means the receipt of the Spirit of Christ. He was who He was, perfect, as a result of His formation through being obedient to the law. In this sense He fulfilled the law, not so much in 'fulfilling' the types and shadows, but in achieving the holy, just and good character which the law was inclined to inculcate. Having His spirit therefore means that we are in essence totally obedient to the law. Physically uncircumcised Gentile believers were therefore in this sense totally obedient to the law. They thereby fulfilled the law- the uncircumcision "fulfil the law" (:27) in that the Lord Jesus fulfilled it, resulting in His perfect character, and they have received of His spirit.

The readership in the Roman ecclesia appears to have been mixed, Jew and Gentile. The Gentile world of darkness doesn't keep the righteousness of the Law. "The uncircumcision" here must surely refer to the uncircumcised Christian believers, especially those in the Roman ecclesia. Indeed, "the circumcision" in Acts 10:45; 11:2; Tit. 1:10 and Gal. 2:12 refers to the circumcised *believers in Christ*; and so it's likely that here in Romans it has the same meaning. The Gentile believers were counted as Jews, under the new definition of 'Israel' which there now was in Christ: "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

2:27 *And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge you*- The Christian Gentile believers, who were uncircumcised, would judge / condemn the Jewish Christian believer who trusted in keeping the letter of the Law and in his circumcision rather than in Christ. They would 'condemn' them in that at the last day, those rejected will as it were be compared against other human beings and be relatively 'condemned' by their example (Mt. 12:39-41). Paul has been emphasizing the need not to condemn our brethren (2:1 etc.)- he's saying that it is God who will use us to condemn others, of His choosing, at the last day judgment. The very existence of believing Gentiles judges the Jews as condemned (Rom. 2:27), just as Noah's very example was a condemnation of his world (Heb. 11:7) and the very existence of the repentant Ninevites condemned first century Israel (Mt. 12:41). The faithful preaching of the Corinthians would judge an unbeliever (1 Cor. 14:24). The fact the Pharisees' children cast out demons condemned the Pharisees (Mt.

12:27). This is why the rejected will be shamed before the accepted; they will bow in shame at their feet (Rev. 3:9; 16:15). Perhaps it is in this sense that "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3)- rejected ecclesial elders, cp. the angels of the churches in Rev. 2,3? The point is, men's behaviour and conduct judges others because of the contrast it throws upon them. And this was supremely true of the Lord. No wonder in the naked shame and glory of the cross lay the supreme "judgment of this world".

"Shall not uncircumcision (i.e. the Gentiles)... judge thee (first century Israel), who... dost transgress the law?" (Rom. 2:27) is an odd way of putting it. How can believing Gentiles "judge" first century Jews who refused to believe? Surely there must be some connection with Mt. 12:41, which speaks of Gentiles such as the men of Nineveh rising "in judgment with this generation (first century Israel), and shall condemn it: because they repented...". I can't say there is a conscious allusion being made here. But the similarity is too great to just shrug off.

We may again need to read in an ellipsis when we read that uncircumcision fulfils the Law. The Gentile Christians fulfilled [the essence of] the Jewish Law. This was a paradox- the Law demanded circumcision, so how could the uncircumcised fulfil the Law? Another explanation is to understand that they 'fulfil the Law' in that God counts them as having done so. And as soon as we think about fulfilling the Law, our minds surely go to the fact that the Lord Jesus was the One who fulfilled the Law by His life of perfect obedience. And Rom. 8:4 makes the point that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled "in us" because of the fact that the Lord Jesus died His representative death for us. Thereby, His righteousness is counted to us. He, the circumcised, perfect keeper of God's law, died as our representative. If we identify with Him by faith and baptism into Him, then women and uncircumcised men alike are all counted to be as Him. And in this way, uncircumcised, disobedient, law-breaking believers in Christ will as it were condemn those who have attempted to justify themselves by the circumcision ritual and obedience to the letter of the Law.

Who with the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law?- "Letter" is Gk. *gramma*, s.w., "Scriptures". Neither the Scriptures nor circumcision in themselves make a person break the Law of Moses. So we must read in an ellipsis here. By trusting in our obedience to these things we can put ourselves in a position where we are coming before God on the basis of justification by our own obedience rather than our faith in Christ. In this lies the danger of 'Biblicism' when it's used the wrong way. If we are obsessed with obedience to the letter of God's Word and external, ritual signs such as circumcision, then we shall end up condemned as law breakers- because perfect obedience to God's word is actually impossible.

2:28 *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh*- This was a radical, hard hitting statement. And coming from a Hebrew of the Hebrews like Saul of Tarsus, it really was stinging. Self-identity in the Mediterranean world of the first century was all tied up with who one was externally. The new identity in Christ challenges our self-perceptions to the absolute core. Rom. 2:28 explicitly states the principle of our real spiritual self being hidden, by saying that the true believer will "inwardly" (same word translated "hidden" in 1 Pet. 3:4) circumcise his heart. The works of the flesh are "manifest", but by inference those of the Spirit are hidden (Gal. 5:18,19). Mt. 6:4,6,18 gives triple emphasis to the fact that God sees in secret. He alone truly and fully appreciates our spiritual self. This is sure comfort on the many occasions where our spirituality is misunderstood, both in the world and in the ecclesia. Yet it also provides an endless challenge; moment by moment, our true spiritual being is known by the Almighty, "Thou whose

eyes in darkness see, and try the heart of man". The spiritual man which God now knows ("sees") and relates to, will be what He sees at the day of judgment. God dwells in "secret", i.e. in the hidden place, as well as seeing in "secret". God is a God who hides Himself (Is. 57:17) due to human sinfulness. If we fail to see the spiritual man in our brethren, this must be due to a lack of real spiritual vision in us. It is human sin which is somehow getting in the way.

2:29 *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter*- It was indeed a radical thing for Paul to re-define self-identity from the outward and visible to the internal and invisible. External appearances were and are what define a person, both within society and to him or her self. By becoming "in Christ", this all changes- radically. "Inwardly" is the same word translated "secrets" when we read a few verses earlier that God will judge the secrets, the internal things (Rom. 2:16). This is what He looks upon.

It's significant that circumcision was in any case a private matter. The Canaanite tribes each had various markings or tattoos, usually on the face or somewhere public and visible, just as some African tribes do today. It was immediately obvious that the person was from whatever tribe. God's people, however, had a body marking on the most hidden and intimate place on a man's body, which was not on public display. This in itself reflected how relationship with God was and is something intimate, personal and not immediately visible, in a sense, to the world around us. We who line up in a supermarket look, smell, talk and chose our shopping in a virtually identical way to the world around us. Our separation unto God is internal, intimate and not externally visible. Note that Paul has been talking about not judging; and from that he moves on to talk about circumcision. The connection is in the fact that we cannot judge others because we can only view them externally; God will judge the "secrets" (2:16), the internal things, because the sign of our covenant connection with God is by its very nature internal and personal to the believer and God. We cannot possibly, therefore, judge others- for we see only the visible and external.

Circumcision under the new covenant doesn't refer to anything outward, visibly verifiable. For now "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)- seeing we can't judge the secret things of others' hearts, how can we tell who is circumcised in heart or not? The 'sealing' of God's people today, the proof that they are the Lord's (2 Tim. 2:19), is not anything external, but the internal matter of being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), or being sealed with a mark in the mind / forehead, as Revelation puts it (Rev. 7:3; 9:4). This is the seal of the new covenant which replaces circumcision as the seal of the old covenant- Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:11). Eph. 3:16 is clear that the Spirit works upon the "inner man"; this is how we are circumcised "inwardly": "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man". This is why John argues that we know that He abides in us by His Spirit which He gave us; it is the litmus test of Christianity and covenant relationship with God. Just as circumcision was the "sign" of being in the [new] covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 17:11). But as discussed on :15, the gift of the Spirit is related to the new covenant. That gift and membership of the covenant is shown by breaking bread. "My covenant will be in your flesh / This is the covenant in your flesh" (Gen. 17:13) is clearly alluded to in the words of for an breaking of bread: "This is the new covenant in My blood".

Circumcision has to be done to a man by someone else, just as the law has to be written upon hearts (:15). It requires his complete exposure to someone else, and trust in them. This stripping naked for circumcision is alluded to in Col. 2:11: "the putting off [Gk. stripping off] of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ". It is not only that undressing is referred to, but even more intimately- the removed foreskin reveals the most intimate part of the penis. This speaks of our most intimate revealing to God and His Son. We too have to reveal our most intimate heart to God, that He might act upon us through His Son. For we are circumcised by Him ["the circumcision of Christ", Col. 2:11, spoken of as occurring at a specific point in time, "In whom you were circumcised", i.e. through the gift of the Spirit at baptism, which is in view in :12]. The idea of the Lord Jesus as the circumciser is perhaps present in Rom. 15:8, where the phrase "a minister of the circumcision" could imply He is the minister / priest who performs the circumcision. Receipt of the Spirit in our hearts, and the work of the Lord Jesus in our hearts, is therefore the equivalent of circumcision under the old covenant. Phil. 3:2,3 warn against accepting physical circumcision exactly because of this: "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by means of the spirit". The gift of the Spirit enables our serving of God. Notice that Paul talks of "we" as if he discounted his own circumcision as being of any meaning. "We", the truly circumcised, are those who are empowered by the Spirit to serve God.

Although in practice the priests circumcised children and proselytes, there is no Biblical statement about the place where circumcision was to be performed, nor by whom. This omission shows again the very personal nature of it, and that the meaning is not predicated upon the presence of standard religious dimensions such as place or priest / holy man performing it. Likewise the circumcision of the heart is very personal, performed without hands by the Lord, and is quite independent of church in every sense. The fact circumcision was not unique to Israelites ought to have made them realize that it spoke of something spiritual. It was practiced in Egypt, and Jer. 9:24,25 makes the point that Egypt, Edom, Moab and the Arab tribes were like Judah in that they were circumcised in the flesh but not in the heart.

All this is the very opposite of salvation by works or intellectualism. This is what makes us "a Jew", for if any man lack the spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Just as the uncircumcised were not part of God's people and were outside the covenant with Abraham, which is the new covenant (Gen. 17:13,14). But just as circumcision was unlike the visible cuttings in the flesh that defined some other tribes, so our covenant relationship with God is not immediately obvious to the world. We dress, speak, smell and appear as they do. But we are set aside for God in our hearts. Circumcision means to cut off, and the term is used about the condemnation of the wicked (Ps. 58:7; 90:6; 118:10-12). Self-circumcision therefore includes the recognition that we deserve death, a self-condemnation, that we might enter covenant relationship and eternal life. The flesh will be "cut off" in the day of final condemnation, and we do that to ourselves in this life. If we would judge / condemn ourselves now, with the breaking of bread as a help towards that, we will not be judged / condemned (1 Cor. 11:31).

Whose praise is not of men but of God- We will be praised by God in that He will ‘go through’ all our good deeds, when we fed the hungry and visited those in prison (Mt. 25:36). He will rejoice over us, glory in us, in the way that only a lover can over the beloved whom He views through eyes of love, counting perfection to us in His eyes (1 Cor. 4:5). This is the real meaning of being ‘Jewish’- for Paul is making a word play on the word ‘Jew’ coming from ‘Judah’, the praised one (Gen. 49:8).

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision?*- Whilst accepting Paul's Divine inspiration, I have always found the logic of this and the next few verses to be difficult and twisted. It's as if Paul wishes to say something nice about the Jews to as it were keep on board the Jews in his audience, having spoken against the significance of natural Jewishness so strongly in 2:27-29. But what he says there isn't quite compensated for by the reasoning he now comes out with- or so it seems to me. If natural descent is so irrelevant and Jewishness has been redefined, what real advantage is there, then, in being ethnically Jewish? "Advantage" translates a Greek word which is a superlative meaning more 'pre-eminence', 'exceeding abundance'. Paul appears to say that the Jews do have indeed such a superlative position; whereas elsewhere in this context Paul speaks as if the Jews are as sinful as or even more sinful than the Gentiles, and that both are "under sin" (Rom. 3:9). Both need baptism into Christ to be the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29). Paul's claim that their amazing blessing and advantage is because the Law was given to their fathers seems to strangely contradict the Law being elsewhere described as "weak and beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9), "weak through the flesh", whose glory was nothing, as dirty garments, compared to the excellency and surpassing wonder of Christ. I therefore suggest in the light of all this that we may be justified in reading Paul's words in Rom. 3:1,2 as a kind of sarcasm: "What superlative, amazing pre-eminence then has the Jew! Or what profit at all is there in being circumcised! Much every way, indeed! The important thing to note is that the oracles of God were firstly given to them…'- and then Paul builds on that point to speak of Israel's disobedience to those commandments, leading up to his crescendo of convicting Jew and Gentile as desperate sinners who must throw themselves upon God's grace.

3:2 *Much every way! First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God*- "Entrusted" is Gk. *pisteuo*, God had faith in Israel (3:3), in giving them the commandments. He believed in them. The God who can know the end from the beginning allowed His emotion of love to take such root in Him that He as it were allowed His omniscience to be limited, just as He at times limits His omnipotence; and He desperately believed in them. For loving someone elicits also faith and hope in them.

3:3 *For what if some were without faith?*- Israel never adopted atheism nor did they ever inform Yahweh He was no longer their national deity. Yet for all their professions of faith and loyalty to the temple cult, God viewed them as unbelievers. Or it could be that Paul's implication is that they did not believe in Christ, in their Saviour Messiah. In the context, "faith" is faith that God will save His people and forgive them by grace. For that is how "faith" is going to be used later in this chapter.

Shall their lack of faith make of no effect the faithfulness of God?- God's faith and hope in His people. See on Rom. 3:2. The awkward translations can make us miss the wonderful point here: Israel's unbelief didn't abolish [Gk.], do away with, make of no effect [AV], God's faith in Israel. Here we see His love, His grace; a faith and hope in

a weak other party which can only come from very deep love. They didn't believe in Him, but He didn't stop believing in them.

"Some" Jews didn't believe (Rom. 3:3); the majority, actually, but the Father is more gentle than that. The whole tragic history of God's relationship with Israel is a sure proof of His essentially positive character. Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him. The Angel told Moses that the people would probably want to come up the mountain, closer to God, when in fact in reality they ran away when they saw the holiness of God; almost suggesting that the Angel over-estimated their spiritual enthusiasm (Ex. 19:21-24 cp. 20:18). Likewise the Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe thee for ever" (Ex. 19:9). Things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21).

3:4 *God forbid. Yes, let God be found true*- Paul is continually using legal language. Let God be found [in a legal sense, through legal, forensic analysis] true [Gk.] and faithful by man's judgment of God. The amazing statement in 3:3- that God remains faithful even when we are not- is hard to believe. Paul understands our internal doubts as to the extent of God's grace as man effectively putting God in the dock and trying the veracity of His claims. In one of the finest paradoxes of all, Paul will go on in Romans to use this very legal language to describe how God the judge as it were turns it all around, puts man, us sinners, in the dock, and justifies us the humanly unjustifiable. And yet our lack of real faith in the certainty of our salvation, of the reality of His grace in Christ, is in fact putting God in the dock. And He answers up, and condemns us- and yet then saves us, we who sought to condemn Him.

But every man a liar- In that our false accusations against the real extent of God's saving grace are exposed as untrue and lies.

As it is written: You must be justified in Your words- God comes through the trial of His grace by doubting man as justified, declared right. And yet this very term is what Paul uses to describe how God declares us righteous in *His* judgment of us. We judge God, but in the end, God judges us.

And must prevail when You come before judgment [Gk.]- Prevail or "overcome" is the legal word for winning a case in court. The idea is "so that you may be victorious when you go to court". It is our doubts as to the extent of God's grace, that He abides faithful even throughout our unfaithfulness, which is effectively our bringing God to court, to judgment. Paul is here quoting Ps. 51:4, which were David's words of reflection upon his sin unto death, and God's forgiveness of him. He reflected that he had sinned *so that* God might be justified when He is brought to judgment by us. Again we are up against an amazing grace. God uses our sin, our doubt of His forgiveness, in order to declare Himself yet more righteous when He is put in the dock to answer against our false charges: 'Is He really able to forgive me *that*? Will He really not hold *this* eternally against me? Will I *really* be saved, sinner that I am? Can

God really accept *me* after what I have done, all I have failed to do as I should, all I have not been...?'. These are the kinds of questions with which we accuse God. Effectively the case against God's grace is that He will *not* actually forgive, justify and save weak sinners. And He gloriously wins the case against us. And He even uses our sin, as He used David's (who becomes a figure of us all), in order to prove this to us and to the world. And so, in a matchless logical *tour de force*, Paul triumphs in 3:5: "Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God", just as David sinned *so that* God's righteousness would be declared.

3:5 *But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God*- see on Rom. 3:4 "And overcome...". God commends His love to us in that when we were still sinners, Christ died for us, the just for unjust (Rom. 5:8). Thus on all sides we have God's saving love commended to us- by our own unrighteousness on the one hand, and by God's self-commendation of His desire to save us through giving His Son to die for us, taking the initiative whilst we were as yet unborn and still from His perspective "sinners". The Greek for "commend" means literally to place beside, e.g. Lk. 9:32 "the men that *stood with* him". God and man come to stand together in that court room. Our unrighteousness and His righteousness stand together. The accused [God] comes to stand together with the accusers [our doubts, sinful man]; and then the roles change, God becomes the accuser and we become the accused, and He through His love comes to again stand with us, having condemned and yet then justified us. Truly, even under inspiration, Paul is lost for words: "What shall we say?".

David recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying in Ps. 51:4: 'I sinned so that You might be justified...'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that " *our* unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God" - in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God…" is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

What shall we say? Is God unrighteous who visits with anger? (I speak after the manner of men)- "Visits with anger" is another legal term, 'to judicially afflict'. God would not be and is not wrong to press the case against our sin to its final term- vengeance, wrath, as will be seen at the final judgment. Would He be wrong to do this to us? Of course not.

3:6 *God forbid. For then how shall God judge the world?*- God will indeed take vengeance, press the legal case to its ultimate end, in condemning the unbelieving world. The judgment against sin cannot be minimized just because we know that it will not in fact be meted out upon those who believe in Christ- see on Rom. 3:5. I

prefer to translate this verse as an exclamation: “Because how much [i.e. ‘how severely!’] shall God judge the world!”.

3:7 *But if the Truth of God*- the profound truth of Rom. 3:4, that God is willing and eager to save sinners, to remain faithful when we are unfaithful (3:3).

Through my lie abounded to His glory- this is the same idea as in 3:5, that our unrighteousness actually commends the righteousness of God. Every man is a liar, a false accuser of God’s grace (3:4) in that we all doubt the reality of God’s saving grace for me personally. And Paul focuses on himself- he along with every man is one of those liars. Yet his doubt, his false accusation of God’s saving grace, only abounds unto God’s glory, in that God will and is finally justified in all this by forgiving, justifying and saving us.

Why am I also still judged as a sinner?- A reference to how his opponents judged him as a sinner. But as he elsewhere says, we are to pay no attention to how men judge us, because the only judgment worth anything is God’s (1 Cor. 4:3). If we are judged and justified by God, so what how men judge us?

3:8 *And why not do evil that good may come? (As some people slanderously charge us with saying*- Paul’s opponents repeated the gossip [“we be slanderously reported”] and fabricated primary evidence that they had actually heard Paul say [“and... affirm”] that therefore we should sin so that blessing would come from God. Note the legal language again- they were as it were putting Paul in the dock and making affirmations against him. Vilification is something which every preacher and teacher of the Gospel has to put up with, and we shouldn’t be surprised when we encounter it. Paul speaks of such slanderers and word twisters in very tough terms: “Whose damnation is just”. This of course is in the context of his having just pointed out that the legal condemnation of the unbelieving world is just and right. He perceived his critics within the ecclesia as actually being in the unbelieving world. He also sees their damnation as a present thing- human behaviour is played out before the judgment seat of God right now. It’s not that He is unaware of it and will only consider it at the future judgment seat. Slanderous words and fabricated evidence against God’s children is seen as an ‘affirmation’ made in the Divine court- and it will be judged with damnation.

Their condemnation is just)- To God, slanderers and false teachers within the ecclesia already are given their condemnation (Rom. 3:8). "The Lord shall judge the people... God judgeth (present tense) the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day... he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows" (Ps. 7:8,11-13). God is now judging men, and preparing their final reward. For the wicked, the arrow is prepared in the bow, the sword is sharpened- all waiting for the final day in which the present judgments will be executed.

3:9- see on Rom. 2:4.

What then? Are we better than they?- RV “in better case”, do we have a better legal case than them? The “they” could be the Gentiles- as if Paul is saying that we Jews have no better case than the Gentiles. In this case our retranslation of Rom. 3:1 see there would be the more justified- for Paul would be saying that actually Jews

have no real advantage over Gentiles. But the "they" contextually would more comfortably refer to the unbelieving world (3:6). We have no better case than them, because both Jew and Gentile are all sinners.

No, in no way. For we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Gentiles- To legally accuse, RV "laid to the charge". It is in fact God who does the accusing; but Paul for a moment sees us as on His side, accusing all humanity, ourselves included, of sin.

That they are all under sin-Paul alludes here when he says that "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). And yet he also draws the contrast between being "under the law" and now after baptism being "under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Paul sees himself from outside himself when he says that he has legally accused all men of being sinners- and he includes himself in that mass of humanity. Repeatedly, he wishes to emphasize that he too is a sinner and not, as the teacher, somehow separate from sinful humanity. He sets a great example to every teacher and preacher in the ecclesia. For he previously warned against the human tendency to assume that what happens to all men will somehow not happen to *me* (Rom. 2:2,3).
Paul speaks of both Jew and Gentile as being "under the power of sin" (Rom. 3:9 RSV) – which in itself suggests that he saw "sin" personified as a power. If sin is indeed personified by the Bible writers – what real objection can there be to the idea of this personification being at times referred to as 'Satan', the adversary? It has been argued that Paul was well aware of the concept of dualism which the Jews had picked up in Babylonian captivity, i.e. the idea that there is a 'Satan' god opposed to the true God; but he reapplies those terms to the conflict he so often describes between flesh and spirit, which goes on within the human mind.
3:10 The quotation from Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3 is about the fools who say in their heart that there is no God. Yet Paul applies this to every one of us, himself included. What he's doing here is similar to what he does at the end of Romans 1- he speaks of the grossest sins such as sexual perversion and reasons that we are all in essence guilty and condemned as serious sinners before God. Here he quotes passages which speak of effective atheism and applies them to us all, himself included- even though atheism was abhorrent to the Jews, and Paul may have seemed the last person to be an atheist. But the 'atheism' of Ps. 14:1 occurs within the psychological thought processes of the human mind- the fool says in his heart that there is no God. In the context of Romans, Paul is arguing that we call God a liar when we disbelieve His offer of justification and salvation. To deny this is to effectively say in our hearts that there is no God. If God is, then He is a Saviour God. To deny that He will save me is effectively to say He doesn't exist; for a God who won't save me may as well not exist. Far too many people claim some level of belief in God's existence, but in their hearts deny Him, in that they personally doubt whether His promised salvation is really true for me.

3:10 *As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one*- The "none righteous" connects with the fact that the Gospel is for both Jew and Gentile (:9). The Jews were not "the righteous", as Judaism loved to claim, because there is no single righteous person except the Lord Jesus. 'Righteousness' is a major concept in Judaism. "The righteous" is a term often used about faithful Jews. But Paul is saying that not one of them is righteous. All stand in need therefore of God's imputed righteousness, which is given by faith in the Lord Jesus and location within Him. The source passage of the quotation in Ps. 14:1-3 is saying that from God's viewpoint, He sees none righteous- even though Judaism declared their saints "righteous", this was not God's judgment. We note that Paul is quoting rather freely from the Septuagint; quotation and

interpretation are so often combined in Paul, as was the custom of the rabbis. The context of Psalm 14 appears to be of thanksgiving for salvation by grace, a salvation that was not deserved, seeing all men are sinners. And this of course is exactly Paul's context.

3:11 *There are none that understand*- In the context, understands, perceives, the reality that God will really save me. But not understanding is paralleled with sinning; 'understanding' in Hebrew thought referred to relationship. Thus to sleep with a woman was to 'know' her. This is not a lament over all the misguided theology and wrong interpretations of the Bible; rather is it a lament that sin has damaged the relationship of every man with his God.

There are none that seek God- Translating the Hebraism for 'to worship'. Nobody really grasps the reality of personal salvation and falls to the ground in worship as they should. If we would only let ourselves go and realize that His desire to save me is greater than my failure, that my sin is no barrier to His grace- we would be the most ecstatic and profoundly devoted worshippers of Him. But actually nobody really is like this, for their faith is not total and therefore their worship cannot be either, whatever outward appearance of ecstasy and profound expressions it may appear to have, in lyrics and music.

3:12 *They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable*- although quoting still from Ps. 14:1-3, the idea is very similar to "we like sheep have gone astray" (Is. 53:6). We sin because of our group mentality, the influence of others is so strong upon us, we sin because we are sheep who follow the rest of the flock rather than stand alone against sin. Peer pressure is simply far stronger than we can ever imagine. In the context, Paul is reading "all" and "together" as meaning that both Jew and Gentile have alike gone astray, united and undivided in their joint sinfulness, no matter how they may culturally differ in the flesh.

There is none that does good, no, not so much as one- The Greek word essentially means profitable, useful. The contrast is with how we are all become "unprofitable"- none is profitable to God. It's not that nobody ever does any good deed; rather the idea is that we are like the vine tree, not useful of ourselves to God (Ez. 15:2-6) unless He justifies us and makes us useful in His service.

3:13 *Their throat is an open tomb, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips*- The connection is surely with how Paul has said that all men, himself included, are liars (3:4,7). Yet the lie he had there in view was the lie that God will not save me, will not and cannot justify me as He has promised. And in this we falsely accuse God, putting Him in the dock. Paul talks of this in the harshest of language here, as if we are poison spitters, the seed of the serpent, in how we speak against God. This is a theme with Paul- to use exaggerated and extreme language about our disbelief and sinfulness.

Because of God's abhorrence of sin, sins of ignorance were still counted as offences against God, requiring atonement. This should really humble us- *if we are sensitive to this fact*. It therefore follows that we should lift up our voice for understanding of God's ways, for ignorant sin is still sin to Him- even though His judgment of us may possibly take into account our level of appreciation. In this context we should also be aware that God remembers unforgiven sin. Over time we can forget that we cursed

our wife on 6.6.96 or whenever and never bowed down in repentance. But He doesn't. The haziness of our memories can work as a kind of pseudo-atonement for us. With Him there is no distinction between past and present and future. The sin remains before Him. By the law comes the knowledge of sin *to men*, but this doesn't mean they aren't culpable for those sins before God (Rom. 3:20; 7:7)- for sins of ignorance still needed atonement. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 3:13) most likely means, in this light, that it is not imputed by those who do the sin. But God still notices… We only have to consider the passion of Peter's appeal to Israel in Acts 3:17-19: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did your rulers... repent ye *therefore*". His Jewish hearers would immediately have spotted the allusion back to the Mosaic protocol about what to do when you and your rulers realized you'd committed sins of ignorance. But the sacrifice required was now not an animal- it was the sacrifice of a broken heart and a baptism into Jesus.

It should be noted that verses 13-18 are quoting from the Septuagint of Psalm 14- they aren't found in the Hebrew text. Time and again the inspired New Testament writers quote from the LXX rather than the Hebrew Masoretic text, often preferring the LXX over the MT, and in this case accepting the LXX addition of verses which the MT omits. It's hard to gauge the wider significance of this. The LXX versions of the genealogies in Genesis would, e.g., not support the contention that the Genesis 1 creation occurred 4000 years before the birth of Christ.

3:14 *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*- This and Rom. 3:16 especially could be appropriate to the descriptions of the rejected at the day of judgment. The idea being that we are all rejected, for we are all sinners; but by grace, the believers in Christ have been declared righteous. We seem to have Paul declaring the sinfulness of humanity in the most graphic terms he can- quoting verses which immediately trigger the reaction: "But that's not quite true of me. I may be a sinner, but I don't do *that*", e.g. cursing and blaspheming all day long. I think this is intentional; for Paul writes very sensitive to his audience's likely reaction. It's similar to how he speaks about the grossest moral sins such as sexual perversion in chapter 1, and then proceeds to count us all guilty in essence. It's a powerful device to try to highlight to us all the extent of human sinfulness.

3:15 *Their feet are swift to shed blood*- Paul may be quoting this and applying it to us all in the sense that he gave full weight to the Lord's teaching that the hateful thought is as bad as murder. Or he may be wishing to shock us with the extent of our sinful position (see on Rom. 3:14).

Eliphaz thought there were only a few very sinful people in the world (Job 15:35); but His words are quoted by the Spirit in Is. 59:4 concerning the whole nation of Israel; and this in turn is quoted in Rom. 3:15-17 concerning the whole human race. This same path of progressive realization of our sinfulness must be trodden by each faithful individual, as well as on a communal level.

3:16 *Destruction*- Gk. 'a dashing to pieces', perhaps an allusion to how the stone of Messiah's second coming would dash the kingdoms of men to pieces at His return (Dan. 2:45; Rev. 2:27). But sinners are going now in way of such destruction. Damnation begins now- in the way of life people chose to live.

And misery are in their ways- The wretchedness of the condemned. But remember Paul is applying this to us all, as apart from Christ we are all sinners, even now living out our future condemnation. Yet Paul uses the very word about himself in Rom. 7:24: "O wretched [s.w. miserable] man that I am…", going on to exalt that Christ has saved him from that position, that misery, the misery of the condemned sinner. What is true of all humanity is true of Paul too- he repeatedly emphasizes his own personal share in the condemned human situation.

3:17 *And the way of peace have they not known*- Remember that Paul is writing to Christians who have known God's ways, convicting them that they with him are, naturally speaking, condemned and the most wretched of sinners. "Peace" in Paul's thought nearly always refers to peace with God through forgiveness and salvation in Christ. It is this which they have not known all the time they refuse to really believe that they have been forgiven and justified in Christ.

3:18 *There is no fear of God before their eyes*- Again, the language appropriate to the most hardened, atheistic blasphemer is being applied to all men, including Paul and all in Christ. This is Paul's attempt to shock us into a deeper realization of how serious our position is as sinners. He has already convicted us of in essence being no better than sexual perverts in chapter 1; he has applied the language of atheists to us in Rom. 1:28; 3:10. And now he as it were crowns it all by quoting a description of the very dregs of human society, who live with no fear of God, and applying it to us- we who fear His judgment and condemnation in our faithlessness that His grace is enough to save us. It's a paradox- if we fear God's judgment, not believing in His grace, then we are categorized along with those who have *no* fear of God.

Although I have argued that Paul is quoting from the LXX of Psalm 14 here in Rom. 3:13-18, it would seem that this verse is also quoting Ps. 36:1: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes". This has a strange appropriacy. David says that the sin of the wicked is speaking within *his* David's heart. This is the same spirit in which Paul is applying the descriptions of the very worst of humanity and admitting that in essence, this is what is going on within *his* heart and within the heart of every man. Truly, bad man only do what good mean dream of.

3:19 *Now we know that whatever things the law said, it speaks to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped*- "The law" here seems to be used in the Rabbinic sense of 'the OT scriptures'. There seems no sense if Paul is saying that the Law, the Scriptures he has just quoted, speak only to those "under the law", and that therefore the whole world is condemned and guilty before God. I think we have to read in some ellipses here; the Message seems to get it right: "This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place!". This would be continuing the theme of 2:2,3- that we are not to give in to the human tendency to assume that the consequences for all men because of sin will somehow not come upon us personally. See also on Rom. 2:21.

Those verses Paul has just quoted, speaking of the worst of sinners, apply to us all (3:9,10). Paul realizes we are prone to respond that no, that's not quite me… I'm not *that* bad. And so he has warned: "Whatever is written in these Scriptures is not

what God says about *others* but to *us*" [The Message]. The intention is that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God". The Greek for "stopped", according to Vine, refers to "the effect of overwhelming evidence upon an accused party in court". It is the speechlessness of the rejected of which the Lord speaks in Mt. 22:12. Each of us should so know our sinfulness that we really feel as if we are standing at the judgment seat of Christ and have been condemned. We, along with all the world, "become guilty", become sentenced [Gk.] before His judgment seat, right now. Only by having some sense of this will we be able to have any emotion of relief, joy, gratitude, praise, exaltation etc. at the wonder of having been declared right, accepted, by God's grace in Christ.

We can however interpret "the law" as the Law of Moses. Its' purpose was "so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). Paul is quoting here from Ps. 63:11: "the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped". He's reasoning that because we're all sinners, we're all liars- for untruth is the essence of sin. We are not being true to ourselves, to God, to His word, to our brethren… we profess covenant relationship with God, to be His people, and yet we fail to keep the terms of that covenant. And the Law of Moses convicted all God's people of this, and in this way led them to the need for Christ. Yet Is. 52:15 prophesied that the crucified Jesus would result in men shutting their mouths. The righteousness and perfection displayed there in one Man, the very human Lord Jesus, has the same effect upon us as the Law of Moses- we shut our mouths, convicted of sin.

And all the world- Rom. 3:19 (A.V.mg.) defines "all the world" as those "subject to the judgment of God" - which is only the responsible. The Lord Jesus took away the sin "of the world", but the Jews died in their sins; "the world" whose sins were taken away is therefore the world of believers. "Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one of us shall give account" (Rom. 14:11,12) is another example- 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of us the responsible'. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men" (Tit. 2:11)- certainly not to every human being that has ever lived; but to the "all men" of the new creation. For not "all men" will be saved. The Lord tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9)- for every one who has a representative part in His sacrifice through baptism. Christ "reconciled the world" in that He obtained forgiveness for us (2 Cor. 5:19)- we are "the world" which was reconciled, we are the "all things" purged by His blood (Heb. 9:22). 1 Cor. 4:9 seems to make a difference between "the world" and "men", as if Paul is using "the world" here as meaning 'the world of believers'. The Lord was "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6), although it was only us, the redeemed, who were ransomed by Him out of sin's slavery (Lk. 1:68; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 8:13; Rev. 5:9; 14:3,4). The "all flesh" upon whom the Spirit was poured out in the first century was clearly enough a reference to those who believed and were baptized (Acts 2:17).

May be brought under the judgment of God- Sodom being a type of latter day events, it is not surprising that Scripture provides a wealth of detail concerning Sodom. The Genesis record summarizes what we glean from later revelation by saying that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen. 13:13). "Before the Lord" recalls the earth being "corrupt before God" prior to the flood (Gen. 6:11), another clear type of the last days. Indeed their sin being "before the Lord" may

hint that Lot (or Abraham?) had preached God's requirements to them, and therefore they were consciously disobeying Him. Thus Rom. 3:19 speaks of the world becoming "guilty before God" (AV) by reason of their having the opportunity to know God's word (cp. Rom. 2:12,13).

3:20 *Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin*- "Because" is AV "Therefore". Because we are convicted sinners facing condemnation, no good works we do in other areas can change the outcome nor displace the sins we have already committed. 'Just' one sin brings death, as evidenced by the sin of Adam and Eve. "Guilty before God" in 3:19 is reflected by "[not] justified in His sight" in 3:20. Because we are already standing dumbstruck and declared guilty before Him, we cannot be now declared right, it can't all be made OK, by doing some other good works according to that same system of law parts of which we broke. If you murder your neighbour and stand in court condemned for it, you can't put it all right by then doing the good deed of mowing your other neighbour's lawn and taking his garbage to the dump. Indeed, trying to obey "the law" in one aspect isn't going to declare us right when that same system of law condemns us. The only possible way to 'get right' would be to somehow get to the judge through another paradigm than obedience or disobedience to the law. And this is exactly what Paul is building up to. For the Judge of all the earth Himself thought up such a way. Seeing that "by the law is the knowledge of sin", or as 1 Cor. 15:56 puts it "the strength of sin is the law", a way simply has to be found for our salvation which doesn't depend upon our obedience or disobedience to the law.

3:21 *But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets*- *"*A righteousness of God" is a poor translation which is out of harmony with the context of 3:20 [see there]. The idea is that the justification of God, the way God sets a person right, without reference to the law, outside the paradigm of law- is in fact revealed (RV "has been manifested", already) within the Old Testament prophets and the Law of Moses itself. The Old Testament scriptures are described with yet another legal term- they are right now witnessing in court, attesting. It's as if we stood in the dock condemned and silent before God; but then the very law which we had broken and the Scriptures themselves take the witness box- and offer a way for us to be declared right.

3:22 *Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all them that believe. For there is no distinction*- God's way of putting us right operates through our faith in [RV, Gk.] Jesus Christ, which Paul will later define more concretely in chapter 6 as baptism into His death and resurrection; for this is what constitutes in the first instance our believing into Christ. Whoever, any human being, who believes into Him will be counted right by God. And therefore "all", "any", who believe will be saved, there is no difference or distinction between them in terms of their being Jew or Gentile. The same word is used in this connection in Rom. 10:12.

On the level of translation, it should be noted that "faith in Jesus Christ" [a subjective genitive] is literally "the faith of Jesus Christ", and could as well mean 'On account of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'. This may well be preferable, because the common reading appears to otherwise be a tautology: 'Through faith in Jesus Christ to all that them that have faith [in Jesus]'.

3:23 *For all have sinned*- the context suggests that the enormity of our condemned position before God should mean that we do not uphold any human distinctions between us, e.g. on ethnic grounds. "All" here, as in :22, is referring in the context to 'Jew and Gentile, every human being'. Perceiving the enormity of our sin, how we are all in this together, and the wonder of God's saving grace, ought to be the most powerful inspiration to unity known to humanity. The "all" who have sinned could refer to 'all believers in Christ' which is the subject of the preceding verse 3:22; and 3:24 suggests that this same "all" are those who are justified freely by His grace.

And all fall short of the glory of God- We have all already sinned [aorist past tense] and we do now [present tense] fall short of God's glory, i.e. the complete perfection, the glory of God which was seen in the person of His Son (2 Cor. 4:6). God declared His glory to Moses in terms of His character (Ex. 33:18 cp. Ex. 34:4-6). We fall short of that perfection of the Father's character which was revealed in its fullness in His Son. Heb. 12:15 uses the same Greek word for "come / fall short" in warning lest any man "fail / fall short of the grace of God". We come far short of God's glory, but we are not to fall short of His grace whereby the righteousness of His Son, His glory, is counted to us and we are thereby declared right with Him. Jewish writings such as the Apocalypse of Moses 20.2 and 21.6 claimed that Adam "came short of the glory of God" by his sin in Eden; Paul is clearly alluding to this and is saying that Adam is everyman, we each are as Adam in Eden, with the tidal wave of realization breaking upon us as to the seriousness and eternal consequence of our so easily committed sin. It must be remembered that the Jewish writings frequently paralleled Adam with Israel [N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) pp. 18-40 for documentation]. But Paul is arguing that Adam is every single human being, not just Israel. For Adam was created well before Israel, and all humanity are his offspring, not just Israel. The universal experience of sinfulness therefore leads to the offer of God's grace to all types of human being, not just Israel; and there will be an ensuing unity between those who believe in this grace, regardless of their ethnic background.

The Bible itself continually reflects a distinction in the mind of God between the person and the behaviour, the sin and the sinner. When we allow ourselves to be offended and to offend others, we have ceased to make that differentiation. We so easily equate the person and their behaviour, and thus they offend us. Consider how we are in the habit of saying: "We're all sinners". You may think I'm being pedantic, but Rom. 3:23 says otherwise- that "all have sinned". And there's a slight and subtle difference. We have committed sin, and therefore we can be called sinners. But the Biblical focus is on the action committed rather than the branding of the person with a label.

3:24 *But are justified freely by His grace*- Gk. 'without a cause / reason, as a gift'. We are justified, declared right in our court case, for no reason. This declaring right is therefore by the purest grace imaginable. The same word is used of how we should freely, without a human reason, preach the Gospel (Mt. 10:8; 2 Cor. 11:7); our receipt of such a "free" salvation should naturally inspire us to share it with others in the same spirit. Any form of charging for the Gospel, getting personal benefit or glory out of sharing it with others, is absolutely outlawed. The free nature of the grace we have received must be reflected in our sharing it with others in the same spirit; God's

giving to us has to be translated in our giving to others. Sharing the Gospel isn't, therefore, an irksome duty, something we salve our conscience with, something we are asked to participate in by a church leadership team; but a natural personal outflowing of the free gift we have received.

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus- We are declared right here and now, we receive redemption in that our sins are forgiven (Eph. 1:7); but redemption is in fact a process, culminating in the redemption of our body at the return of Christ, the final change from mortality to immortality in a corporeal, literal sense (s.w. Rom. 8:23), in "the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

3:25 *Whom God set forth* -"Whom God put forward as a place of atonement by his blood" (NRSV margin) seems to be the right sense. The reference is to the mercy seat, not to the sacrificed animal. Vincent comments: "The word is used by Herodotus of exposing corpses (v. 8); by Thucydides of exposing the bones of the dead (ii. 34)". The sense of public display is picked up later in the verse in the word "declare". Crucifixion is by its very nature a public event. There was once a doctor in Paraguay who spoke out against human rights abuses. Local police took their revenge by torturing his teenage son to death. The local people wanted to stage a huge protest march, but the father disallowed them and chose another means of protest. At the funeral, the father displayed his son's body as it was when retrieved from jail- naked, scarred from electric shocks, cigarette burns and beatings. And the body was displayed not in a coffin but on the blood-soaked prison mattress. This public display of a body was the most powerful witness and incitement possible. And the public nature of the display of God's tortured son was for the same basic reason. "He was manifested, that he might put sins away" (1 Jn. 3:5) could suggest that in His atoning death, 'He' was manifested. There God set forth Jesus in His blood, for all to see and respond to (Rom. 3:25 Gk.). There the real essence of Jesus was publicly shown forth. And there we come to know what love is (1 Jn. 3:16).

To be a propitiation- The Greek word *hilasterion* doesn't *have* to specifically mean "mercy seat" / atonement cover, with reference to the ark's cover, even though this is how it is translated in Hebrews 9:5 and how it is used in the LXX. The idea is essentially a place of atonement or the atonement victim, the sacrificed animal. Instead of that place of blood sprinkling, obscurely hidden away on the top of the atonement cover [on the ark of the covenant within the Most Holy Place which the High Priest saw only once per year], God through the cross set forth publicly, He declared, the place of atonement to be in the very publicly displayed blood of His Son. The public nature of crucifixion therefore was appropriate. The Son of Man had to be, therefore, "lifted up" (Jn. 3:14) so that He could and can be believed in. Rom. 3:25 states that the Lord in His death was "set forth to be a propitiation". Graham Jackman comments: "Though the primary meaning of the word 'set forth' (*protithemi*) seems to be that of 'determining' or 'purposing', another sense, albeit not in the New Testament, is said to be that of exposing the bodies of the dead to public view, as in a lying in state". See on Mk. 15:29.

We note too that *hilasterion* is used in a passage in 4 Maccabees 17:21,22, which is so similar that Paul is surely alluding to it. The blood of the seven slain, martyred brothers is seen as a *hilasterion* for the sins of Israel: "Through the blood of those righteous men and their propitiatory death *[hilasterion],* the Divine providence delivered Israel". Writing as Paul was against a background of Jewish nationalism and

appeal to their Maccabean heroes, Paul is making the point that it is the blood of Jesus, and not the blood of martyred Jewish rebels, which alone can atone for Israel's sin. We can take the lesson that nothing else at all can really deal with our sin. Not self help, "love yourself" philosophy, not association with some current of historical or national identity... only the blood of Jesus.

Through faith in his blood, to show His righteousness in the passing over of the sins done previously- See on "set forth". But the word also carries the sense of setting forth evidence, proof. The legal flavour could possibly suggest that the blood of Christ, His death upon the cross, is brought forth as a proof in the court case that actually, we really have been declared in the right. Whilst Christ's death was multifactorial, it would be true to say that God could have saved us any way He chose, without being forced, as it were, to have a begotten Son who was publicly crucified. Maybe He did this because He so wishes us to believe, and He wanted to commend His love in all its depth and costliness as publicly as possible, so that we would indeed perceive and believe it. "Through faith in his blood" certainly invites us to focus upon His blood, and the nature of the communion meeting encourages us in that. "God has publicly displayed Christ as a propitiation in his [Christ's] blood". But it was not the red liquid of itself of course, but the perfect life represented by it. And yet because we are human, we need some visual symbol upon which to focus. We have this in the communion wine.

God's method of declaring us right deals with the sins "that are past", for which we stand condemned before His judgment seat with no way to make amends; and also "at this time" (3:26), right now, we are declared righteous by status, declared in the right, if we are believers into Jesus.

In the forbearance of God- We shall all be saved by the forbearance of God, hence we should not deny to others the forbearance of God. Hence in Rom. 2:4 the same word is used, in stating that those who condemn their brethren are despising the forbearance of God, in that they are assuming that His forbearance can't apply to the person whom they have condemned. If we are saved by God's gracious forbearance, it's not for us to deny this to another.

3:26 *For the showing of His righteousness at this present time*- See on Rom. 3:25. As discussed below, His justice / righteousness is displayed by forgiving by grace. But this requires a radical redefinition of "justice" far away from any sense of punitive justice, whereby justice is 'done' through punishment. For the wages of sin is eternal death. Justice has to be redefined, and it is, in the cross. Just as "love" was given a whole new dimension when we were given the "new commandment" to love *as Christ loved us*. The otherwise colourless word *agape* was loaded with a radically new significance, just as "justice" and "atonement" are now to be radically redefined.

That He might Himself be just- the whole process of justifying sinners is achieved without infringing upon the justice and integrity of God. Quite how… isn't explained (although I am aware of many attempts to explain it, but they all seem to fail). I think we are asked to accept this on faith.

And the justifier- God's plan of declaring us right takes care of our past sins (Rom. 3:25), right now "at this time" declares us right, and will justify us at the coming day

of judgment. The idea is that in our court hearing, we are declared 'just' or 'right'. We receive not only the word of pardon from the judge of all, but we are actually rehabilitated and declared 'right'. This is the wonder of it all; that this is also done in an ultimately 'right' or 'just' way. And yet all that is within us cries out that pardon is one thing, but sinners being declared 'just' is far from 'just' and right. But here we are deeply challenged- our view of rightness, of justice, must crumble beneath this new justice which is made possible through the never before experienced power of God's love toward us in Jesus. Never did love and atonement come to such term- that the concept of justice itself should be reframed and redefined. Forgiveness likewise is redefined. We have been not only forgiven, but so deeply cleansd that we are now declared right.

All this talk about being justly justified is really a way of saying that the cleansing work of Jesus is more powerful than any atonement or forgiveness known to man. Human forgiveness of each other cannot erase guilt, nor can it of itself declare the guilty to be spotlessly innocent. But the forgiveness of God through Jesus can do this. It is to such an extent that the sinner is justly declared just and righteous, despite being a sinner. We are not just 'let off'. We are rehabilitated and justified as just men, when we were sinners and deeply guilty. This is why Paul at this point in Romans continually argues that it is the blood of Jesus which makes all this possible. He has stated in :25 that the blood of Jesus is publically exhibited in the court room as evidence, a legal exhibit, of our justification. No human court would ever accept that. But here we have a radical redefinition of justice and evidence, to the point that the judge imputes His own righteousness to the accused. And of course the judge is not impartial- the accused has sinned against the judge personally, for all sin is ultimately against God. There can therefore be no impartial legal process. God is involved at all points.

Of him that has faith in Jesus- "Faith in Jesus" is hardly a legal basis upon which to justify and rehabilitate a convicted criminal. But that's how things work in God's court. And for us, that is all the ultimately matters. The non-Christian will understandably complain. All this makes no sense. How can a man who abused children be counted righteous and enthused about? No justice, in a human sense, appears to have been done. But then human 'justice' is flawed. As hurt people leave a court room and are interviewed about their feelings concerning their abuser, they at times will say they are satisfied that justice has been done and seen to be done. But whilst that may provide a little cosmetic comfort, the damage has still been done, and the clock cannot be turned back. Human justice still fails to address the real issues. Admittedly, it is going to be hard for a non-Christian to accept that their abuser is now seen by God as just because of "faith in Jesus". And here we are down to the simple reality that the believer in Christ lives in a different culture, speaking another language and understanding things totally differently... to the unbeliever. It's a difference as radical as that between light and darkness. That's why believers should only marry believers. The gap in thought and culture is so chasmic and total.

It’s rare for Paul to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as simply “Jesus” with no title. Perhaps he is trying to bring out the simplicity of it all- that by believing in the very human Jesus, a man of our nature with one of the commonest names amongst first century Palestinian Jews, i.e. ‘Jesus’, we really can be declared right before God. The style of :24-26 is such that it has been suggested that this is an early Christian formula which was well known amongst the Christians. This would explain why Paul uncharacteristically refers to "Jesus" rather than "the Lord Jesus" as he usually does.

3:27 *Where then is the glorying? It is excluded*- The Jewish boasting about obedience to the Mosaic Law of Rom. 2:17. If we are saved by grace, any feelings of superiority are excluded. "It is excluded" is a mild way of translating the aorist- the sense is that boasting has once for all been cut off, ended, excluded; by the death of Christ, and by that moment when we believed into Christ, and stood declared righteous before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul must refer to boasting in a wrong sense, a boasting in our works and obedience; for he uses the word quite often in his letters of his boasting of God's grace, and of the faithfulness of other brethren which had been inspired by that grace (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:4; 11:10,17).

By what manner of law? Of works?- Boasting in the sense of feeling superior to others hasn't been excluded by law, i.e. it's not that we no longer boast because there's a law that says 'You shall not boast'. It has been cut off by the law or principle of salvation by faith rather than works. This simple reality, that we really are saved, not by works but by faith in God's grace through Jesus, is so powerful that it quite naturally excludes boasting.

3:28- see on Rom. 2:26.

We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law- The legal sense of the word refers to the summing up of a court case. Here again, Paul assumes the role of judge. The summary of the case is that a man is declared right by God on account of his faith in God's grace and the blood of Christ. This is "without", quite apart from, any acts of obedience to law.

3:29 *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*- Paul brings out the practical implications of the doctrine of justification by faith in God's grace. Seeing that all men are sinners, and the basis of salvation is our faith in His grace through the blood of Christ- there can be no basic division between believers. God becomes "the God" of those He has saved, that seems to be implication- and so He isn't the God of only the Jews.

The Roman concept of *religio* allowed each subject nation to have their own gods, so long as the cult of the emperor was also worshipped. But Rom. 3:29 states that the God of Israel was the one God of the Gentiles too. This is in sharp distinction to the way the Romans thought of the god of the Jews as just another national deity. Caesar was king of many subject kings, Lord of many conquered and inferior lords. In this we see the radical challenge of 1 Tim. 6:15,16: that Jesus Christ is the *only* potentate, the Lord of Lords, the King of all Kings.

3:30 *Since God is one*- The belief which the Jews held most dear; they felt that their monotheism divided them from the rest of the world. But it is the fact that there's only one God which binds together Jew and Gentile believers in Christ; for that one God justifies each human being on the same basis. The seriousness of our personal positions and the wonder of His saving grace is such that any ethnic difference between us becomes irrelevant.

That God is one is not just a numerical description. If there is only one God, He therefore demands our *all*. Because He is the One God, He demands all our worship; and because He is One, He therefore treats all His people the same, regardless, e.g., of

their nationality (Rom. 3:30). All true worshippers of the one God, whether Jew or Gentile, are united in that the one God offers salvation to them on the same basis. The fact there is only one Lord Jesus implies the same for Him (Rom. 10:12). Paul saw these implications in the doctrine of the unity of God. But that doctrine needs reflecting on before we come to grasp these conclusions.
Paul, writing to those who thought they believed in the unity of God, had to remind them that this simple fact implies the need for unity amongst us His children, seeing He treats us all equally as a truly good Father: " If so be that God is one... he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and [likewise] the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. 3:30 RV). Unity amongst us is inspired by the fact that God seeks to be one with us, exactly because He is Himself 'unity', one in Himself. The Rabbis have always been at pains to point out the somewhat unusual grammar in the record of creation in Genesis 1, which literally translated reads: "One day... a second day... a third day", rather than 'One day... two days... three days', as we'd expect if 'Day one' solely referred to 'firstness' in terms of time. "The first day" (Gen. 1:5) therefore means more strictly 'the day of unity', in that it refers to how the one God sought unity with earth. "*Yom ehad,* one day, really means the day which God desired to be *one* with man... the unity of God is a concern for the unity of the world".

He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith- The Greek words *ek* ["by"] and *dia* faith [AV "through"] may simply be being used in parallel, meaning effectively the same thing, as they are in Gal. 2:16. "The circumcision" refers to Jewish Christians who believed; "the uncircumcision" is perhaps also a technical term, in this context, for believing Christian Gentiles.

3:31 *Do we then make the law of no effect through faith? God forbid. No, we establish the law*- Consider where the same word is used in the context of showing that the Law has indeed been 'made void' or done away: Rom. 7:2, we are "loosed" from the Law, "delivered from the Law" (Rom. 7:6), the Law was "done away" (2 Cor. 3:11), "abolished" (2 Cor. 3:13), "done away" (2 Cor. 3:14), "abolished… the law of commandments" (Eph. 2:15). Clearly enough, the Law is indeed "made void"- by the death of Christ. The emphasis should therefore be on the fact that it is not *us* ("we"), who made it void. We as lawbreakers have no right to simply abrogate Divine Law, to void it because we broke it and we want to avoid the consequences. It can only be done by the Divine lawmaker and His Son. Our faith in Him and His saving grace doesn't mean that *we* make the law void; we by our sinfulness and acceptance of it do in fact establish or 'make to stand' Divine law. Paul is anticipating the objections of his Jewish audience- that he was teaching that sinners could merely abrogate the Law they had broken. We sense how on the back foot Paul was- his critics must have been persistent, and his stress level must have been very high by constantly seeking to anticipate their objections and parry them [did he actually need to have done this?]. By believing in God's grace in Christ and not trying to get justification from keeping the Law of Moses, we are in a strange way fulfilling the "righteousness of the law" (Rom. 8:4). It may be that Paul here is using "law" as a reference to the Old Testament scriptures generally, which he has been quoting so freely to prove his point (he uses "law" like this in Rom. 3:19,21; although "law" in the first half of 3:31 seems to refer to the Mosaic Law specifically).

"Think not that I am come to destroy ("to make void", Darby's Translation) the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mt. 5:17) has some kind of unconscious, hard to define link with Rom. 3:31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law". The Greek words for "destroy"

and "make void" are different; yet the similarity of phrasing and reasoning is so similar. I can't pass this off as chance, yet neither can I say there is a conscious allusion here. There is, therefore, what I will call an 'unconscious link' here.

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *What then shall we say*- Paul's frequent "What then shall we say to this?" occurs at least 5 times in Romans alone (Rom. 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14,30)- and this is the classic phrase used by Jewish teachers at the end of presenting their argument to their students. Seeing then that Paul writes in a rabbinic way, as if He is giving a stream of *Midrash* on earlier, familiar writings [e.g. the words of Jesus or the Old Testament], we should be looking for how he may quote or allude to just a word or two from the Lord, and weave an interpretation around them.

About Abraham our forefather- Paul was writing to Jewish and Gentile believers. Yet he speaks of "our" father as if he's writing mainly to Jews here- but see on Rom. 4:11. Alternatively, it could be that Paul in wishing to be as personal as possible in addressing his readers is referring to Abraham as "our father" in the sense that he personally was Jewish. Paul in this section is now exemplifying what he has taught so far in Romans from the example of Abraham. This whole 'Abraham' section is written in the style of Rabbinic Midrash, with Gen. 15:6 as the verse being expounded. Paul's point is that Jewish and Gentile believers can trace themselves back to Abraham because the family likeness is in faith not circumcision. Jewish proselytes were forbidden to call Abraham "our father" (C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (New York: Scribner's, 1962) p. 31.).

According to the flesh- The same Greek phrase is used five times in Romans 8 in the negative sense of "according to the flesh". The suggestion may be that walking according to the flesh rather than the Spirit was related to placing meaning on the fact that Abraham was a fleshly ancestor. Being or emphasizing ones' Jewishness was therefore related to *un*spirituality, whereas the Jews thought that being Jewish was a sign of spirituality. Paul's style was so radical, but then so are the demands of the grace which has saved us.

Hath found [KJV]- In the context of Rom. 3:27,28, what has he found to boast / glory about? The answer is- nothing, according to his works.

4:2 *If Abraham was justified by works*- As the Jews said he was. Jubilees 23:10: "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well pleasing in righteousness". Indeed some of the Jewish writings claimed Abraham never sinned.

He has something to boast about- Alluding to Sirach 44:19, which says about Abraham in the context of his good works: "None has been found like him in glory". This allusion to and deconstruction of other writings is something which Paul does quite often- and probably even more frequently, if we had access to more first century texts from which to perceive his allusions. Significantly, Sirach is in the Apocrypha, but Paul evidently disagrees with the book and shows it teaches wrongly about Abraham. This would possibly confirm the Protestant tradition of rejecting the Apocryphal books as inspired, although the recorded words of men in the canonical books are also of course quoted and deconstructed. But the quotation from Sirach is from the actual words of Ben Sira, which are claimed to be directly inspired.

But not before God- Before the judgment throne of God, of which Paul has been speaking in chapter 3, especially 3:19. He demonstrated there that all humanity, Abraham included, stand shamed and speechless before God. The idea that Abraham was sinless is therefore disputed strongly by Paul. The Greek phrase "before God" occurs several times in Romans. Because we are justified by faith, we have peace "before God" [AV "with God", Rom. 5:1]. The practical section of Romans brings out what we ought to do, therefore, with that position- Paul prayed for Israel "before God" (AV "to God", Rom. 10:1), and he urges the believers to likewise pray "before God" (AV "to God", Rom. 15:30). If we are justified, declared right before God by grace, then as we stand there in His presence with His gracious acceptance, we ought to from that place beg His mercy for others. This is the practical outcome of the courtroom parable. We stand there accepted, with the judge lovingly smiling at us in gracious acceptance, with nothing now laid to our charge, declared right with God; and what should we then do? We who have peace before God should whilst before God, beg Him for mercy upon others. Job is really a working model for us in all this. He said the *wrong* things about God, as Elihu points out on God's behalf; and yet before God's awesome throne he was declared right, as if he had spoken what was right; and then he prays for his friends.

4:3 *What did the Scripture say..?*- The Bible as a living word continues to speak with us, in part of an ongoing dialogue between God and man.

And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness- The Greek word for "counted" occurs very often in this section. Significantly, Rom. 3:28 says that we are to conclude [s.w. "count"] that we are justified by faith rather than works. We are to view ourselves, impute to ourselves, as God does. His view of us is to be our view of ourselves. The Septuagint uses this word with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ's death on the cross] being "reckoned" to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to "reckon" his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only "in Christ", for them "to live is Christ". They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Abraham's weakness at the time of the Genesis 15 promises is perhaps behind how Paul interprets the star-gazing incident in Rom. 4:3-5. He is answering the Jewish idea that Abraham never sinned (see on Rom. 4:2). He quotes the incident, and God's counting of righteousness to Abraham, as proof that a man with no "works", nothing to glory before God with, can believe in God to "justify the ungodly", and thereby be counted righteous. Understanding Abraham's mood as revealed in Gen. 15:1-4 certainly helps us see the relevance of all this to Abraham. And it helps us see Abraham more realistically as the father of us all... and not some Sunday School hero, well beyond our realistic emulation. No longer need we think "Abraham? Oh, yeah, Abraham... faith... wow. But me... nah. I'm not Abraham...". He's for real, truly our example, a realistic hero whom we can cheer and pledge to follow. For Abraham is an

example to us of God's grace to man, and a man in all his weakness and struggle with God accepting it and believing it, even when he is "*un*godly", rather than a picture of a white-faced placid saint with unswerving faith:
"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, hath found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:1-5).

It is in the very struggle for faith that we have that we show ourselves to have the family characteristic of Abraham. That moment when the "ungodly", doubting, bitter Abraham believed God's promise is to be as it were our icon, the picture we rise up to: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:6,7). The struggle within Abraham at the time is brought out by Paul in Rom. 4:18-24, which seems to be a kind of psychological commentary upon the state of Abraham's mind as he stood there looking at the stars in the presence of God / an Angel ("before him [God] whom he believed", Rom. 4:17): "Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead".

It may be that Abraham realised his own spiritual weakness at this time, if we follow Paul's argument in Rom. 4:3,5: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory... (but) Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness... to him (alluding to Abraham) that worketh not, but believeth (as did Abraham) on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (like Abraham's) is counted for righteousness". Surely this suggests that Abraham felt *ungodly* at the time, unworthy of this great promise, recognizing he only had moments of faith, and yet he believed that although he was ungodly, God would justify him and give him the promise, and therefore he was counted as righteous and worthy of the promise. There is certainly the implication of some kind of forgiveness being granted Abraham at the time of his belief in Gen. 15:6; righteousness was imputed to him, which is tantamount to saying that his ungodliness was covered. In this context, Paul goes straight on to say that the same principles operated in the forgiveness of David for his sin with Bathsheba. It would actually appear that Paul is writing here, as he often does, with his eye on deconstructing popular Jewish views at the time. Their view of Abraham was that he was perfect, "Godly" in the extreme- and Paul's point is that actually he was not, he was "ungodly", but counted righteous not by his acts but by his faith.

4:4 *Now to him that works*- the same word for “works” is used in Mt. 25:16, where we are to trade or ‘work’ with our talents and will be judged for the quality of that working. The point surely is that we will be saved by grace, not works; and yet our works in response to that grace will be judged, and will determine the nature of the

eternity, the salvation, which we enjoy- reigning over 10 or five or two cities etc. By a sublime paradox, the "work" we are to do is to believe in Jesus (Jn. 6:28-30). So here in Rom. 4:4 we have to again read in an ellipsis: "He that [trusts in] works [for his justification]".

The reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt- The only other time the word occurs in the New Testament is in the request for our debts [i.e. sins] to be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). We are in debt to God, to suggest He is in debt to us is bizarre- as bizarre as thinking that we can be justified by our works rather than His grace.

4:5 *But to him that works not, but believes in Him*- The content of Abraham's faith was in the promise just given him that he would have a great descendant, the Lord Jesus, who would become many. The content of our faith in Christ which results in justification is the same. Note that Abraham wasn't presented with a complex theology of Christ which he had to say "yes" to. He was presented with very simple facts concerning Jesus- that He would be the future descendant of Abraham, and through connection with Him, blessing would be received and eternal inheritance of the earth. This is the same basic content of the faith in Christ which we are asked to have.

That justifies the ungodly- Abraham, whom the Jews argued was sinless and Godly because of his works (see on 4:2). The word is used about gross sinners (e.g. Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:18). Again, Paul is using extreme language to demonstrate how serious is sin; a man like Abraham whom we would consider a Godly man was in fact ungodly- because he was a sinner.

His faith is reckoned for righteousness- Paul comments that he persecuted the Christian church "zealously" (Phil. 3:6). He was alluding to the way that Phinehas is described as 'zealous' for the way in which he murdered an apostate Jew together with a Gentile who was leading him to sin (Num. 25). Note that the Jews in Palestine had no power to give anyone the death sentence, as witnessed not only by the record of the trial of Jesus but Josephus too (*Antiquities* 20.202; *BJ* 2.117; 6.302). Paul was a criminal murderer; and he had justified it by saying that he was the 1st Century Phinehas. Ps. 106:30 had commented upon the murder performed by Phinehas, that his zeal "was accounted to him for righteousness". This sets the background for the converted Paul's huge emphasis upon the fact that *faith* in Jesus is what is "reckoned for righteousness", and it is in *this* way that God "justifies the unGodly" (Rom. 4:3-5; 5:6; Gal. 3:6). Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as him- passionately obsessed with going about our justification the *wrong* way, and having to come to the *huge* realization that righteousness is *imputed* to us by our faith in the work of Jesus.

4:6 *Even as David pronounces blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness*- The Greek idea is of 'beatification', making a man into a saint. This exalted language, the kind of thing the Rabbis did only for stellar examples of spirituality like Abraham and David, is actually the process which happens to every man who believes in Christ.

I've often asked myself *how* exactly the Mosaic Law led people to Christ. Was it not that they were convicted by it of guilt, and cried out for a Saviour? "The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that… grace might reign… unto eternal life by Jesus" (Rom. 5:20,21). This was the purpose of the Law. And thus Paul quotes David's rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from "he" to "they" (Rom. 4:6-8). David's personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know the true 'blessedness' of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1), David wrote, after experiencing God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing "the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David's position. The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to "Blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point.

Apart from works, saying- In that there was no defined sacrifice for David to offer to atone for the murder of Uriah and adultery. We stand speechless and defenceless before the judgment seat of God in the same way. Again we see Paul urging us to accept the depth of our sinfulness- the position of a man guilty of adultery and murder is that of each of us.

4:7 *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*- This is perhaps the thread of connection between the examples of Abraham and David. Abraham believed God's promise of blessing (which the New Testament interprets as forgiveness and salvation, e.g. Acts 3:25,26); he received the blessing for no works he had done, but simply because he believed. David likewise received a similar blessing- just because he believed.

4:8 *Blessed is the man*- Connects with "blessed are *they*" (4:7). David becomes representative of us all.

To whom the Lord will not count sin- A double negative in the Greek, He absolutely will not count us as sinners!

4:9 *Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, to Abraham his faith was counted as righteousness*- Is paralleled with "righteousness" in the second half of the verse. Paul's reasoning is that Abraham was uncircumcised when he received this blessing of righteousness, therefore circumcision is irrelevant. But the implication is that Abraham received the blessing, the righteous standing, immediately upon his belief, right there and then. Because the crux of the argument is that he received these things whilst uncircumcised. We therefore should be able to rejoice here and now that we right now are counted righteous before God's judgment throne.

4:10 *How then was it counted? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision*- The question is how, and not when. How, in what manner was righteousness reckoned- obviously not thanks to circumcision.

4:11 *And he received the sign of circumcision*- Circumcision was a sign given as a testament or seal to the faith Abraham had before he was circumcised, the faith which justified and saved him. Circumcision itself, therefore, was nothing to do with his justification. Paul appears to be labouring his points somewhat, but he was up against a colossally strong Jewish mindset that considered circumcision itself to be what saves and defines a person as God's. The "seal" which we now have is in our foreheads, Rev. 9:4, a mental attitude, a seal stamped within our hearts by God's Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30); as such it is invisible, an internal condition rather than an external mark in the flesh. But what exactly is it? Surely if we believe the good news which Paul has been explaining, that we stand ashamed and condemned before God's judgment seat but are then declared righteous, justified and saved, standing there in the very presence of God clean and justified- this will make an indelible psychological mark upon the person who believes this. 'Once saved always saved' is too primitive a teaching- we can fall from grace. But all the same, if we have really and truly experienced this great salvation, we have the mark of it, the seal of it in our hearts, and it will become evident in our thinking and speaking and behaviour in this world. Whatever we do subsequently with this grace, our experience of standing justified before God will leave as I put it, an indelible psychological mark upon us. This is what I suggest is the sealing of which the New Testament speaks. And it has to be inevitably observed that many who bear the name of Christ would appear by the way they reason and act to simply not have that indelible psychological mark upon them. Which is the value of Romans, working through the mechanics of salvation in this dense, intense manner, to bring us to the point where we too are convicted, converted and can stand rejoicing "before God", declared right.

Another angle on this is that the circumcision which we receive is to be connected with baptism (Col. 2:11-15). The cutting off of the flesh is therefore achieved by Christ operating directly on our hearts, rather than by the midwife's knife. In this case, baptism likewise would be a "seal" upon our faith in God's righteousness being counted to us in Christ; and it is this faith which is the essence of our salvation. However, Romans 6 seems to place baptism as more than a mere piece of physical symbolism of the same value as circumcision; it is the means by which a believer believes into Christ and thus becomes "in Christ", thereby having His righteousness counted to them. 1 Clement, the Shepherd of Hermes and other early Christian writings likewise speak of baptism as the "seal" upon Christian faith.

A seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they be in uncircumcision, that righteousness might be counted to them also- Because Abraham is their spiritual father. Here we see the power of example. Abraham inspires our faith, and so the amazing grace of righteousness being counted to us happens, in one sense, because of him- because he opened the paradigm, of being declared right before God just because he believed. The crucial family likeness in the Abraham family is therefore faith, not marks in the flesh placed on the male members of the tribe. This of course was blasphemy for the Jews to hear… In this sense therefore, Abraham was father of "all" the believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile. Connection to him should therefore create unity between ethnic groups rather than exclusivity.

4:12 *And the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had*

whilst he was uncircumcised- See on 4:1. Walking in the steps of Abraham suggests that his journey of faith from Ur to Haran to Canaan becomes typical of the walk of every single believer towards salvation in the Kingdom, a journey only motivated by our faith that we will be there, that we are declared right before God in Christ. Abraham walked by faith- but the content of that faith, Paul is arguing, was faith in justification by God. Likewise we will not get very far in our walk to the Kingdom if we fail to believe that we are already right now justified and right with God; we aren't walking to judgment day in the vague hope that we will inherit the Kingdom, walking to the Kingdom to see if we shall enter into it. We walk [Gk. 'march'] in faith, faith that we are already declared right before God, that ours is the Kingdom, and we are walking there to obtain it, just as Abraham took his steps toward Canaan not to just have a look at it and see if he would obtain it, but rather believing that it already was his. The Greek word "steps" is in fact a form of the word 'arrival'; we are walking to the Kingdom and yet we have in a sense arrived there.

Lk. 19:9 = Rom. 4:11,12. If you have real faith, you'll be like Zacchaeus. You'll have his determination, his unashamedness to come out in the open for Christ your Lord.

4:13 *For the promise to Abraham and his seed*- The Greek really means an announcement. It's not a vague possibility, the 'promises' to Abraham were an announcement that he would inherit the Kingdom. The promise Paul refers to was given to Abraham because of, *dia*, on account of, his being declared right with God by faith in Gen. 15:6. Perhaps Paul specifically has in mind the promise of Gen. 22:17,18. Having been declared right with God, Abraham was then promised that he personally would be heir of the world- the implications of being right with God, counted righteous, were thereby fleshed out and given some more tangible, material, concrete form. He would therefore live for ever, because he was right with God; and the arena of that eternity would be "the world".

That he should be heir of the world, did not come through the law- but through the righteousness of faith- Abraham was only explicitly promised the land of Canaan, not the entire planet. Perhaps Paul is interpreting the promises that his seed would comprise "many nations" and that he would bring blessing on "all the peoples of the earth" (Gen. 12:2,3 etc.). In this sense, they would become his, and he would thereby inherit them. Thus Is. 55:3-5 likewise implies that Abraham's promised inheritance was therefore not only the land of Canaan but by implication, the whole planet.

God promised Abraham a very specific inheritance in Canaan. And yet this promise seems to be interpreted in later Scripture as referring to the *world-wide* Kingdom which will be established at the second coming (e.g. Rom. 4:13 speaks of how Abraham was promised that he would inherit the world; Ps. 72 and other familiar prophecies speak of a world-wide Messianic Kingdom, based on the promises to Abraham). One possible explanation is found in Psalm 2, where the Father seems to encourage the Son to ask of Him "the *heathen* [i.e., not just the Jews] for thine inheritance, and the *uttermost parts of the earth* [not just the land of promise] for thy possession" (Ps. 2:8). Could it be that due to the Lord's spiritual ambition, the inheritance was extended from the Jewish people to *all* nations, and from literal Canaan to all the earth? This is not to say, of course, that *fundamentally* the promises to Abraham have been changed. No. The promise of eternal inheritance of Canaan still stands as the basis of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8), but that promise has

been considerably extended, thanks to the Lord's spiritual ambition.
Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but the works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith "perfect". Through his correct response to the early promises given him, Abraham was imputed "the righteousness of faith". But *on account of* that faith inspired by the earlier promises, he was given "the promises that he should be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). That promise in turn inspired yet more faith. In this same context, Paul had spoken of how the Gospel preached to Abraham in the promises leads men "from faith to faith", up the upward spiral (Rom. 1:17).
Through his correct response to the early promises given him, Abraham was imputed "the righteousness of faith". But *on account of* that faith inspired by the earlier promises, he was given "the promise that he should be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). That promise in turn inspired yet more faith. In this same context, Paul had spoken of how the Gospel preached to Abraham in the promises leads men "from faith to faith", up the upward spiral (Rom. 1:17).

4:14 *For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of no power*- The huge importance attached to faith in Gen. 15:6 would be pointless if obedience to the Law was what guaranteed the promise of inheritance the world- as Jewish theology taught about Abraham. The promise of the Kingdom would become irrelevant because Paul has demonstrated in Romans 1-3 that all men, Abraham included, are sinners, law breakers, and condemned before the judgment seat of God. Nobody would therefore inherit the promised Kingdom, and so the promise of it would have been pointless- see on 4:15.

4:15 *For the law works anger; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression*- The wrath of Divine condemnation. Because nobody keeps God's law fully, therefore the law brings those under it to condemnation. Another way has to be found if we wish to be declared right and not condemned. To say that the law creates [AV "works"] Divine wrath upon men is another example of Paul using purposefully radical and controversial language to demonstrate the seriousness of sin and the utter folly of hiding behind legal righteousness. Law creates the possibility of "transgression", a conscious crossing over the line. Sin is one thing; but transgression is what brings liability to receiving the wrath of God, because if we know His law and cross over it, then we are the more culpable. This difference between sin and transgression is at the root of a great Biblical theme- that knowledge brings responsibility. And this was particularly relevant and concerning, or it ought to have been, to a Jewish audience so keen to attain rightness with God through obedience to law.

4:16 *Therefore it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure*- God's promises are sure from His end, in that He will not break them. But the promised inheritance of the Kingdom would never be a very sure promise if it depended upon human acts of obedience to come true. But because salvation is by our faith in God's grace, declaring us right quite apart from our works- therefore we are sure of entering that Kingdom, and in this sense it is grace which makes the promise sure. The certainty of our future hope and present salvation is therefore precisely in the fact that it doesn't depend upon our works. All the time we think it does, the promise of salvation will not appear to us to be at all "sure".

To all the seed- the fact salvation is by pure grace to sinners means that any person of

whatever ethnic background may believe in it and accept it. The result of that is that there should be no spiritual difference between ethnic groups such as Jew and Gentile in Rome. And today, our common experience of utter grace, each of us accessing it by faith, should be the basis for a powerful unity.

Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham- There is an intended ambiguity in the phrase "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16); this 'ambiguous genitive' can mean those who share "the (doctrinal) faith" , which Abraham also believed; or those who have the kind of belief which Abraham had. Like Abraham, we are justified by *the* faith in Christ; not faith in Christ, but more specifically *the* faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). The use of the definite article surely suggests that it is our possession of the same doctrinal truths (the Faith) which Abraham had, which is what leads to faith in Christ and thereby our justification. The *life* Paul lived was by *the* Faith of Christ; not simply by faith, as a verb, which is how grammatically it should be expressed if this is what was meant; but by *the* Faith (Gal. 2:20).

Who is the father of us all- see on Rom. 4:1.

4:17 *(As it is written, A father of many nations have I made you) before Him whom he believed, God, who gives life to the dead*- This continues the language of our standing "before God" in 3:19,20 and being condemned there for our sins, and yet also being declared righteous there by His grace and our faith in that grace. The first part of v. 17 is in brackets, correctly in my opinion. Abraham was declared the "father of us all" (4:16) before God, as he stood as it were in God's judgment presence and was justified, declared right- God then considered him as the father of us all, naming things [AV "calling"] which didn't exist as if they did. Abraham the ungodly was counted as Godly; we who were sinners, disobedient to the law, were counted as obedient; and thus God as it were saw Abraham before His presence not merely as Abraham, but as representative of so many others who would likewise believe in God's grace and be thereby justified.

And called things that are not, as though they were- This is exactly what Paul has been arguing all through his letter so far. God calls the unrighteous righteous, counting righteousness to those who believe, who are themselves not righteous. "Calls" strictly means 'to name', and the reference would initially be to the way God called Abram as Abraham, as if he already was the father of the people of many nations whom God foresaw would believe in His promised grace just as Abraham had done. God saw us then as if we existed, in the same way as He sees us as righteous even though we are not. The idea of calling things which don't exist into existence also has suggestions of creation (Is. 41:4; 48:13). The new, spiritual creation is indeed a creation *ex nihilo*, an act of grace. Incomprehensible to the modern mind, the natural creation involved the creation of matter from out of God, and not out of any visible, concrete matter which already existed. The physical creation therefore looked forward to the grace of the new creation- creating people spiritually out of nothing, counting righteousness to them which they didn't have, treating them as persons whom they were not.

Because God is not limited by time, He speaks of things which do not now exist as if they do, because He knows that ultimately they will exist (Rom. 4:17). This explains

why the Bible speaks as if Abraham is still alive although he is now dead; as if the believers are now saved in God's kingdom, although "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mt. 10:22); as if Israel were obedient to God's word (Ps. 132:4 cp. Ex. 19:5-6), when they will only be so in the future; as if Christ existed before His birth, although he evidently only existed physically after his birth of Mary.

Our comprising the Kingdom to some degree is understandable seeing that God speaks of "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). Thus Abraham and those believers who have died are described as 'living unto God' in prospect, because He can foresee their resurrection (Lk. 20:38). It is to this that Rom. 6:11 refers: "Reckon yourselves (i.e. in prospect)... alive unto God through (having been resurrected with) Jesus" in baptism. In the same way as in prospect we should reckon ourselves resurrected to eternal life, unable to give service to sin any longer, so in the same way we are now in the Kingdom. Careful attention to the tenses in 1 Cor. 15:20 indicates the same logic; by His resurrection Christ has "become the firstfruits of them that slept"- not those 'who are sleeping', but "that slept", seeing that because of their Lord's resurrection they also are alive in prospect. Similarly if Christ had not risen "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor.15:18), implying that now they are not perished. The practical meaning of all this is that we should live now in the same joy and righteousness as if we were in the Kingdom. "The day (of the Kingdom) is at hand: let us therefore... walk honestly, as in the day" (Rom.13:12,13), i.e. as if we are now living in the Kingdom which is soon to come.

4:18 *Who in hope believed against hope* – see on Rom. 4:19. The first "hope" may be human hope- and Abraham as a sinner was in a hopeless situation. Yet he believed and thereby shared in God's hopefulness for us, seeing himself as God saw him- as declared right. "Against" could equally be translated "beyond". Beyond human hope, Abraham had hope. This is the essence of the Gospel- having no hope in our own strength, standing condemned and speechless before God, but believing in His hopefulness for us. His faith in this instance was that he would indeed become a father of many nations. He didn't just believe that he was declared right with God, but that really and truly there would be people world-wide who would likewise believe and become his seed. In this sense he believed in God's hope. We likewise need to share in the hopefulness of God for people rather than being negative, cynical and defeatist about people just because so many chose not to respond.

To the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to what had been spoken: So shall your seed be- Because of Sarah's faith, "therefore sprang there... so many as the stars of the sky in multitude" (Heb. 11:11,12). Those promises to Abraham had their fulfilment, but conditional on Abraham and Sarah's faith. Gen. 18:18-20 says that the fulfilment of the promises was conditional on Abraham teaching his children / seed the ways of God. Those promises / prophesies were "sure" in the sense that God's side of it was. Rom. 4:18 likewise comments that Abraham became "the father of many nations" precisely because he *believed* in this hope. Yet the promise / prophecy that he would be a father of many nations could sound as if it would have happened anyway, whatever. But it was actually conditional upon Abraham's faith. And he is our great example exactly because he had the possibility and option of *not* believing in the hope he had been offered.

4:19 *And without being weakened in faith*- s.w. "impotent", Jn. 5:7; the word is

usually used with the sense of sickness or weak health. Abraham was physically impotent, perhaps even seriously ill and weak at the time the promise was given- but not impotent or weak in faith. The idea of the Greek is that Abraham didn't weaken in faith as he observed / considered his body. We showed in our introductory comments that the theological first half of Romans has many connections with the practical second half. Thus we meet this very same phrase "weak in faith" in Rom. 14:1,2- where we are told to accept those who are "weak in faith". This connection would seem to be a tacit admission that not all in the ecclesia are going to rise up to the faith of Abraham, even though he is to be the father of us all, in that we share that same family characteristic of faith. Thus on one hand Paul sets Abraham before us as a vital, crucial pattern- not an option, a nice idea, but a role model whose faith must be followed, in whose faithful steps we are to walk. And yet he accepts that not all in Christ will rise up to his level of faith- and we are to accept them. The same word for "weak" is used in Rom. 5:6- whilst we were weak [AV "without strength"], Christ died for us. We therefore are to accept the weak, even as Christ died for us in our weakness. We share something of His cross in accepting those who are spiritually weaker than ourselves. Yet so many refuse to carry His cross in this matter, because their own pride stops them accepting those weaker in the faith than themselves.

When he considered his own body, now as good as dead (he being about one hundred years old)- He didn't fix his mind upon (Gk.) the fact his body was dead (i.e. impotent) and unable to produce seed (Rom. 4:19). He wasn't obsessed with his state, yet he lived a life of faith that ultimately God's Kingdom would come, he rejoiced at the contemplation of Christ his Lord; and he filled his life with practical service. He wasn't obsessed with the fact that in his marital position he personally couldn't have children when it seemed this was what God wanted him to do; and this was very pleasing to God. Gen. 17:1 says he was 99, so he was in his 100th year.

And the deadness of Sarah's womb- So often we allow the apparent weakness of others to become a barrier to our faith. 'She'll never change… she just isn't capable of that'. But Abraham not only believed that *he* could do it, but that the apparent obstacle of another's weakness was also surmountable by the word of promise.

There are some implied gaps within the record in Gen. 15:5,6: God brings Abraham outside, and asks him to number the stars [gap]; then He tells Abraham "So shall thy seed be" [gap]; and then, maybe 10 seconds or 10 hours afterwards, "Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness". Those 10 seconds or 10 hours or whatever the period was, are summarized by Paul as how Abraham "in hope believed against hope" (4:18). His no-hope struggled against his hope / faith, but in the end his faith in God's word of promise won out. "According to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be" implies to me that he kept reflecting on those words: "So shall thy seed be" (three words in Hebrew, *ko zehrah hawya*). And we too can too easily say that we believe the Bible is God's word, without realizing that to just believe three inspired words can be enough to radically change our lives and lead us to eternity. I'm not sure that Abraham's ultimate belief of those three words *ko zehrah hawya* just took a few seconds. According to Paul, he "considered... his body"- he reflected on the fact he was impotent (see Gk. and RV). *Katanoeo*, "consider", means to "observe fully" (Rom. 4:19). He took full account of his impotent state, knowing it as only a man can know it about himself. And he likewise considered fully the deadness of his elderly wife's womb, recalling how her menstruation had stopped years ago... but all that deeply personal self-

knowledge didn't weaken his faith; he didn't "waver", but in fact- the very opposite occurred. He "waxed strong through faith... being fully assured that what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform". As he considered his own physical weakness, and that of his wife, his faith "waxed" stronger (RV), he went through a process of becoming "fully assured", his faith was progressively built up ("waxed strong" is in the passive voice)... leading up to the moment of total faith that so thrilled the heart of God. And so it can happen with us- the very obstacles to faith, impotence in Abraham's case, are what actually leads to faith getting into that upward spiral that leads towards total certainty. Abraham's physical impotence did not make him "weak" [s.w. translated "impotent" in Jn. 5:3,7] in faith- it all worked out the opposite. For his physical impotence made him not-impotent in faith; the very height of the challenge led him to conclude that God would be true to His word, and he would indeed have a child. For when we are "weak" [s.w. "impotent"], then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:10). Thus the internal struggle of Abraham's mind led his faith to develop in those seconds or minutes or hours as he reflected upon the words "So shall your seed be". He "staggered not at the promise" (Rom. 4:20), he didn't separate himself away from (Gk.) those three Hebrew words translated "So shall your seed be", he didn't let his mind balk at them... and therefore and thereby he was made strong in faith ("waxed strong in faith" Rom. 4:20 RV). This process of his faith strengthening is picked up in the next verse: Abraham was "fully persuaded that what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). There was a process of internal persuasion going on- leading to the moment of faith, which so thrilled God and was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. And of course Paul drives the point home- that we are to have the faith of Abraham. As he believed that life could come out of his dead body ("dead" in Rom. 4:19, with a passive participle, implies 'slain'), so *we* are to believe in the resurrection of the slain body of the Lord Jesus, and the real power of His new life to transform our dead lives (Rom. 4:23,24). Gal. 3:5,14 puts it another way in saying that if we share the faith of Abraham at that time, we will receive "the promise of the spirit through faith", the enlivening of our sterile lives. And this takes quite some faith for us to take seriously on board; for as Abraham carefully considered the impotence of his physical body, so we can get a grim picture of the deadness of our fleshly lives. These ideas help us understand more clearly why the Lord chose to be baptized. He understood baptism as a symbol of his death (Lk. 12:50). Rom. 6:3-5 likewise makes the connection between baptism and crucifixion. The Lord knew that He would be crucified, and yet He lived out the essence of it in His own baptism.

4:20 *But instead, looking to the promise of God, he did not waver through unbelief*- "Did not waver" is Gk. *diakrino*, to judge. Abraham didn't judge God by doubting, analysing, forensically investigating, the promise made- finding all the possible reasons why it might not be true for him. This continues the idea of Rom. 3:4- that man effectively puts God in the dock and prosecutes Him for false witness and unreal promises, the accusers being the doubts of God's grace deep within the human mind. Abraham didn't do this. The word occurs only one other time in Romans, in the practical section, in Rom. 14:23: "He that doubts [s.w. 'stagger'] is damned if he eat". If we are truly Abraham's children and don't doubt God's promises, we will have a strong conscience, not worrying that eating this or that or failing to keep some ritual will result in our losing God's grace.

But grew strong through faith, giving glory to God- Gk. 'was / became strengthened'- by whom? By God? In this case we would see God's grace yet more apparent, in that

Abraham was justified by his faith in God's grace, but God Himself partially empowered that faith. This would be an example of how faith is part of an upward spiritual spiral, the dynamic in which is God Himself- a theme with which Romans begins, when Paul talks about going "from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17). Exactly the same term is used about Paul after his conversion- he "increased the more in strength" and confounded Jewish opposition to the Gospel (Acts 9:22). As so often, Paul provides himself as a parade example of what he's preaching. Significantly, Paul elsewhere comments that it is Christ who strengthens him within his mind (Phil. 4:13 and context; other examples of the same word applied to Christ's strengthening of Paul are in 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17; and Heb. 11:37 says that the faithful of old were "made strong" in their faith, by God). We are thrown up yet again against God's grace. We can be saved by grace if we believe in that grace, but the Lord is willing to even strengthen us in that necessary faith. See on 4:21 "fully persuaded", where again God is the persuader of human faith. Abraham therefore gave the glory to God, because it was God who had strengthened his faith and the whole thing comes down to God's grace in every way, for which we can only glorify Him. Paul uses the same phrase for 'giving glory to God' as in Lk. 17:18, where it is a Gentile rather than the Jews who give glory to God for what He has done for them- and surely this is another of Paul's many allusions to the Gospel records.

Mt. 21:21 = Rom. 4:20. Paul saw Abraham as being like the man in the parable who had the faith to throw mountains into the sea.

4:21 *And became fully assured that what He had promised-* By whom? Surely by God. This continues the theme of 'was strengthened' in 4:20 [see note there], that although God's saving grace is accessible to us by faith, He also plays a part in developing that faith. This of course lays the basis for Paul's later comment in Romans upon predestination as being an indicator of God's pure grace. For He doesn't just start talking about predestination without a context- he cites it as an example, or another window onto, God's grace.

We have earlier commented that the doctrinal section of Romans [chapters 1-8] has many connections with the latter, practical part of Romans; and we've demonstrated that several verses in Romans 4 contain phrases which recur in Romans 14. "Fully persuaded" occurs elsewhere in Romans only in Rom. 14:5, where Paul urges that each of us, like Abraham, should be "fully persuaded in [our] own mind" about the matter of Sabbath keeping. The implication isn't so much that each of us should just be certain that we are fully persuaded of our position- that would be to state an axiom needlessly- but surely the point of the allusion to Abraham's full persuasion in Rom. 4:21 is that if we have been fully persuaded of God's salvation being by pure grace and not works, then we will not be concerned about keeping days or indeed any other ritual in order to gain His acceptance. That same principle can be applied in our church lives, in forming our approach to matters of external ritual [e.g. head coverings for sisters, or dress codes at church meetings] which in our generation may be a live issue, as Sabbath keeping was for the Rome ecclesia of the first century.

He was able also to perform- It may seem obvious that anyone who believes in the God of the Bible will believe that God Almighty is truly almighty, and is capable of doing what He has promised. And yet when it comes to believing that He is able to save me despite my sins and regardless of my works- we all baulk. Abraham believed,

that God was able to do what He had said. To save him, without works. The only other time the Greek phrase translated "able to perform" occurs is in Lk. 1:49, where young Mary exalts that the God who is able has performed great things for her. Perhaps Paul is setting her up as our example. That barefoot and pregnant, illiterate young woman (a teenager, probably), who took God at His word. Paul maybe has the same sense in mind when he comments that the God who cannot lie has promised us eternal life (Tit. 1:2). John in characteristic bluntness puts it so clearly: "This is the promise that He has promised us: eternal life" (1 Jn. 2:25). To doubt that we shall receive it is effectively calling Him a liar. We are between a rock and a hard place. We must either face up to the wonder of our salvation, or do the unthinkable- call God a liar, one incapable of doing what He has said. Sarah likewise "judged Him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11). There again we meet the idea of putting God in the dock. We judge Him- as either faithful, or unfaithful; able or unable; almighty or impotent, a god of nice ideas and fair words which have no cash value in the weakness and desperation of our human, earthly lives. The Greek translated "promise" can be used in the context of a legal assertion about oneself (although it isn't used within the NT in this way). God is in the dock, making the promise, the assertion about Himself, His very own self, that He will give us eternal life. And we judge Him- as speaking the Truth, the most ultimate truth of the cosmos, of history- or as lying under oath to us. Faced with a choice like that, we have no real choice but with Abraham and Sarah "judge Him faithful who has promised" (Heb. 11:11).

4:22 *Therefore also it was counted to him for righteousness*- This word occurs so many times in Romans 4. Abraham's faith that God would give him the promised blessing and salvation was counted to him as righteousness, with no reference to Abraham's works or sins. The word recurs in the practical section of Romans just once- in Rom. 14:14: "To him that counts anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"- although there is nothing "unclean in itself". God counts us as clean, not unclean. The person who is always paranoid about this that or the other being unclean, the need to separate from this brother or that sister for their uncleanness, hasn't been filled with the positive spirit of our Father, who rejoices to count unclean persons as clean. This isn't in any way to blur the boundary between clean and unclean, sin and righteousness. Rather is it the logical connection between Rom. 4:21, speaking of God calling sinners as righteous; and Rom. 14:14, which warns that men have a tendency to count / impute things as unclean rather than clean. Cleanness or uncleanness is a matter of perception, seems to be Paul's message. For "there is nothing unclean in itself". Likewise sin and righteousness are matters of God's perception; for sometimes a man can do something which is counted a sin, other times the same act can be counted as righteousness. Yet God is eager to count us as clean; and we should have that same positive, seeking, saving spirit.

4:23 *Now it was not written for his sake alone*- Where was it written? In some unrecorded Scripture? In God's heavenly record book? Or is the allusion to the finality of the legal case now concluded, that 'it was written' in the sense of legally concluded, under the hammer, so to speak? The suggestion is that right now in this life, if we really believe God's offered salvation, or perhaps, *for so long* as we believe it- we are written down as declared right before His judgment. In this case, Paul is interpreting the comment in Gen. 15:6 "And it was imputed unto him for righteousness" as a writing in Heaven, the court secretary writing down the outcome of the case. The Jews taught that justification would only be at the future day of

judgment (see D. Moo, *Romans* 1-8, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991) p. 293). Paul is teaching that in fact we can be justified, declared right with God, here and now; and we ought to be able to know and feel that.

That it was counted to him- This appears to be a pointless repetition of the same phrase in the preceding 4:22. Paul keeps on and on repeating it to try to impress upon us the sheer wonder of it all- that we are counted righteous when we are not.

4:24 *But for our sake also, to whom it shall be counted*- In that Abraham was being consciously set up as our example; and the record of Abraham's justification by faith is purposefully designed, Paul seems to be inferring, to inspire us to a similar faith.

Who believe in Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead- Our faith is that God will justify us by His grace. But as Paul will now go on to show (see on 5:1), that position of being declared right with God will be articulated in our being given eternal life. This means in practice that we will be resurrected as Jesus was, and given eternal life. So our belief in God is a belief in the God of resurrection, who resurrected Jesus our representative, in whom, through faith and baptism into His death and resurrection, we shall also be resurrected to eternal life.

4:25 *Who was delivered up for our trespasses*- An allusion to the LXX of Is. 53:12: "He was handed over because of their sins". The Gospel accounts of the crucifixion give special emphasis to the moment of the Lord being handed over to those who would crucify Him. Paul is going on to show the mechanics, as it were, of how God has chosen to operate. His scheme of justifying us isn't merely a case of Him saying 'So you are declared right by Me'. He can do as He wishes, but He prefers to work through some kind of mechanism. We are declared right by God although we are sinners; which raises the obvious question: So what becomes of our sins? And so Paul explains that by talking about the crucial role of the death of Christ. Because He was of our nature, He is our representative. Although He never sinned, He died, yet He rose again to eternal life. Through connection with Him, we therefore can be counted as in Him, and thereby be given that eternal life through resurrection, regardless of our sins. In this sense, Jesus had to die and resurrect because of our sins.

And was raised for our justification- This also is an allusion to the LXX of Isaiah 53, this time to Is. 53:11, which speaks of "the righteous servant" (Jesus) "justifying the righteous". The repetition of the word "righteous" suggests that on account of the Lord's death, and resurrection, His righteousness becomes ours, through this process of justification. But how and why, exactly, does Christ's death and resurrection enable our justification? Paul has explained that faith in God brings justification before Him. Now Paul is explaining how and why this process operates. Jesus died and rose again to eternal life as our representative. If we believe into Him (which chapter 6 will define as involving our identification with His death and resurrection by baptism), then we too will live for ever as He does, as we will participate in His resurrection to eternal life. Our final justification, being declared in the right, will be at the day of judgment. We will be resurrected, judged, and declared righteous- and given eternal life, never again to sin and die. This is the end result of the status of 'justified' which we have now, as we stand in the dock facing God's judgment.

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *Being therefore justified by faith*- There's a noticeable change of style beginning at Rom. 5:1. Paul starts to talk about "we", as if he assumes that he has won the argument in chapters 1-4 and taken his readership with him- they along with him are now, as it were, believers in Christ. Instead of the focus on "justification" which there is in chapters 1-4, the end result of God's work for us is generally replaced with the word "life", i.e. eternal life, occurring 24 times in chapters 5-8. Chapters 5-8 of Romans form a definite section. The words "love", "justify", "glory", "peace", "hope", "tribulation", "save" and "endurance" all occur in Rom. 5:1-11 and also several times in Rom. 8:18-39. These passages form bookends [an 'inclusio' is the technical term] to the material sandwiched between them. Paul is going on from us standing before Divine judgment declared right, justified by our faith in God's promise of grace. That salvation will be and is articulated in terms of life, eternal life, life lived both now and in its fullness after we again stand before the final judgment seat of Christ.

We have peace with God- It's hard to avoid the conclusion that God has written His word in such a way as to leave some things intentionally ambiguous. He could just have given us a set of brief bullet points, written in an unambiguous manner. But instead He gave us the Bible. Given that most of His people over history have been illiterate, they simply couldn't have been able to understand His word in an academic, dissective, analytical sense. Take Rom. 5:1- it could read "Let us have peace" (subjunctive) or "We have peace" (indicative). The difference is merely the length of a vowel, and this would only have been apparent in *reading* it, as the difference wouldn't have been aurally discernible when the letter was publicly read.

Peace here refers to our being right with God, rather than a calmness in life generally. Such a thing isn't promised to Christians but rather the very opposite. "Peace with God" cannot be experienced if we are continually doubting whether or not we shall ultimately be saved. We should be able to say that if the Lord were to return right now, by grace, we believe that we shall surely be saved; for we are right here and now justified before God's judgment seat. Therefore we experience right now "peace with God".

Through our Lord Jesus Christ- previously Paul has pointed out that God has set us right with Him simply if we can believe that He would do this. But increasingly, Paul points out that *how and why* this is- He does this on account of the work of the Lord Jesus.

5:2 *Through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*- may be continuing the judgment image of chapters 3 and 4, in which we are left standing in the dock before the judgment of God, and by grace are declared right when in fact we are sinners. And we stand there before God's judgment, very much in grace. The language of 'access into' suggests that "this grace" is a situation, a 'place', a status, in which we are now permanently located. "Access into… wherein we stand" is a phrase used in classical Greek about entering a royal presence (Moo, *op cit.* p. 300 gives examples). So the idea is very much of our standing in the august judgment presence of God acceptable by status. This point needs to be more than intellectually noted; it must be our real and felt experience that we are not one moment in an

acceptable status with God, and then next we slip out of it- through inattention, insensitivity, or downright selfish rebellion on our part. We are in a relationship, married as it were to Him, bearing His Name, and thereby in a permanent status. Perhaps we can be so foolish as to leave that status, but we certainly don't drift in and out of it insofar as we sin or avoid sinning in the course of daily life. The very nature of the "grace" status which we are in means that we are declared right, OK with God, in spite or and even in the face of our sins.

By faith into this grace wherein we stand and in which we rejoice- Standing before God justified means that in the judgment day to come at the Lord's return to earth, we will be accepted and given eternal life in God's Kingdom. We are to rejoice (Gk. 'boast') in that hope quite naturally- for Paul doesn't exhort us to rejoice in the hope, he simply states that given our position of grace, we, naturally, rejoice in hope. If we cannot say "Yes" to the question "Will you be accepted before the judgment seat of Christ?", then I fail to see that we can rejoice in hope. To rejoice in hope means that we have accepted God's judgment of us now- and His judgment is that we are acceptable to Him, that even now, "it's all OK". If we are to boast in this hope- and the Greek translated "rejoice" definitely means that- this would imply that we can't keep quiet about such good news. We simply have to share it with others.

In hope of the glory of God- Our hope to participate in this glory, which is associated in Mt. 6:13 with the future Kingdom of God on earth, connects with what Paul has earlier reasoned in Rom. 3:23- that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We who have been declared right can now rejoice in the prospect of participating in that glory, that glorious eternal future, which we fell short of by our sins. We commented under 3:23 that Paul is referring to writings such as the Apocalypse of Moses, which claimed that Adam had fallen short of God's glory in Eden, but the hope of the Messianic age would be Adam's restoration to the glory intended in Eden (Apoc. Moses 39.2-3). Adam is everyman- a theme now to be developed specifically here in Romans 5.

5:3 *More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance*- "Sufferings" is s.w. Rom. 2:9, where we read that "tribulation" will come upon the rejected, faithless sinner at the day of judgment. Paul no doubt had in mind "the tribulation" which the Olivet prophecy and other NT Scriptures predicted would come upon the faithful in the first century. But the connection with Rom. 2:9 suggests that he saw that in a sense, we are condemned for our sins now, and as he explains in Romans 6, we die to sin, in baptism we take fully the condemnation for sin, and we rise again as new people, like the Lord Jesus, who are not under condemnation. Indeed the same word for "tribulation" occurs in Rom. 8:35, where Paul exalts that tribulation, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril and the sword cannot separate us from Christ's loving acceptance; and most if not all of those terms are applied elsewhere in Scripture to the rejected at the day of judgment. The condemnation for sin- our sins- will not separate us from Christ's love, and we shall be saved all the same. If this idea of "tribulation" as part of the condemnation process for sinners is indeed somewhere in Paul's mind (for this is how the word is used in 2 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 2:22), he would be saying that as a result of experiencing in our lives the condemnation for sin, we come through enduring the process ["patience", *hupomone*] to 'pass the test' (Rom. 5:4, AV "experience" is a terribly poor translation), and through that we come to a sure hope in acceptance at the last

day and a feeling unashamed (Rom. 5:5), despite knowing we are on one hand condemned sinners.

“Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace... let us rejoice... let us also rejoice in our tribulations" (Rom. 5:1-3 RV). If we really feel justified due to righteousness being imputed to us, then this will give us a joyful perspective on all suffering. For the reality that we are counted righteous will mean that all tribulation "under the sun" is not so ultimately meaningful; and thus we will find all joy and peace through believing.

5:4 *And endurance produces character, and character produces hope*– See on Rom. 5:3. “Experience” translates a Greek word elsewhere translated ‘to put to the proof’, and meaning ‘to pass the test’. We are going through the future judgment process right now- by passing through “tribulation”, living out the consequences for our sin, but in faith in God’s acceptance of us- we pass the test. The future day of judgment isn’t our ultimate test or putting to the proof; our faithful acceptance of salvation by grace today, right now, is our crucial testing or proving.

5:5 *And hope does not put us to shame*- A significant theme in Paul and Peter (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6).. The believer in Christ will not be ashamed at the last day judgment, with which “shame” is so often associated for the rejected (Dan. 12:2; Lk. 14:9; Jude 13; Rev. 16:15). If we have confident hope that we will not be rejected but will be saved at the last day, that we will not be ashamed then- therefore nothing in this life should make us feel ashamed, not even our own sins, for the shame of them is taken away by God’s declaring us right.

Because God's love- Gk. *hoti* isn’t necessarily causative but it can be demonstrative. Paul may not therefore mean that we are unashamed *because* the love of God is in our hearts; he may mean that we are unashamed, as the final end result of God’s justification process, we stand before Him uncondemned, not in shame as are the rejected sinners; and *therefore* the love of God becomes shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This latter option is how I interpret *hoti* here, because Paul has been building up all throughout the letter to the reason why we are unashamed at judgment- it is because we are declared legally right before God’s judgment by God the judge of all, due to our faith in His grace which operates through Jesus. Nothing has so far been said about the Holy Spirit in our hearts being the basis for this unashamed position. Our standing before God justified, declared right, forgiven, accepted at judgment, rejoicing in sure hope of eternity in the glory of God’s Kingdom- this leads to the love of God filling our hearts. His love for us elicits our love for Him, and it fills our hearts.

Has been poured into our hearts- Tit. 3:6 uses the same word to speak of how God’s grace has been “shed abroad” abundantly upon us. The word is of course frequently used about the shedding of Christ’s blood; because of God’s colossal gift to us, of His Son, bringing about our justification if we believe in Him… then in due turn, the awareness of God’s love is likewise shed into our hearts. Whether we have really believed and accepted the good news is answerable by whether or not we feel and know God’s love to have been shed abroad, to have gushed out, into our hearts. Paul gives the hint several times in Romans 1-8 that this situation is not drifted into; the idea of gushing out or shedding suggests a one-time moment when this happened.

'Justification', the being declared legally right, is always spoken of grammatically as if this is a one off defined event which happened to us at a moment in the past. This moment is defined by Paul in Romans 6 as baptism, when we become "in Christ". Note that he is writing to Roman Christians who had already been baptized and believed in Christ- rather than seeking to convert unbelievers. They may well not have felt any watershed moment at their conversion or baptism. But Paul's whole point is that even though they may not have felt it emotionally, this is actually how it is in reality, and we can now appreciate it and feel the wonder of the status into which we entered, even if it was unappreciated by us at the time. It is this feature more perhaps than anything else which makes this letter so relevant to we today who read it, who like the Romans have already believed, been baptized- and yet likely fail to appreciate the huge implications of the position we have now entered.

Through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us- the whole argument so far in Romans has said nothing about the Holy Spirit. Note the comments under "Because…" above. This isn't teaching that the Holy Spirit zapped our hearts and therefore all these wonderful things are true. We are unashamed, at the end of the process outlined in Rom. 5:3-5, because we stand at judgment day even now uncondemned, not ashamed as the condemned are, because of our faith in God's grace. This is how we come to be unashamed- not because the Holy Spirit zapped us. It is God's grace, justification, which has been given unto us. We could read in an ellipsis here, as often required in reading Romans, and understand this phrase as referring to how the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts 'by what the Holy Spirit has given unto us'. This would associate 'the Holy Spirit' with the power of God by which He has orchestrated and executed this entire wondrous plan of His.
Serious meditation upon the Lord's work ought to have this effect upon us. Can we really see his agony, his bloody sweat, without a thought for our response to it? It's impossible to passively behold it all. There is something practically compelling about it, almost in a mystical way. *Because* "Christ died for the ungodly", because in the cross "the love of God" was commended to us, *therefore* "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5,6,8). As the smitten rock gave out water, so the smitten Saviour gave out the water of the Spirit. This link between the shedding of the Lord's blood and the shedding of love in our hearts is surely because an understanding and relation to His sacrifice brings forth in the believer a response of love and spirituality. As the love of God was shown in the cross, so it will be reflected in the heart of he who truly knows and believes it.

5:6- see on Rom. 4:19. Paul in Rom. 5:6-8 lays out a three point logical case for the supremacy of God's love. Each of those three verses ends with the Greek word "die", to stylistically emphasize the step logic.

For while we were yet weak- The Greek word is pronounced as-then-ace; "the ungodly" translates a Greek word pronounced as-eb-ace. Bearing in mind the generally illiterate nature of Paul's primary readership, such literary devices which assisted memorization of the text are common in the NT. Christ died for us before we had anything at all to commend us. He didn't await our faith or repentance and then die for us, but He died for us in order to inspire those very things. Paul describes all of us as having been saved although we were "without strength", using the same word used about the disciples asleep in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:41 = Rom. 5:6). He saw the evident similarity between them and us, tragically indifferent in practice to the mental agony of our Lord, failing to share His intensity of striving- although we are so

willing in spirit to do this. And yet, Paul implies, be better than them. Don't be weak ["without strength"] and sleepy as they were when Christ wanted them awake (Mt. 26:40,41 = 1 Thess. 5:6,7). Strive for the imitation of Christ's attitude in the garden (Mt. 26:41 = Eph. 6:18). And yet in Romans 7, a depressed but realistic Paul laments that he fails in this; his description of the losing battle he experienced within him between flesh and spirit is couched in the language of Christ's rebuke to the disciples in Gethsemane (the spirit was willing, but the flesh weak).

In due time- The Greek could imply 'at just the right time'. Perhaps God's wrath was set to destroy the earth by the time of Christ, but He came and successfully did His work at the right time. But perhaps the idea is more that Christ died for us "at that very time" when we were weak and ungodly. He died for us in the hope of what we could potentially become through exercising faith; and our sacrifices for others, not least in the work of preaching and nurturing, are made in the same spirit. They are made whilst the objects of our attention appear immature, non-existent or unbelieving.

Christ died for- All that is true of the Lord Jesus becomes in some sense, at some time, true of each of us who are in Him. It's true that nowhere in the Bible is the Lord Jesus actually called our "representative", but the idea is clearly there. I suggest it's especially clear in all the Bible passages which speak of Him acting *huper* us- what Dorothee Sölle called "the preposition of representation" (1). Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon define *huper* in the genitive as meaning "'for', 'in behalf of', 'for the sake of' someone (2). When used in the sense of representation, *huper* is associated with verbs like 'request, pray, care, work, feel, suffer, die, support'". So in the same way as the Lord representatively prays, died, cares, suffers, works "for" us, we are to do likewise, if He indeed is our representative and we His. Our prayers for another, our caring for them, is no longer a rushed salving of our conscience through some good deed. Instead 2 Cor. 5:15 becomes our motivation: "He died for (*huper*) all [of us], that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for (*huper*) them". We are, in our turn, to go forth and be "ambassadors for (*huper*) Christ... we pray you in Christ's stead (*huper* Christ), be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Grasping Him as our representative means that we will be His representatives in this world, and not leave that to others or think that our relationship in Him is so internal we needn't breathe nor show a word of it to others. As He suffered "the just for (*huper*) the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), our living, caring, praying for others is no longer done "for" those whom we consider good enough, worthy enough, sharing our religious convictions and theology. For whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died *huper* us (Rom. 5:6). And this representative death is to find an issue in our praying *huper* others (Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11), just as He makes intercession *huper* us (Rom. 8:26,34). We are to spend and be spent *huper* others, after the pattern of the Lord in His final nakedness of death on the cross (2 Cor. 12:15). These must all be far more than fine ideas for us. These are the principles which we are to live by in hour by hour life. And they demand a huge amount, even the cross itself. For unto us is given "in the behalf of Christ [*huper* Christ], not only to [quietly, painlessly, theoretically] believe on Him, but also to suffer for (*huper*) his sake" (Phil. 1:29). In all this, then, we see that the Lord's being our representative was not only at the time of His death; the fact He continues to be our representative makes Him our ongoing challenge.

The ungodly- connecting with how we read in Rom. 4:5 that by faith, the ungodly are

declared right with God. And the context there suggests Abraham was along with us all in that category of "ungodly". Elsewhere, "the ungodly" are those who specifically will be condemned at the day of judgment (1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:7; Jude 15). We stand in the dock before God's judgment and are condemned. We aren't just the passive, the rather lazy to respond to God- we are, every one of us, "the ungodly", the condemned. But Christ died for *us*, so that we might be declared right, become de-condemned, have the verdict changed right around.

5:7 *For one will scarcely die for a righteous man! Perhaps for the good man some one would even dare to die*- This verse feels like it's quoting some saying or verse from some other writing. The sense may be that for a righteous man [the Greek phrase is used in this part of Romans to refer to Jesus as the perfectly righteous one] it's hard to die *huper* him ["scarcely"- Gk. 'with difficulty'], to save him- for he isn't in need of saving; but for a good man, humanly "good" rather than morally righteous, some would "dare" (Gk. 'be bold') to die. True as this observation may be, the whole point is that Christ died for us when we were "sinners"- neither morally righteous, nor humanly 'good guys' who might inspire their buddy to die for them.

5:8 *God commends His own love toward us*- The Greek translated "commend" means to set down beside, in contrast to, over against. And it's in the continuous tense. God keeps on doing this. But what is His love so continually laid down against? Surely against our sins and failures. But it keeps on being commended through the fact that Christ died for us, whilst we were still sinners. Christ died once only, and so the continual commendation of this fact is in that continually, we perceive the wonder of it all. Our unrighteousness commends God's righteousness (Rom. 3:8).

In that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us- This shows the greatest example in the cosmos of taking the initiative, of seeking to save others when there is no appreciation from them *at the time* of what you are doing. This is an endless inspiration in child rearing, preaching and pastoral work. Tragically, the simple words "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) have been grossly misunderstood as meaning that Christ died instead of us. There are a number of connections between Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15 (e.g. v. 12 = 1 Cor. 15:21; v. 17 = 1 Cor. 15:22). "Christ died for *us*" (Rom. 5:8) is matched by "Christ died for our *sins*" (1 Cor. 15:3). His death was in order to make a way whereby we can gain forgiveness of our sins; it was in this sense that "Christ died for us". The word "for" does not necessarily mean 'instead of'; Christ died "for (because of) our sins", not 'instead of' them. Because of this, Christ can "make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25) - not 'instead of' us. Neither does "for" mean 'instead of' in Heb. 10:12 and Gal. 1:4. If Christ died 'instead of us' there would be no need to carry His cross, as He bids us. And there would be no sense in being baptized into His death and resurrection, willingly identifying ourselves with Him as our victorious representative.

5:9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the anger of God through him*- If He died for us whilst we were unborn and before we had repented of our sins; if right now we are counted right before God's judgment seat; then we can confidently expect to being saved from "the wrath" (Gk.), the condemnation at the last day. Note how Rom. 5:1 spoke of justification by our faith; here, by "His blood". His blood shed for us only becomes powerful and of any value *if we believe*. It's a tragedy that His sacrifice for us goes wasted unless we [and

others] believe. “Much more then” seems to be rejoicing in playing some kind of logical game of extension, which continues in 5:10.

In the future, at the Lord's return, we will be saved from wrath (i.e. condemnation) through Christ (Rom. 5:9). Whilst this has already been achieved in a sense, it will be materially articulated in that day- in that we will feel and know ourselves to be worthy of God's wrath, but then be saved from it. We are all to some extent in the position of Zedekiah and the men of Judah, who was told that if they accepted God’s condemnation of them as just, and served the King of Babylon, then they would ultimately be saved; but if they refused to accept that condemnation, then they would be eternally destroyed (Jer. 21:9; 27:12). And the Babylonian invasion was, as we have shown elsewhere, a type of the final judgment.

We are justified by many things, all of which are in some way parallel with each other: the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), grace and the redemption which there is in His blood (Rom. 3:24), our faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:16), the name of the Lord Jesus, the spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11), by our confession of sin (Ps. 51:4; Lk. 18:14). All these things revolve around the death of the Lord Jesus, the shedding of His blood. This becomes parallel with the name of Jesus, “Christ"- because the cross presents us with the very essence of the person of the Lord Jesus. But it is also parallel with the spirit or mind / essence of God. Because in that naked, bleeding, derided body and person, in that shed blood, there was the essence of all that God was to us, is to us, and ever shall be for us. It was the cross above all which revealed to us the essence of God Almighty. And it is the cross, the blood of Jesus, which elicits in us the confession of sin which is vital for our justification.
The idea of a Saviour dying for us (5:8) and God’s wrath being turned away by His blood is all very much the language of “noble death” found in the stories of the Maccabees, which Paul had been brought up on. The idea was that the Jewish martyrs in their struggle against the occupying power had shed their blood “to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty” against Israel (2 Macc. 7:37 – 38); and thereby reconciled God with His people. But Paul is deconstructing these ideas, fiercely popular as they were amongst first century Jews. Paul’s point is that the wrath of God is against all human sin, and that the Lord Jesus through His willing death, rather than the Jewish heroes through their death in battle, had brought about reconciliation and the turning away of God’s wrath. Note in passing how the Maccabees spoke of their martyrs having reconciled God, whereas Paul’s emphasis is upon how God has reconciled *us*- the change was not of God but of His people.

5:10 *For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*- In the argument so far, Paul has talked about justification, declaring us right in a legal sense. Now he talks about us being reconciled- as if the impartial judge becomes personally reconciled to us as we stand in the dock. G.E. Ladd has made the informed comment that the surrounding first century religions didn’t speak of reconciliation, because they didn’t offer nor even conceive of the personal relationship between God and man which Christianity does (3). The need for such personal reconciliation has been implied by Paul earlier, in talking of God’s “wrath” against sin (Rom. 1:19-32; 2:5). So the legal declaring of us as right is going to have a more personal aspect between us and our judge; if we are now justified, His wrath is no more, and we become reconciled on a personal level. Note that Strong defines the Greek for “reconciled” as meaning ‘to change mutually’. This raises the whole question as to whether God in some sense has changed as a result of His relationship

with us, just as a person changes when they marry or have a child. Seeing that God "is Spirit" and isn't therefore static, it would seem to me that there is an element of growth associated with His present nature. Hence we read in the continuous tense of the Father growing to know the Son and vice versa (Mt. 11:27). This 'growth' or change within God Almighty as a result of the supreme God of the cosmos being reconciled to a few specks of dust and water on this tiny planet… is not only awesome of itself, but a testimony to the colossal consequences of the reconciling work of His Son. "Being reconciled" is clearly a state- for 2 Cor. 5:18 likewise rejoices that we have been reconciled to God in Christ, yet 2 Cor. 5:20 goes on to appeal to the Corinthians to therefore "be reconciled to God". This idea of living out in practice who we are by status is perhaps the essence of Paul's practical appeal throughout Romans.

Much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life- i.e. His resurrection, in that our personal salvation depends upon resurrection from the dead and being given eternal life. This is the significance of our baptism into His death and resurrection. His resurrection, His life, must become ours today.

We must beware lest our theories of the atonement obscure the connection between salvation and *life*- both His life and ours. Having been reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, we are "saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). This is not only a reference to His resurrection. When He died, He outbreathed His breath of life towards His people who stood beneath the cross. His death, and the manner of it, inspires us to live the life which He lived. And this is the eternal kind of life, the life we will eternally live in the Kingdom with Him. His death was not solely the merit that supplies forgiveness. The cross was His life the most fully displayed and triumphant, forever breaking the power of sin over our street-level human existence by what it inspires in us. Our lives, the ordinary minutes and hours of our days, become transformed by His death. For we cannot passively behold Him there, and not respond. We cannot merely mentally assent to correct doctrine about the atonement. It brings forth a life lived; which is exactly why correct understanding of it is so important. We are inspired to engage in His form of life, with all the disciplines of prayer, solitude, simple and sacrificial living, intense study and meditation in the Father's word which characterized our Lord's existence. For His cross was the summation of the life He lived. We quite rightly teach new converts the need for attending meetings, giving of time and money to the Lord's cause, doing good to others, Bible reading. But over and above all these things, response to the cross demands a life seriously modelled upon His life.

5:11 *And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation*- It's not all jam tomorrow, a hope of resurrection from the dead in the future. We joy right now, because through Christ "we have now received the atonement", s.w. "reconciliation", the reconciling spoken of in v. 10. The courtroom 'declaring right' or innocent goes much further- we become personally set right with the Judge Himself. The whole world has in a sense been reconciled to God, but we are those who have "received" that reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).

5:12 *So through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, for that all sinned*– This opening word "so" carries much meaning. It is picked up again in Rom. 5:18, the intervening verses being in

parenthesis. It almost seems that Adam sinned in order that God's grace might be the more powerfully revealed.

In the New Testament we find Paul writing, as a Jew, to both Jews and Gentiles who had converted to Christ, and yet were phased by the huge amount of apostate Jewish literature and ideas which was then floating around. For example, the book of Romans is full of allusions to the "Wisdom of Solomon", alluding and quoting from it, and showing what was right and what was wrong in it. Wisdom 2:24 claimed: "Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it". And Paul alludes to this, and corrects it, by saying in Rom. 5:12: ""By one man [Adam- not 'the devil'] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". This is one of many such examples. Jude does the same thing, quoting and alluding to the apostate Book of Enoch, correcting the wrong ideas, and at times quoting the ideas back against those who used them.

In the same way as Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, Israel at the time of Achan (Josh. 7:1,11) etc. were reckoned as guilty but were not personally responsible for the sins of others, so the Lord Jesus was reckoned as a sinner on the cross; He was made sin for us, who knew no sin personally (2 Cor. 5:21). He carried our sins by His association with us, prefigured by the way in which Israel's sins were transferred to the animal; but He personally was not a sinner because of His association with us. The degree of our guilt by association is hard to measure, but in some sense we sinned "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12 AVmg.) In the context of Rom. 5, Paul is pointing an antithesis between imputed *sin* by association with Adam, and imputed *righteousness* by association with Christ. In response to the atonement we have experienced, should we not like our Lord be reaching out to touch the lepers, associating ourselves with the weak in order to bring them to salvation- rather than running away from them for fear of 'guilt by association'?

The difficulty we have in understanding our sinning somehow "in Adam" may be the result of our failure to appreciate the extent of corporate solidarity in Hebrew thinking. This has been documented at great depth in H.W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (4). This corporate solidarity (even if "corporate *personality*" is a bridge too far) doesn't mean that we personally sinned with Adam or are directly culpable for his sin. Adam is everyman- the Hebrew "adam" means just that, man. The concern expressed by many as to why babies and the mentally unaccountable still die is a valid one, but I don't think it's solved by postulating that they sinned "in Adam". Paul is writing to Christians in Rome, and he is explaining why *they* die. The question of infants isn't in his purview here. Likewise when he talks about "death" in Romans, he seems to often have in view the second death, the permanent death to be meted out at the judgment seat to those condemned for their sins, rather than 'death' in the general sense. Such death, condemnation at the last day, passes upon us all, but all in Adam in this sense are also those who are now in Christ. It is this apparent paradox which can lead to the almost schizophrenic feelings for Christians which Paul explains in Romans 7. The apparent parallel drawn between those "in Adam" and those "in Christ" would suggest that those "in Adam" whom Paul has in view are not every human being, but those now "in Christ" who have also been, and still are in a sense, "in Christ".

Paul emphasized that it was by one male, Adam, that sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12)- in designed contrast to the contemporary Jewish idea that Eve was to be demonized as the *femme fatale*, the woman who brought sin into the world. Thus Ecclesiasticus 25:4: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die". Paul is alluding to this and insisting quite the opposite- that Adam , the male, was actually the one initially responsible. Paul can hardly be accused of being against women! Another example of Paul's conscious rebellion against the contemporary position of women is to be found in Rom. 5:12: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin". This is an intended rebuttal of Ecclesiasticus 25:24: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die". This allusion is one of many reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired. The idea that women were second class because Eve, not Adam, was the source of sin was widespread. Tertullian (*On Female Dress*, 1.1) wrote: "You [woman] are the first deserter of the Divine law… on account of your desert, that is, death, the Son of God had to die". And Paul is consciously countering that kind of thinking.

Adam: The First Sinner

The classical view of the fall supposes that as Eve's teeth sunk into the fruit, the first sin was committed, and soon afterwards Adam followed suite, resulting in the curse falling upon humanity. What I want to discuss is whether the eating of the fruit was in fact the first sin. If it was, then Eve sinned first. Straight away, the Bible-minded believer comes up with a problem: the New Testament unmistakably highlights Adam as the first sinner; by *his* transgression sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). So sin was not in the world before *his* transgression. The ground was cursed for the sake of *Adam's* sin (Gen. 3:17). This all suggests that Eve wasn't the first sinner. The fact Eve was deceived into sinning doesn't mean she didn't sin (1 Tim. 2:14). She was punished for her sin; and in any case, ignorance doesn't mean that sin doesn't count as sin (consider the need for offerings of ignorance under the Law). So, Eve sinned; but Adam was the first sinner, before *his* sin, sin had not entered the world. We must also remember that Eve was deceived by the snake, and on account of this was "(implicated / involved) in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). "The transgression". Which transgression? Surely Adam's (Rom. 5:14); by listening to the snake she became implicated in Adam's sin. The implication is that "the transgression" was already there for her to become implicated in it by listening to the serpent. This is the very opposite to the idea of *Adam* being implicated in *Eve's* sin.

So I want to suggest that in fact the eating of the fruit was not the first sin; it was the final physical consequence of a series of sins, spiritual weakness and sinful attitudes on Adam's part. They were mainly sins of omission rather than commission, and for this reason we tend to not notice them; just as we tend to treat our own sins of omission far less seriously than our sins of commission. What happened in Eden was that the garden was planted, Adam was placed in it, and commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The animals are then brought before him for naming; then he is put into a deep sleep, and Eve is created. *Then* the very first command Adam and Eve jointly received was to have children, and go out into the whole earth (i.e. out of the Garden of Eden) and subdue it to themselves (Gen. 1:28). The implication is that this command was given as soon as Eve was created. There he was, lying down, with his wife beside him, "a help meet"; literally, 'an opposite one'. And they were commanded to produce seed, and then go out of the garden and subdue the earth. It would have been obvious to him from his observation of the animals that his wife was

physiologically and emotionally designed for him to produce seed by. She was designed to be his 'opposite one', and there she was, lying next to him. Gen. 2:24 implies that he should have cleaved to her and become one flesh by reason of the very way in which she was created out of him. And yet he evidently did not have intercourse with her, seeing that they failed to produce children until after the fall. If he had consummated his marriage with her, presumably she would have produced children (this deals a death blow to the fantasies of Adam and Eve having an idyllic sexual relationship in Eden before the fall). Paul saw Eve at the time of her temptation as a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2,3). Instead, Adam put off obedience to the command to multiply. There seems an allusion to this in 1 Cor. 7:5, where Paul says that married couples should come together in intercourse "lest Satan (cp. the serpent) tempt you for your incontinency". Depending how closely one reads Scripture, there may be here the suggestion that Paul saw Adam's mistake in Eden as not 'coming together' with his wife.

But Adam said something to Eve (as they lay there?). He alone had been commanded not to eat the tree of knowledge. Yet when Eve speaks to the serpent, it is evident that Adam had told her about it, but not very deeply. She speaks of "the tree that is in the midst of the garden" rather than "the tree of knowledge". She had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, even though this is not what God had told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). So we are left with the idea that Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said 'Now you see that tree over there in the middle, *don't you even touch it* or else there'll be trouble, O.K.'. She didn't *understand*, he didn't *explain* that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it- unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam's emphasis was on not *committing the* sin of eating the fruit; he said nothing to her about the need to multiply and subdue the earth. There are similarities in more conservative Christian groups; e.g. the father or husband who lays the law down about the need for wearing hats without *explaining* to his wife or daughter *why*.

The next we know, Adam and Eve have separated, she is talking to the snake, apparently indifferent to the command to *subdue* the animals, to be their superiors, rather than listen to them as if they actually had superior knowledge. When the snake questioned: "Yea, *hath* God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree..." (Gen. 3:1), Eve was in a weak position because Adam hadn't fully told her what God had said. Hence she was deceived, but Adam wasn't.

So, *why* didn't Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? I would suggest that he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn't have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..." (Gen. 3:12) seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God's provision of her. Not only was Adam disillusioned with Eve, but he failed to really take God's word seriously. Romans 5 describes Adam's failure in a number of parallel ways: "transgression... sin... offence... *disobedience* (Rom. 5:19)". "Disobedience" translates a Greek word which is uncommon. Strong defines it as meaning 'inattention', coming from a root meaning 'to mishear'. It is the same word translated "neglect to hear" in Mt. 18:17. Adam's sin, his transgression, his offence was therefore not eating the fruit in itself; it was disobedience, neglecting to hear. That this neglecting to hear God's word seriously was at the root of his sin is perhaps reflected in God's judgment on

him: "Because thou hast hearkened unto *the voice of thy wife*..." rather than *God's* voice (Gen. 3:17).
Adam's sin was therefore a neglecting to seriously hear God's word, a dissatisfaction with and effective rejection of his God-given wife, a selfish unwillingness to leave the garden of Eden and go out and subdue the earth (cp. our natural instincts), and a neglecting of his duty to multiply children in God's image (cp. preaching and pastoral work). All these things were sins of omission; he may well have reasoned that he would get around to them later. All these wrong attitudes and sins of omission, apparently unnoticed and uncondemned, led to the final folly of eating the fruit: the first sin of commission. And how many of our more public sins are prefaced by a similar process? Truly Adam's sin was the epitome of all our sins. Romans 5 points an antithesis between Adam and Christ. Adam's one act of disobedience which cursed us is set off against Christ's one act of righteousness which blessed us. Yet Christ's one act was not just His death; we are saved by His life too (Rom. 5:10). Christ lived a life of many acts of righteousness and refusal to omit any part of His duty, and crowned it with one public act of righteousness in His death. The implication is that Adam committed a series of disobediences which culminated in one public act of commission: he ate the fruit.

There are three lines of argument which confirm this picture of what happened in Eden which we have presented. Firstly, Adam and Eve were ashamed at their nakedness. Perhaps this was because they realized what they should have used their sexuality for. Eating the tree of knowledge gave them knowledge of good (i.e. they realized the good they should have done in having children) and also evil (the capacities of their sexual desire?). Adam first called his wife "woman", but after the fall he called her "Eve" because he recognized she was the mother of living ones (Gen. 3:20). By doing so he seems to be recognizing his failure of not reproducing through her as God had originally asked him. The way they immediately produce a child after the fall is surely an expression of their repentance.
Secondly, it seems that God punishes sin in a way which is appropriate to the sin. Consider how David so often asks God to take the wicked in their own snare- and how often this happens. The punishment of Adam and Eve was appropriate to the sins they committed. What Adam wasn't bothered to do, i.e. have intercourse with his woman, became the very thing which now every fallen man will sell his soul for. They ate the tree of *knowledge*, they *knew* they were naked, and then Adam *knew* Eve (Gen. 4:1); this chain of connection certainly suggests that sexual desire, whilst not wrong in itself, was part of the result of eating the tree. There is an artless poetic justice and appropriacy in this which seems simply Divine. What they couldn't be bothered to do became the very thing which has probably generated more sin and desire to do than anything else. Adam was to rule over Eve as a result of the fall- the very thing he wasn't bothered to do. Eve's punishment was that her desire was for her husband- perhaps suggesting that she too had no desire for Adam sexually, and therefore was willing to delay obedience to the command to multiply. They were both driven out of the garden- perhaps reflecting how they should have left the garden in obedience to God's command to go out and subdue the natural creation to themselves. Because Adam wasn't bothered to do this, even when it was within his power, therefore nature was given a special power against man which he would never be able to overcome, and which would eventually defeat him (Gen. 3:17-19). This all shows the logic of obedience; we will be made to pay the price of obedience even if we disobey- therefore it is logical to obey.

Thirdly, there seems evidence that the eating of the fruit happened very soon after their creation. Eve hadn't seen the tree before the serpent pointed it out to her (Gen. 3:6); and consider that they could eat of all the trees, but not of the tree of knowledge. But what about the tree of life? This wasn't forbidden, and yet had they eaten of it, they would have lived for ever. We are told that this tree brings forth fruit every month (Rev. 22:2); so presumably it had not fruited, implying the fall was within the first month after creation.

The practical outcome of what happened in Eden is that we are to see in Adam's sin an epitome of our essential weaknesses. And how accurate it is. His failure was principally due to sins of omission, of delaying to do God's will because it didn't take his fancy. Time and again Biblical history demonstrates that sins of silence and omission are just as fatal as sins of public, physical commission (e.g. Gen. 20:16; 38:10). To omit to hate evil is the same as to commit it (Ps. 36:4). Because David omitted to enforce the Law's requirements concerning the transport of the tabernacle, a man died. His commission of good didn't outweigh his omission here (1 Chron. 15:13). The Jews were condemned by the Lord for building the sepulchres of the prophets without erecting a placard stating that their fathers had killed them. We have a debt to preach to the world; we are their debtors, and yet this isn't how we often see it (Rom. 1:14). Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required (1 Sam. 8:8). Adam stayed in the garden rather than go out to subdue the earth. Our equivalent is our spiritual selfishness, our refusal to look outside of ourselves into the world of others. Because things like disinterest in preaching or inattention to subduing our animal instincts are sins of *omission* rather than commission, we too tend to overlook them. We effectively neglect to hear God's word, although like Adam we may make an appearance of half-heartedly teaching it to others. And even when we do this, like Adam we tend to focus on *avoidal of committing sin* rather than examining ourselves for the likelihood of *omission*, not least in our lack of spiritual *responsibility* for others. Because of his spiritual laziness, Adam's sin led Eve into deception and thereby sin, and brought suffering on untold billions. His sin is the epitome of ours. So let us really realize: none of us sins or is righteous unto ourselves. There are colossal ramifications of our every sin and our every act of righteousness on others.

5:13 *For until the law sin was in the world*- This could be Paul's way of countering the objection that his teaching that it was the Law of Moses which brought condemnation (Rom. 4:15) wrongly implied that there could have been no death before the Law.

But sin is not imputed when there is no law!- We do not have to appear at the day of judgment and answer for our sin if we didn't know God's Law, and we broke it in ignorance. Sin is not therefore imputed to those who are not under law, for whom effectively there is no such law.

5:14 *Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression*- Paul is demonstrating that the whole world is under sin, even those who don't know God's law. They die because they themselves sin, albeit in ignorance, and because of their relation to Adam. He's building up the picture of every single human being as having a desperate

need for forgiveness and finding the answer in Jesus- who therefore is the Saviour designed and intended for all people, not just Jews.

Who is a figure of him that was to come- A phrase the Jewish writings used about Moses, but which Paul tellingly reapplies to the Lord Jesus (5). Paul's letter is densely packed with allusions to Jewish writings- and this explains some of the apparently awkward grammatical constructions and some of the otherwise strange phrases, often using words and concepts which don't occur in the rest of Paul's writings. Instead of spilling ink trying to exactly understand some of the phrases in Romans- and this letter has produced more tortuous, unhelpful, highly abstracted commentary than any other- it may be wiser to assume that those difficult passages are in fact allusions to extant Jewish writings or thinking contemporary with Paul, which at present we are unaware of.

5:15 *But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift*- This begins an extended comparison and contrast between the results of Adam's sin and disobedience, and the grace [s.w. "free gift"] given as a result of Christ's obedience. This is all in demonstration of the comment in 5:14 that Adam- or more specifically, "Adam's transgression"- was a type of the Lord Jesus. The type works not only by similarity but by inverse contrasts. By doing so, we see how God rejoices in showing grace, almost playing intellectual games to demonstrate how much greater and more abundant is His grace than the power of sin. And this is done in order to persuade us, the doubting readership, of the simple reality- that His grace is for real, and we really will be and are saved and secure in Christ.

For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ- The point of similarity here is that just one person can affect many. We may doubt that the obedience of one man, the Lord Jesus, 2000 years ago, can really have much to do with you and me today. That it all happened, I don't think we seriously doubt any more than we doubt standard historical facts. But a man hanging on a stake of wood on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April, just outside a Middle Eastern city… can He really do anything for all of us here today? We may never articulate it, say it in so many words. But that is at least our unspoken, unverbalized, unformulated, under the bedcovers nagging doubt, the bane of our deepest spiritual psychology, the fear of our soul, the cloud that comes betwixt as we look up at the steely silence of the skies, or gaze at the ceiling rose as we lay upon our bed. Paul tackles that doubt (and Romans 1-8 is really a tackling of human doubts about God's grace) by quoting the example of Adam. Through 'just' one, death and suffering affected many. If Adam is proof enough of 'the power of one'- then how much more is Jesus?

Abound to the many- The Greek means to superabound, to be lavished, to be poured out in over abundance. The "gift" which so abounds is surely a reference to the language of Mt. 25:29, where at the final judgment, he that has shall be given to yet more, "in abundance" [s.w.]. Yet our receipt of that grace in this life is a foretaste of that superabundance we are yet to receive. Superabundant generosity characterizes God. We note that when the Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, there superabounded 12 full baskets and then seven full baskets (Mt. 14:20; 15:37). Why the apparent over creation of food? For what purpose was there such waste? Why is the same strange word for superabundance used both times? And why is it used

in *three of the four Gospels* when this incident is recorded (Lk. 9:17; Jn. 6:12,13; Mt. 14:20; 15:37)? Surely to give us the impression of the lavishing of God's gift, His grace, when He provides for His children. We have experienced the same from Him, and should be like this towards others. Paul often uses the word in 2 Corinthians in appealing for generosity to poorer brethren; he speaks of how God's grace has superabounded, and how we also ought to superabound in kindness and generosity to others (2 Cor. 9:8). We will eternally know the truth and reality of all this, because we will not only be given eternal life, but life "more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). We must ask ourselves to what extent we show that same quality of super abundant grace to others.

5:16 *This gift is unlike the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment came because of one man to condemnation*- The result of the legal case, the final verdict. This is contrasted with "the gift", as if the judge hands down the verdict but then profers us the gift of being declared right. The verdict can mean at times the actual execution of the punishment (as in Rom. 2:2,3; 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:29,34). In this sense, we were actually condemned- not threatened with it and let off.

But the free gift came out of many trespasses to justification- Dikaioma, s.w. "righteousness". The free gift of salvation apart from our works actually inspires righteousness- performed in gratitude for salvation, rather than in order to attain salvation. Or we could still read the word as referring to a decree which counts us as right, reversing that of condemnation.

The contrast is between the one man who brought the verdict of condemnation upon many, by one sin [for Adam is everyman]- and the one man, Jesus, who brought the verdict of being declared right for many people who had committed many sins. The paradox is that 'just' one sin lead to the condemnation of mankind, but our many sins lead to us being declared right- by grace. The reasoning here indirectly suggests that Christ was also "a man" as Adam- and certainly not a god.

5:17 *For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned on account of the one man*- This again highlights the superabundance of the grace received. By Adam's sin, we became reigned over by death; by Christ, we sinners, we who are like Adam, not only become free from death and shall live eternally, but we shall "reign", as rulers in God's future Kingdom (Lk. 19:19; Rev. 5:10). Note the contrast so far in these verses is between Adam and Christ, and between Adam's sin and… Christ. We expect the connection to be between Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness and obedience. This is the connection made later, but for now, we simply read of Christ as the counterpart to both Adam and Adam's sin. It wasn't so much one act of obedience which countered Adam's one sin; rather was it a life lived, a character developed, a person, rather than a single act of obedience, as perhaps implied by the legalism of Judaism, whereby one sin could be cancelled out by an act of obedience. The reality however is that Adam's one sin was no mere casual infringement which had no significant consequence- 'just' one sin leads to all the death and suffering which Adam's sin brought. Our sins are to be understood in the same way. Adam must have held his head in his hands as he stood somewhere eastward in Eden, and sobbed to the effect "My God, what have I done…", and from tear filmed eyes looked out upon a creation starting to buckle and wrinkle. If we accept Paul's point that Adam is everyman [5:12], that whilst we suffer because of what he did, this is because we would have

done the same if in his shoes… then we will feel the same for our falls, our slips, our rebellions, our sins.

Much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life on account of the one man, Jesus Christ- For the Macedonians "the abundance of their joy… abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). Their joy for what the Lord had done for them, for the "abundance" [s.w.] of His grace and giving to them (Rom. 5:17), led to their giving to the poor.
Throughout Romans 5, Paul makes a seamless connection between the reign of God's grace now, and our future reigning in the literal Kingdom of God to be established materially upon earth at the Lord's return: Grace reigns *unto* eternal life, i.e. the result of the reign of grace now is eternal life in the future (Rom. 5:21)... and thus "the ones receiving the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness in life *will* reign through the one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Elsewhere, Paul clearly understands the idea of future reigning as a reference to our ruling in the future Kingdom of God. This is a very real and wonderful hope which we have, and is indeed part of the Gospel. "Israel" means something like 'God rules' (Gen. 32:22-28); His people are those over whom He rules. We therefore are under His Kingdom now, if we accept Christ as King over our lives.

Rom. 5:17,21 draws a parallel between Adam's sin and ours. His tragedy, his desperation, as he looked at his body, at his wife, with new vision; as his wide eyes wandered in tragedy around the garden: all who fall are in that position, eagerly reaching out to the clothing of the slain lamb.

5:18 *So then. As through one act of sin the judgment came to all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came to all men to justification of life*- This verse could be ended with an exclamation mark and be read as a summary, exclaimed in joy and wonder, of the preceding argument. "Justification of life" could be a legal term concerning how a person condemned to death has received "life" through being declared right.

Perhaps we feel that our preaching somehow lacks a sense of power and compulsion of others. Try explicitly telling them about the cross. The apostles recounted the fact of the cross and on this basis appealed for people to be baptized into that death and resurrection. There is an impelling power, an imperative, in the wonder and shame of it all. Joseph saw the Lord's dead body and was compelled to offer for that body to be laid where *his* dead body should have laid. In essence, he lived out the message of baptism. He wanted to identify his body with that of the Lord. He realized that the man Christ Jesus was truly his representative. And so he wanted to identify with Him. And properly presented, this will be the power of response to the preaching of the cross today. "Through one act of righteousness [the cross] the free gift came unto all men to justification of life" (Rom. 5:18)- yet "all men" only receive that justification if they hear this good news and believe it. This is why we must take the Gospel "unto all men" (surely an allusion to the great commission)- so that, in that sense, the wondrous cross of Christ will have been the more 'worthwhile'. Through our preaching, yet more of those "all men" who were potentially enabled to live for ever will indeed do so. This is why the Acts record so frequently connects the preaching of the cross with men's belief. Negatively, men do not believe if they reject the "report" of the crucifixion (Jn. 12:38,39).

5:19 *For as through the one man's disobedience*- Adam's sin of commission (i.e. eating the fruit) may well have been a result of his sins of omitting to go forth out of the centre of the garden and multiply. By one man's inattention (Rom. 5:19 Gk.) sin came into the world.

The many were made sinners- Gk. 'to appoint, ordain'. It's not that we as innocent people [which we are not anyway] were turned into sinners because someone else sinned, far away and long ago. Rather were "all men"- and Paul uses this term to emphasize how Jew and Gentile are in the same position- put into the category of Adam, of sinners, of guilty, of flesh. But the good news is that there can be a category change- if we can be "made sinners" we can likewise be made righteous.

Even so through the obedience of the one man shall the many be made righteous- A reference to the crucifixion, or to a life of obedience? Significantly, Paul writes in Romans of baptism as being "obedience" (Rom. 1:5; 6:16,17; 15:18; 16:26, also Acts 6:7). It's as if by obeying the command to die with Him by baptism into His death, we are associating with His actual obedience to death in the cross. The Lord spoke of having been given a specific "command" by the Father to die on the cross (Jn. 10:18), which would encourage us to interpret His "obedience" here as His obedience to death on the cross.

5:20 *Now the law was added to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more*- "Was added / entered" is s.w. only Gal. 2:4, where the Judaizers 'sneaked in' to the church. Why exactly Paul uses such a word isn't altogether clear to me, nor to any of the many expositors I've read.

In the context, "the trespass" [singular] refers to the specific sin of Adam- "the offence of the one man" (5:18). The Law was intended on one hand to bring life (Rom. 7:10); it was "holy, just and good". But the effect of it in practice was to accentuate sin, and this result of human failure was also somehow under the overall hand of God. He on the one hand cannot be held guilty of leading men into sin by creating the concept of Divine law; for that Law which He gave was ordained to bring life. Yet He worked with and through human weakness, so that in the bigger picture, the result was that the Law convicted men of their sin *so that* God's grace could superabound, abound yet more than sin abounded. God uses sin, and doesn't just turn away from human failure in disgust; and in this we see a huge lesson for ourselves, we who are confronted on all sides by serious human failure.

Paul knew the 'abounding' aspect of the Father, when he wrote of how God does exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). How many times have we found that we prayed for one thing, and God gave us something so very much better? I see a kind of similarity with the way that God brought in the Law "that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Rom. 5:20). God set up a situation in order that in due time, He could lavish His grace the more. One almost wonders whether this is one of the reasons why God allowed the whole concept of sin to exist at all. After all, the God of boundless possibilities surely had ways to achieve His ends without having to allow a concept like sin in the first place. Seeing there is no personal Satan, the intellectual origin of the concept of sin surely lies with God. And perhaps He chose this simply as a way of being better able to express His amazing grace and love to sinners. Having lambasted Israel for their sins and described in detail their coming judgment, God then makes a

strange comment, apparently out of context with what He has just been saying: "And therefore will Yahweh wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Yahweh is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him" (Is. 30:18). God appears to be saying that He delays His actions, that He brings judgment, that He sets Himself *so* far above us- just so that He can get to show yet more mercy to us. Perhaps Joseph was manifesting God in the way he worked out that slow and detailed scheme of dealing with his sinful brethren... it has always seemed to me that he drew out the process just so that he could lead up to a climax of pouring out his maximum grace to them. Whilst the way seems long, "blessed are all they that wait for him". God is even spoken of as concluding (Gk. 'shutting up the eyes') of Israel in the sin of unbelief, "that he might have mercy" upon both them and the Gentiles (Rom. 11:32).

Romans and the *Wisdom of Solomon*

Seeing Romans 1-8 is Paul's inspired exposition of the nature of sin and the Gospel, it's surely surprising that he makes no mention of the words Satan or Devil, let alone 'fallen Angel'. He lays the blame for sin quite clearly upon us and our weakness in the face of internal temptation. And Paul speaks of the Genesis account of the fall of Adam and Eve as if he accepted it just as it is written – he makes no attempt to say that the serpent was a Lucifer or fallen Angel. In fact, closer analysis shows that Paul is consciously rebutting the contemporary Jewish ideas about these things as found in *The Wisdom of Solomon* and other writings. We must remember that in the first century, there was no canonized list of books comprising the "Old Testament" as we now know it. There was therefore a great need to deconstruct the uninspired Jewish writings which were then circulating – hence the many allusions to them in the inspired New Testament writings, in order to help the Jewish believers understand that these writings were uninspired and to be rejected.

The flood of apostate Jewish literature in the first century and just before it all have much to say about Adam's sin (e.g. the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and *Apocalypse of Abraham*), and I submit that Paul writes of Adam's sin in order to deconstruct these wrong interpretations. Wisdom 2:24 claimed: "Through the Devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it". This is actually the first reference to the idea that a being called 'the Devil' envied Adam and Eve and therefore this brought about their temptation and fall. Paul rebuts this by saying that "By one man [Adam – not 'the Devil'] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). This is evidently an allusion by Paul to this wrong idea – and he corrects it. The allusion becomes all the more legitimate when we appreciate that actually Paul is alluding to the *Wisdom of Solomon* throughout his letter to the Romans. This book glorified the Jewish people, making them out to be righteous, blaming sin on the Devil and the Gentiles. By way of allusion to it, Paul shows how the Jews are de-emphasizing sin, not facing up to the fact that all of humanity are under the curse of sin and death, and all therefore need salvation in Christ. This same basic emphasis upon personal responsibility, not blaming others for our sins, not seeing ourselves as pure and everyone else as the problem, is just as relevant today – surrounded as we are by false theologies that make us out to be basically pure, shifting all blame onto a 'Devil' of their own fabrication. It should be noted that this way of alluding to contemporary writings and correcting them is common throughout Scripture – I've elsewhere given examples of where Jude and Peter do this in relation to the Book of

Enoch, and how Genesis 1–3 does this with the views of creation and origins which were common at the time the book of Genesis was compiled.

Wisdom of Solomon 13–14 criticizes the Gentiles for idolatry and sexual immorality. And Paul criticizes the Gentiles for just the same things in Rom. 1:19–27 – in language which clearly alludes to the Wisdom of Solomon. It's as if Paul is reviewing the Wisdom of Solomon and placing a tick by what is right (e.g., that Gentiles are indeed guilty of idolatry and immorality), and a cross by what is wrong in the book. E.P. Sanders has observed: "Romans 1:18–32 is very close to the Wisdom of Solomon, a Jewish book written in Egypt. Paul's reference to 'images representing... birds, animals or reptiles' (Rom. 1:23) points to... Egypt. Birds, animals and reptiles were idolized in Egypt, but not commonly in the rest of the Graeco–Roman world" (E.P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1996) p. 113). The point of the reference to these things would therefore simply be because Paul is alluding to, almost quoting, the Wisdom of Solomon.

Paul's Other Allusions to the Wisdom of Solomon

Having spoken of how "the destroyer" destroyed the Egyptian firstborn, Wisdom 18 goes on to speak of how this same "destroyer" tried to kill Israel in the wilderness, but the evil "destroyer" was stopped by Moses: "For then the blameless man made haste, and stood forth to defend them; and bringing the shield of his proper ministry, even prayer, and the propitiation of incense, set himself against the wrath, and so brought the calamity to an end, declaring that he was thy servant. So he overcame the destroyer, not with strength of body, nor force of arms, but with a word subdued him that punished, alleging the oaths and covenants made with the fathers (Wisdom 18:21,22). Paul in 1 Cor. 10 alludes to this – showing that "the destroyer" was sent by God to punish Israel's sins. The author of Wisdom speaks as if "the destroyer" is some evil being victimizing Israel – and Paul appears to correct that, showing that it was the same "Destroyer" Angel who protected Israel in Egypt who later slew the wicked amongst them. Wisdom 19 makes out that all sins of Israel in the wilderness were committed by Gentiles travelling with them – but Paul's account of Israel's history in 1 Cor. 10 makes it clear that *Israel* sinned and were punished.

It should be noted in passing that 1 Cor. 10:1–4 also alludes to the Jewish legend that the rock which gave water in Num. 21:16–18 somehow followed along behind the people of Israel in the wilderness to provide them with water. Paul is not at all shy to allude to or quote Jewish legends, regardless of their factual truth, in order to make a point [as well as to deconstruct them]. God Himself is not so primitive as to seek to 'cover Himself' as it were by only alluding to true factual history in His word; He so wishes dialogue with people that He appears quite happy for His word to refer to their mistaken ideas, in order to enter into dialogue and engagement with them in terms which they are comfortable with. Another example of allusion to Jewish legend is in Rev. 2:17, where the Lord Jesus speaks of giving His people "of the hidden manna" – referring to the myth that Jeremiah had hidden a golden jar of manna in the Holy of Holies at the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, which then ascended to Heaven and is to return with Messiah. Jesus doesn't correct that myth – He as it were runs with it and uses it as a symbol to describe the reward He will bring. He adds no footnote to the effect 'Now do understand, this is myth, that jar never really ascended to Heaven nor will it come floating back through the skies one day'. Perhaps this is why the New Testament often quotes the Septuagint text, even where it incorrectly renders the

Hebrew original – because God is not so paranoid as to feel bound to only deal in the language of strictly literal truths. If first century people were familiar with the Septuagint, even if is a poor translation of the Hebrew original in places – well OK, God was willing to run with that *in order to engage with people in their language*. And this approach is very helpful in seeking to understand some of the Biblical references to incorrect ideas about Satan and demons.

It seems to me that Paul's allusion to wrong Jewish ideas in order to deconstruct them is actually a hallmark of his inspired writing. Ecclesiasticus is another such Jewish writing which he targets in Romans; Rom. 4:1–8 labours the point that Abraham was declared righteous by faith and not by the Law, which was given after Abraham's time; the covenant promises to Abraham were an expression of grace, and the 'work' of circumcision was done *after* receiving them. All this appears to be in purposeful allusion to the words of Ecclus. 44:21: "Abraham kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with Him".

Allusions From Paul's Letter to The Romans to The Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon	Romans	Comment
Wisdom 4:5 The imperfect branches shall be broken off, their fruit unprofitable, not ripe to eat, yea, meet for nothing [concerning the Gentiles and those in Israel who sinned].	Romans 11:17–20	Israel as an entire nation were the broken off branches; Gentile believers through faith in Christ could become ingrafted branches.
Wisdom 1:13 For God made not death: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living.	Romans 1:32; Romans 5,7	Death is "the judgment of God" – death does come from God. It doesn't come from "the Devil". It was God in Genesis who 'made' death. Death comes from our sin, that's Paul's repeated message – death isn't something made by the 'Devil' just for the wicked.
Wisdom 1:14 For he created all things, that they might have their being: and the generations	Romans 1,5,7	Paul makes many allusions to these words. He shows that all humanity, including Israel, the dwellers upon the earth / land of Israel, are subject to sin and death. Paul argues against the position that God made man good but the Devil

of the world were healthful; and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth: [in the context of the earth / land of Israel]		messed things up – rather does he place the blame upon individual human sin.
Wisdom 8:20 I was a witty child, and had a good spirit. Yea rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled.	Romans 3,7	As a result of Adam's sin, our bodies aren't "undefiled" – we will die, we are born with death sentences in us. "There is none good" (Rom. 3:12); "in my flesh dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18)
Wisdom 10:15 She delivered the righteous people and blameless seed from the nation that oppressed them.	Romans 9–11	Israel were *not* blameless; "there is none righteous, not one" (Rom. 3:10).
Wisdom 12:10 But executing thy judgments upon them by little and little, thou gavest them place of repentance	Romans 2:4	"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). Paul's argument is that it is God's grace in not immediately punishing us as we deserve which should lead us to repentance.
Wisdom 12 raves against the Canaanite nations in the land, saying how wicked they were and stressing Israel's righteousness – e.g. Wisdom 12:11 For it was	Romans 1,2,9–11	Paul uses the very same language about the wickedness of Israel

a cursed seed from the beginning; neither didst thou for fear of any man give them pardon for those things wherein they sinned.		
Wisdom 12:12 For who shall say, What hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgment? or who shall accuse thee for the nations that perish, whom thou made? or who shall come to stand against thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous men?	Romans 8:30–39; 9:19	*Wisdom* marvels at how God judged the wicked Canaanites. But Paul reapplies this language to marvel at God's mercy in saving the faithful remnant of Israel by grace. Paul's answer to "Who shall accuse thee [Israel]?" is that only those in Christ have now no accuser (Rom. 8:34).
Wisdom 12:13 uses the phrase "condemned at the day of the righteous judgment of God" about the condemnation of the Canaanite tribes.	Romans 2:5	Paul stresses that *Israel* will be condemned at the "day of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5)
Wisdom 12:22 Therefore, whereas thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies a thousand times more, to the intent that, when we judge, we should carefully think of thy	Romans 2:1–4; 11:28; 14:4	Paul says that Israel are the "enemies" (Rom. 11:28); and that judging is outlawed for those who are themselves sinners. Paul's case is that we receive mercy at the judgment because we have shown mercy rather than judgment to others.

goodness, and when we ourselves are judged, we should look for mercy.		
Wisdom 13:1 Surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is.	Romans 1,10	*Wisdom*'s implication is that the Gentiles are vain by nature, but Israel aren't, because they aren't ignorant of God, and see Him reflected in the "good things" of His creation. Paul contradicts this. He says that *all* humanity is "vain... by nature"; Israel are "ignorant of God" (Rom. 10:3); and it is believers in Christ who perceive God from the things which He has made. Indeed, it is Israel who are now "without excuse" because they refuse to see "the goodness of God" [cp. "good things"] in the things which He has created (Rom. 1:20–30).
Wisdom 12:26 But they that would not be reformed by that correction, wherein he dallied with them, shall feel a judgment worthy of God. Wisdom 12:27 For, look, for what things they grudged, when they were punished, that is, for them whom they thought to be gods; now being punished in them, when they saw it, they acknowledged him to be the true God, whom before they denied to know: and therefore	Romans 1	It is *Israel* and all who continue in sin who are worthy of judgment (Rom. 1:32). It was *Israel* who changed the true God into what they claimed to be gods (Rom. 1:20–26).

came extreme damnation upon them.		
Wisdom 13:5–8: For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen. But yet for this they are the less to be blamed: for they peradventure err, seeking God, and desirous to find him. For being conversant in his works they search him diligently, and believe their sight: because the things are beautiful that are seen. Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned.	Romans 1,2	It is Gentile Christians who 'found' God (Rom. 10:20). It was they who were led by the beauty of God's creation to be obedient to Him in truth (Rom. 2:14,15). It was Israel who failed to 'clearly see' the truth of God from the things which He created (Rom. 1:20).
Wisdom 14:8 But that which is made with hands is cursed, as well it, as he that made it: he, because he made it; and it, because, being corruptible, it was called god.	Romans 1:23	It was Israel who changed the glory of the true God into images made by their hands and called them gods (Rom. 1:23)
Wisdom 14:9 For the ungodly and his ungodliness are both alike hateful unto God.	Romans 4:5; 5:6	Paul argues that Christ died for the ungodly before they knew Him (Rom. 5:6); God justifies the ungodly not by their works but by their faith (Rom. 4:5)
Wisdom 14:31 For it is not the power of them by whom	Romans 5	Paul argues that the offence of man is met by God's grace in Christ, and not dealt with by God through taking out vengeance against sinners.

they swear: but it is the just vengeance of sinners, that punisheth always the offence of the ungodly.		It was the “offence” of Adam which was used by God’s grace to forge a path to human salvation (Rom. 5:15–20). As “the offence” abounded, so therefore did God’s grace (Rom. 5:20).
Wisdom 15:2 For if we [Israel] sin, we are thine, knowing thy power: but we will not sin, knowing that we are counted thine.	Romans 3	Paul argues that we *all* sin – it’s not a case of ‘we don’t sin, because we are God’s people’ (Rom. 3:23). And knowledge isn’t the basis for immortality, rather this is the gift of God by grace (Rom. 6:23). Paul leaves us in no doubt that there’s no question of “*if* we sin”; for we are all desperate sinners, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 3:23). And our sin really does separate us from God and from His Son; we are “none of His” if we sin (Rom. 8:9 – cp. “we are thine”). We are not automatically “His... even if we sin”. Paul speaks of how both Jew and Gentile are equally under sin; whereas *Wisdom* claims that there’s a difference: “While therefore thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies [i.e. the Gentiles] ten thousand times more” (12:22).
Wisdom 15:3 For to know thee is perfect righteousness: yea, to know thy power is the root of immortality.		
Wisdom 15:7 For the potter, tempering soft earth, fashioneth every vessel with much labour for our service: yea, of the same clay he	Romans 9:21–30	*Wisdom* mocks the potter for making idols – Paul shows that God is the potter and Israel the clay, and they will be discarded like an idol. For they became like that which they worshipped. Paul uses

maketh both the vessels that serve for clean uses, and likewise also all such as serve to the contrary: but what is the use of either sort, the potter himself is the judge.		the same language as *Wisdom* here – he speaks of how the Divine potter uses "the same clay to make different types of vessels.
Wisdom 15 often laments that the Gentiles worship the created more than the creator	Romans 1 and 2	Romans 1 and 2 make the point, using this same language, that Israel as well as the Gentiles are guilty of worshipping the created more than creator
Wisdom 18:8 For wherewith thou didst punish our adversaries, by the same thou didst glorify us, whom thou hadst called.	cp. Romans 8:30	The "us" who have been "called" and are to be "glorified" are those in Christ – not those merely born Jews.
Wisdom 18:13 For whereas they would not believe anything by reason of the enchantments; upon the destruction of the firstborn, they acknowledged this people to be the sons of God.	cp. Romans 8:14	The true "sons of God" are those in Christ, the Son of God; for not those who merely call themselves "Israel" are the children of God, as *Wisdom* wrongly argues (Rom. 9:6)
As for the ungodly, wrath came upon them without mercy unto the end: for he knew before what they would do... For the destiny, whereof they were worthy, drew		What *Wisdom* says about the Gentile world and Egypt, Paul applies to Israel in their sinfulness. And he stresses many times that the result of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), not "torments" in the way the Jews understood them. "Wrath... without

them unto this end, and made them forget the things that had already happened, that they might fulfil the punishment which was wanting to their torments" (Wisdom 19:1,4)

mercy" is a phrase Paul uses about the coming condemnation of those Jews who refused to accept Christ (Rom. 1:18; 2:5,8). Paul uses the idea of foreknowledge which occurs here in *Wisdom*, but uses it in Romans 9 and 11 to show that foreknowledge is part of the grace of God's predestination of His true people to salvation. It is the Jews who reject Christ who are "worthy" of death (Rom. 1:32) – not the Gentile world. No wonder the Jews so hated Paul!

5:21 *So that as sin reigned with the result of death*- Or, Gk., *in* death. We have changed masters and also changed our Kings. Our status has changed, but we must still try to live out that status change in practice- hence "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it" (Rom. 6:12). Grace reigns as King right now, in that Christ reigns- and thereby we are right now in the sphere of His Kingdom.

Even so might grace reign through righteousness with the result of eternal life-through Jesus Christ our Lord- In that God's grace operates through the 'mechanism' of God and Christ's righteousness being counted to us, so that we are counted as righteous, justified. And this comes to its ultimate term in physical, literal terms in our being given eternal life at the final judgment.

Grace, and the forgiveness it brings, reigns as a King (Rom. 5:21), in the sense that the real belief that by grace we are and will be saved, will bring forth a changed life (Tit. 2:11,12). The wonder of grace will mean that our lives become focused upon Jesus, the one who enabled that grace. Grace will be the leading and guiding principle in our lives, comprised as they are of a long string of thoughts and actions. And as with every truly focused life, literally *all* other things become therefore and thereby of secondary value. The pathway of persistent, focused prayer, the power of the hope of glory in the Kingdom, regular repentance… day by day our desires are redirected towards the things of God.

You cannot have abstract diabolism; the evil desires that are in a man's heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore 'the Devil' is personified. Sin is often personified as a ruler (e.g. Rom. 5:21; 6:6,17; 7:13–14). It is understandable, therefore, that the 'Devil' is also personified, seeing that 'the Devil' also refers to sin. In the same way, Paul speaks of us having two beings, as it were, within our flesh

(Rom. 7:15–21): the man of the flesh, 'the Devil', fights with the man of the spirit. Yet it is evident that there are not two literal, personal beings fighting within us.

Paul makes a seamless connection between the reign of God's grace now, and our future reigning in the literal Kingdom of God to be established materially upon earth at the Lord's return: Grace reigns *unto* eternal life, i.e. the result of the reign of grace now is eternal life in the future (Rom. 5:21)... and thus "the ones receiving the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness in [this] life *will* reign through the one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). The idea is that if grace reigns in our lives, then we will reign in the future Kingdom.

Notes
(1) Dorothee Sölle, *Christ The Representative* (London: S.C.M., 1967) p. 69.
(2) W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1957).
(3) G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993 ed.) pp. 450-456.
(4) H.W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).
(5) For documentation see Robin Scroggs*, The Last Adam*: *A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) pp. 80,81.

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*- Paul says he had been slanderously accused of teaching this (Rom. 3:8). He's here not only answering that false charge, but more positively, analysing what our response should be to the great grace in which we now stand. In doing so, he expounds in more detail how we come to that position of being "in Christ", what "the obedience of faith" means in practice. And he's quite clear that this faith in Christ is expressed in the act of baptism.

Paul didn't just decide to write about baptism in Romans 6; the classic exposition of baptism which we find there is within a context. And it's not an appeal for people to be baptized- it's written to baptized believers, appealing for them to live out in practice the "in Christ" status which they had been given as a result of their baptisms. If we really feel the result of our baptism, we will not "continue in sin". Martin Luther used to overcome temptation by taking a chalk and writing *baptizatus sum*- 'I am baptized'. And therefore we simply cannot continue in servitude to sin. As Karl Barth put it in his needle-sharp analysis of baptism's implications: "Baptism recalls me to the service of witness, since it recalls me to daily repentance" (Karl Barth, *Dogmatics In Outline* (London: S.C.M., 1972 ed.) p. 151). It should be noted that allusions to baptism in Paul's letters are in passages where Paul is trying to correct misunderstandings about unity and way of life (Rom. 6; 8:12-17; Gal. 3:27-4:6; 1 Cor. 1-4, 12). The early brethren had a tendency to forget the implications of baptism. And so it is with us all today. Entering the body of Christ by baptism means that our sins are in a sense against our own brethren, our spiritual body, as well as against the Lord personally. Like the prodigal, we realize we sin against Heaven and men.

The Implications Of Baptism

One of the reasons for baptism is perhaps so that we realize that we can't just drift into relationship with God; there must be a concrete point at which we decide for Him and His Son. The whole thing is so counter-instinctive, as Naaman discovered- to get wet, with all the awkwardness of it being so public, to be exposed and vulnerable to the view of others, to be dipped under water by another person... it's not exactly painless and effortless. Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). God placed His Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Further, in the first century, such baptisms were required of Gentiles who wished to become proselyte Jews and thus enter "Israel". For orthodox Jews to submit to baptism demanded a lot- for it implied they were not by birth part of the true Israel as they had once proudly thought. The Jews thought of Israel in the very terms which Paul applies to Jesus: "We Thy people whom Thou hast honoured and hast called the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, Near and Beloved One" (*The Apocalypse Of Ezra* 6.55-58 (London: S.P.C.K., 1917 ed.) p. 47). The New Testament uses these titles to describe the Lord Jesus Christ- and we must be baptized into Him in order to be in His Name and titles. The Lord Jesus was thus portrayed as Israel idealized and personified, all that Israel the suffering servant should have been; thus only by baptism into Christ of Jew and Gentile could they become part of the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal. 3:27-29). The act of baptism into Christ is no less radical for us in our contexts today than it was for first century Jews. All we once mentally held dear, we have to give up.

Our Relationship With God

Being baptized into the Name has quite some implications. In Hebrew thought, you called your name upon that which was your personal property- hence a wife took on the name of her husband because he placed it upon her. By baptism into the Name of the Father and His Son, we become their personal property, their woman, upon whom they have unique claims and obligations. Baptism in this sense is a kind of marriage contract with none less than the God of the universe. We can't drift into relationship with God; God has designed the whole experience of baptism so that we once and for all make a choice, to be with Him and not this world, to be in Christ and covered in Him, rather than wandering in the rags of our own righteousness and occasional half-hearted stabs at real spirituality.

There is no doubt that the cross and baptism into that death was central to the preaching message of the early brethren. According to the Bible, baptism is essential to salvation; yet we can't draw hoops around God and limit His salvation ultimately. The completeness and reality of the redemption achieved is expressed in Hebrews with a sense of finality, and we ought to not let that slip from our presentation of the Gospel either. There in the cross, the justice and mercy of God are brought together in the ultimate way. There in the cross is the appeal. Some of the early missionaries reported how they could never get any response to their message until they explained the cross; and so, with our true doctrinal understanding of it, it is my belief that the cross is what has the power of conversion. A man cannot face it and not have a deep impression of the absoluteness of the issues involved in faith and unbelief, in

choosing to accept or reject the work of the struggling, sweating, gasping Man who hung on the stake. It truly is a question of believe or perish. Baptism into that death and resurrection is essential for salvation. Of course we must not bully or intimidate people into faith, but on the other hand, a preaching of the cross cannot help but have something compulsive and urgent and passionate about it. For we appeal to men on God's behalf to accept the work of the cross as efficacious for them. In this sense baptism is essential to salvation *from our perspective.* It can be that much of our preaching somehow fails in urgency and entreaty. We seem to be in places too expository, or too attractive with the peripherals, seeking to please men... or be offering good advice, very good advice indeed, background Bible knowledge, how to read the Bible effectively... .all of which may be all well and good, but we should be preaching good news, not good advice. The message of the cross is of a grace and real salvation which is almost too good to believe. It isn't Bible background or archaeology or potshots at interpreting Bible prophecy. It is the Man who had our nature hanging there perfect, full of love, a light in this dark world... and as far as we perceive the wonder of it all, as far as this breaks in upon us, so far we will hold it forth to this world. If we think there could be other paths to salvation, then we wouldn't preach Christ as we do. The zeal of the early brethren to witness for Him was because, as they explained, there is no other name under Heaven whereby we may be saved. People do not drift into covenant relationship with God; they have to consciously chose, and God has instituted baptism as a means to that end; to force a man or woman to a conscious decision and crossing of boundaries. And this is why we preach towards baptism, with an eye on future conversion, knowing that baptism is essential to salvation.

Lk. 3:12 records how there "came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?". There is a parallel between desiring baptism and realizing that they must *do* something concretely in their lives. The baptism process brings us into the realm of God's gracious forgiveness and redemption, and into living contact with the real Christ. There is no way we can be passive to this and do nothing about it.

6:2 *God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live in it?*- The idea is of living in the sphere of sin, identifying ourselves with being “in Adam” rather than the sphere of “in Christ”. Romans 6 is talking about being in one of two spheres- in the flesh, and in the Spirit; in Adam, or in Christ; continuing in condemnation, or rejoicing in our justified status in Christ. It is actually impossible for us to ‘live in sin’ for a moment, because we are no longer “in” that sphere or position.

Baptism is a change of masters- but we are still bondslaves, not of sin, but of God. The implications of this figure may not be immediately apparent to the modern mind. We are totally committed to the Master- this is who we are, bondslaves. In Gen. 44:9, being dead is paralleled with being a slave; and there appears a parallel between being a bondslave and dying in Gen. 44:9,17. Indeed, Romans 6 draws the same parallel- death to sin is part of being a slave of Christ. The very fact we are baptized means we should not continue in sin, seeing we are dead to it (Rom. 6:2). This is one of the most basic implications of a first principle which we live in ignorance of most of our days.

6:3 *Or are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?–* A common appeal of Paul’s in his letters (Rom. 7:1; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13). His earnest desire was that his readership would appreciate the real import of what they knew in theory. This is the most

profound truth- that we are united with His death, in life. Our life is a living out of His death. We are dead with Him, but yet we are dying with Him, and so Phil. 2 appeals for us to live with the mind He had as He was dying. We are in union with Christ (Gal. 3:27), "in Christ". Man is thereby not alone in this world. We have somebody. And it is that desire to have somebody which drives this world, psychologically. It drives their morals, it drives their worldview deep within them. As ever, man asks the right questions and wants the right things, but looks for the answers in the wrong places. The answer is ultimately in union with the Lord Jesus, which begins at baptism. But man has a tendency to ever be in search of ideal realtionship, and there's more fun in the search than in finding. And when he finds the Lord, he too easily treats Him as another town along the endless toad to Wigan Pier, and moves on in the search.

Galatians was one of Paul's earlier letters. In it, he speaks of his own baptism: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live" (Gal. 2:19-21). Years later he writes to the Romans about *their* baptisms, in exactly the same language: "All of us who have been baptized… our old self was crucified with him… the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:1-10). He clearly seeks to forge an identity between his readers and himself; their baptisms were [and are] as radical as his in their import. Note how in many of his letters, especially Galatians and Corinthians, he switches so easily between "you" and "we", as if to drive home the fact that there was to be no perception of distance between him the writer and us the readers.

6:4 *We were buried therefore with him through a baptism into his death*-
Gk. *dia* baptism. It is through baptism, on account of it, that we are "in Christ" and associated with the saving death of the Lord Jesus. This is how, mechanically, as it were, we become "in Christ". The use of *dia* here demonstrates the colossal importance of baptism.

The significance of burial is that our death with Him is sealed. Burial seals death. Whilst we can fall away, as Israel wished to return to Egypt after baptism, it is as difficult and wilful as a dead man pushing open his burial coffin. Or the adopted son disowning his adoptive Father. Burial is something done to us; and that is a theme here. We were baptized- by Jesus. We were "united with him in the likeness of his death" (:5)- again, this was done to us, and is progressively done to us through the Lord's Spirit and usage of life situations to unite us with the crucified, slain and buried Lord Jesus. We were "planted together with Him" in baptism (:5)- again, planting has to be done to a seed. We were "crucified with Him" (:6)- and crucifixion is done to somebody, you cannot crucify yourself on a stake of wood. We were slaves bought out of slavery to sin, "made free from sin" in the manumission paid for in the blood of Jesus, and thereby 'made servants' to righteousness (:18). "You became the servants..." (:18) definitely means 'you were made the servants'. It is translated 'brought into bondage' [Israel in Egypt, Acts 7:6]; "I *made myself a servant* to all" (1 Cor. 9:19); "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he *brought into bondage / servitude*" (2 Pet. 2:19). And the blood of the Lord has overcome us and won us for Him, and we enter His household as His servants. We were bought by a master, not given ultimate personal freedom, and so we become His servants. When a slave was bought by a new owner, he had no say in the matter- he was now at the disposal of the new master. This is all the language of what is done to us. Baptism is presented as a willing surrender to these processes. It is something done to us- we are baptized. "For

in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body... and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Our response is to "yield" to the process (:13,16,19), the word meaning to present yourself. We are now the Lord's servants, but we need to present ourselves for service. In practice we do this by presenting ourselvs to those in Him as their servants: "Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be the Christ to you". The same word is used in Rom. 16:2 about assisting or presenting themselves in service to Phoebe.

We are to 'reckon / count ourselves' as dead to sin (:11), seeing ourselves as God reckons us; looking at sin and thinking 'this is not for me', not allowing sin to reign but allowing the Lord Jesus to reign in our lives (:12).

“Therefore we *are* buried with him by baptism into death... knowing this, that our old man *is* crucified with him" (Rom 6:4,6). Every time someone is baptized, the Lord as it were goes through His death for them again. And yet baptism is an ongoing process, of dying daily. We are in Christ, connected every moment with the life and living out of His cross. We *are* dying with Him, our old man *is* crucified with Him because His death is an ongoing one. “It is Christ that died... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom 8:34-36). According to Isaiah 53, He on the cross was the sheep for the slaughter; but all in Him are *all day long* counted as sharing His death, as we live out the same self-control, the same spirit of love and self-giving for others, regardless of their response...

That like as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father- This doesn’t mean that some bright light as it were hauled the body of Jesus out of the grave. The glory of God is essentially His character and attributes; when Moses asked to see God’s glory, He heard the essential character of God proclaimed. Christ was raised from the dead *dia* , for the sake of, this glory. He perfectly revealed it in a life and personality which was totally like God’s, omitting no aspect of righteousness and not committing any sin. He gave His life for us, to become our full representative; and therefore it was appropriate that He be raised again, for the wages of sin is death, but He had done no sin. His same perfection is counted to us, if we believe in Him and into Him through “the obedience of faith” in baptism. And it is on this basis that we too shall rise again. Paul mentions this aspect of the Lord’s resurrection to explain to us something more about *how and why* immersion into His death and resurrection can lead to *our* resurrection. We must consider that His resurrection is in fact going to be ours exactly because His righteousness is counted to us, and therefore*, dia,* that, for the sake of it, we took shall be raised to life eternal.

The theory of Him only ‘acting out’ reaches its nadir when we come- as each Christian must- to personally contemplate the meaning of the dead body of Jesus. That lifeless corpse, in contrast with the immortal God who cannot die, was surely the ultimate testament to Christ’s total humanity. God did not die for three days. The Lord Jesus did. His subsequent resurrection doesn’t in any way detract from the fact that He was really dead for three days. Indeed, His resurrection would also have been a cheap sham if He had actually not been really dead, with all that death means. We too, in our natural fear of death (cp. Heb. 2:15), come to that dead body and wish to identify ourselves with it, so that we might share in His resurrection. Baptism is a baptism into His death (Rom. 6:3-5). It’s more than some act of vague identification with the dead and resurrected Jesus. We are “buried with him”, literally ‘co-buried’

(Gk. *syn-thaptein*) with Him, inserted into His death, sharing the same grave. If His death was not really death, then baptism loses its meaning, and we are left still searching for another Saviour with whom we can identify in order to rise out of the grave. Jesus Himself was baptized in order to emphasize our identity with Him: "Now when *all* the people were baptized, and Jesus *also* had been baptized…" (Lk. 3:21).

Our experience of grace means "that we should serve in *newness* of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). We don't *have* to serve God in the sense that He grants us salvation by pure grace, not by works. The blessing of the Lord has nothing added to it by human toil (Prov. 10:22 RVmg.). But just because we don't *have* to do it, we do. This is the power of grace; it doesn't force us to monotonous service, but should be a wellspring of fresh motivation, to do perhaps the same things with an ever fresh spirit. The pure *wonder* of it all needs to be felt- that *for nothing but pure faith* the Lord will grant us eternal redemption for the sake of the Lord's death and resurrection. Which is why Rom. 6:4 says that because of this, and our appropriation of it in baptism, we therefore live in *newness* of life, a quality of life that is ever new. Through His death, a new and living way is opened (Heb. 10:20). We share the ever fresh life which the Lord lived from His resurrection. It does us good to try to imagine that scene- the Son of God, coming out of the grave at daybreak. He would have seen the lights of Jerusalem shimmering away in the distance, a few kms. away, as everyone woke up and went back to work, the first day after the long holiday. Getting the children ready, caring for the animals… it was back to the same old scene. But as they did so, the Son of God was rising to newness of life, standing alone in the fresh morning air, with a life that was ever new, with a joy and dynamism that was to know no end… His feelings are beyond us, but all the same, distorted by our nature, by our spiritual dysfunction, into *our* lives *His* life breaks through.

So we also might walk in newness of life- The similar passage in Tit. 3:5 speaks of how "according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (see note there). This regenerative power is from the Spirit working within our minds, making life ever new as the Spirit is progressively poured out. Paul will develop this further in chapter 8. There is a clear link between water baptism and the birth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). All things are becoming new once we are in Christ by baptism (2 Cor. 5:17). Baptism is not just forgiveness but the cleansing of our innermost conscience (1 Pet. 3:21). "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body... and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Walking in newness of life is to "serve in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:3). It is the ever new life caused by the work of the Spirit. Life is never now stale or boring, we are renewed day by day in our inward man even though the outward man perishes (2 Cor. 4:16). This does not mean that we cease sinning. Paul laments that indeed his inward man serves the law of God (Rom. 7:22), but his flesh continues to sin. We put on the new man which is being ongoingly created by God in righteousness (Eph. 4:24), being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that is creating him (Col. 3:10).

6:5 *For if we have become united with him*- Gk. 'planted together'. The image appears to be of two seeds growing up together out of the ground. To parallel Christ with us in this way is arresting; that we, so far behind Him, our Master, King and hero- should actually be seeds and tender plants growing up next to Him. The suggestion could be that Christ is still growing, His life is a newness of life, an ever fresh experience, a growth, which goes on eternally; and we are growing together with Him. And that

growth has started even now. The initial planting under the earth is symbolized by going under the water of baptism.

In the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection- The reference could be to baptism itself as the likeness of His death. But perhaps the idea more essentially is that our death to sin is a copy, a "likeness", of Christ's death to sin (6:10). It's an elevating thought- that we are seeking to copy His death in our daily death to sin. Not only through our rejecting of temptation, but our recognition that we are in a state of being dead to sin and its demands, because we are counted right before God by our faith in His grace. "Likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character. In this we as it were die with Christ (6:8)- not just in the dirt and heat of battling and resisting temptation to sin, but in that we have identified ourselves with Him there, we are in the sphere of Christ rather than Adam. What we do with our thoughts, our spare time, what our aims and ambitions are in life, where our heart is- is within the Christ sphere rather than the Adam sphere, the spirit rather than the flesh. We are in the "likeness" of Christ's death by baptism, and He is in the "likeness of [our] sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3)- thereby showing the mutuality between Him and us, and how representation and response to it is two-way. He is like us, and we therefore seek to become like Him.

God forbid that for us, the cross should be a mere art form that we admire from afar. We are to be intimately connected with the spirit of the Lord as He hung there. In baptism, we are to be 'incorporated with him in a death like his' (Rom. 6:5). The Greek word *symphytoi* speaks of a symphony, in which we and the Lord in His time of dying are united together. Likewise Rom. 8:29 and Phil. 3:21 speak of being 'fused into the mould of his death'. He, as He was there, is to be our mould. The strange ability of the cross to elicit powerful response in practice is one way in which the blood of Christ sanctifies us. His sacrifice not only brings forgiveness for past sins, it is the inspiration to a sanctified future life.

6:6 *Knowing this*- see on Rom. 6:3. As in 6:9, "knowing" these things means more than factual knowledge; Paul is driving home the practical implications.

That our old man- the contrast between the old man and the new man is similar to that which Paul draws in 1 Cor. 15:45 between the "first man", Adam, and the "last" man, Christ. Therefore I suggest that the "old man" here is a reference to our status in Adam; by baptism we pass from that status to that of the "new man", Christ. Eph. 4:22-24 exhorts baptized believers to put off the old man and put on the new man- i.e. to live out in practice the change in status which occurred in baptism. "The new man" comprises Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10,11)- connecting with how Gal. 3:27-29 explains that baptism into Christ likewise gives us a status of "in Christ" which thereby obviates any difference between Jew and Gentile. If "the old man" refers to our status in Adam which has now ended, been crucified, then we need no longer be phased by the fact that no baptized believer manages to totally avoid sinning; none of us have put to death the old manner of life in totality. All our days we seek to respond to the change of status which has occurred, living appropriate to that change.

Is crucified with Him- the very pinnacle of the Lord's achievement, which we tend to gape at from an awed distance reflecting that 'I would not, could not, possibly, have done that', is counted to us insofar as we are in Christ. "Is crucified" is a translation which misses the point- the Greek speaks of this as a one time act which we did with Christ, rather than any ongoing identity with the crucifixion through our sufferings over the course of our life. That one time point of identity was surely baptism, when we were counted as in Christ, changed status from Adam to Christ, and His crucifixion was counted to us as if we had died there. This interpretation is in context with Paul's argument in Romans; he's not merely saying that our sufferings in fighting sin bring us identity with Christ's crucifixion, or that thereby we know something of the spirit of the crucified Christ. For we are so, so far behind Him. And our paltry efforts fall far short, and certainly would not entitle us to a resurrection. By our being counted as dead, even crucified, with Christ, because we are seen as "in" Him, we will be thereby also resurrected with Him in that we will share in His resurrection life just as we were identified with His death. Indeed, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. We died with Him (6:8), were crucified with Him (6:6), buried with Him (6:4), raised with Him (Col. 2:12; 3:1); are seated with Him in Heaven (Eph. 2:16), are simply "with" Christ in life today (Rom. 8:17,29), and so will eternally be "with the Lord" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:17).

That the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin- Is the body of sin done away with at the day of judgment? Or is it now; for therefore we no longer serve sin, and that surely is our status now. It's a case of 'now but not yet'. Paul speaks of how the life / living of Jesus is now manifested in our "mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11). So we still have "mortal flesh" now. It will only literally be no more at the Lord's return. This could require the next clause to be translated "that from then onwards [i.e. after the day of judgment] we shall no longer serve sin". However, this phrase could be returning back to this life- with the idea being that because at the day of judgment our body of sin will be destroyed, and this was guaranteed by our baptism into Christ, we therefore shouldn't serve sin, in having sin as our master. We are no longer in that sphere, under that domination- but instead under the domination of Christ and within His sphere. Note the difference between the "old man" being crucified and the "body of sin" being therefore, henceforth, destroyed. The old way of life [which is how Paul uses "the old man" in Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9] is dead, we have changed status, living as "the new man", Christ. This will come to its physical manifestation in the destruction of our physical body and the gift of the new body at the day of judgment.

6:7 *He that has died is set free from sin*- is virtually quoting Rabbinic writings. However in the Talmud there is the statement that "when a man is dead he is freed from keeping the law" (*B. Shabbat*, 151 B). Paul provocatively replaces "law" with "sin". Not that God's law is sinful in itself, but he has been emphasizing that the Law is associated with sin because it as it were magnifies sin and leads to the conscious crossing over of a Divine line which results in sin being imputed to man. However, "freed" here translates the usual word for "justified" or acquitted. A slave can no longer serve a master after the death of the slave. And this is how God counts us. This is another example of legal language in Romans. The idea also is that a person cannot be accused of crimes after they have died. We are legally free from the claims of sin- because we died. We took the death penalty when we were baptized into the Lord's

death. This idea of being free from accusation will be developed in Rom. 8. And it is this freedom which secular man can only dream of, scared and fearful as he is of being accused of this or that, of trial and condemnation before the court of public opinion.

6:8 *But if we died with Christ*- In baptism into Christ's death. Paul is writing to baptized believers; his thought is therefore 'Since we died with Him'.

We believe that we shall also live with Him- yet the fact someone has been baptized doesn't necessarily mean that they do at this point believe that they will live with Christ. Paul surely means that if we really accept the reality of what happened at baptism, this must influence our faith now- that we shall therefore live with Him eternally in the future, and we therefore shall live with Him and in Him, within the sphere of His life, right now. The logic here is powerful, intense, and cutting. It can't be squirmed out of. If we really were baptized into His death- then we [almost] have to believe that we will also live with Him, because He didn't stay dead but rose to life. The power of baptism, therefore, is that it reminds us subsequently in our lives of the simple fact that therefore, as Christ died and lives, so I too "shall", I really will, "live with Him".

6:9 *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more*- "We believe that we shall live with Him" (6:8) because we know that Christ was raised from the dead. To believe that He rose from the dead is therefore no painless intellectual matter. If He rose, and if I really died with Him, then I shall for sure live with Him. Because He is me and I am Him; He in me and I in Him. This is what Paul is saying, amidst our own doubts and fears about our moral failures trying to shout him down.

Death no more has dominion over him- If death and sin have no more dominion over Christ, they have no dominion over us, and therefore we are to live as if sin has no dominion over us (6:14).

6:10 *For the death that he died, he died to sin once*- This apparently obvious fact is added to develop the argument that because He totally isn't under the power of sin and death any more, we who are in Him are likewise free from it, totally and utterly- by status. And seeing His death isn't ongoing, our freedom from sin should likewise be ongoing.

But the life that he lives, he lives to God- The fact that even now, the Son of God lives "unto God", to His glory, for His sake, unto Him… is a sure proof that He isn't "God" in any Trinitarian sense. But just as His life is constantly and in every dimension "for God", so we also should be living unto God now (6:11)- not a hobby, a part time religion, but a devotion to His sphere in every aspect of our existence.

The life that He lived and now lives, and the death that He died, become ours (Rom. 6:10 RV). We identified with that life, that death, at baptism. But it's an ongoing thing. We live in *newness* of life. The life in Christ is not a stagnant pond, but rather living water, spring water, bubbling fresh from the spring. The Lord Jesus died and rose as our representative. Therefore we live out His life, His death, His rising again to new life; and so as we sing, "into *my* life *your* power breaks through, living Lord". And this is what we give out to others- for "he that believeth in me, out of his

innermost being shall flow rivers of springing water" for others (Jn. 4:10; 7:38). We can experience the newness of life of Christ right now. His life is now made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:11), insofar as we seek to live our lives governed by the golden rule: 'What would Jesus do…?'. The life that He had and now lives is the essence of the Kingdom life.

Throughout the New Testament, there is a clear link between the preaching of the cross, and men and women being converted. There is a power of conversion in the image and message of Christ crucified as our representative. Man cannot remain passive before this. Baptism is an appropriation of His death and resurrection to ourselves. This is why the response to the preaching of the cross in the 1st century was baptism. And the response doesn't stop there; it continues, in the living of the life of the risen Jesus in our lives after baptism: "For the death that he died, he died unto sin… the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to dead unto sin but alive unto God [because you are] in Christ [by baptism into Him]" (Rom. 6:10,11 RV). The death Christ died for us, the life He lives, are all imperatives to us now.

6:11- see on Rom. 2:26; 6:10.

Even so count yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus– "Count" translates the common Greek word for "impute". As God imputes Christ's righteousness to us, we are to count ourselves, perceive ourselves, feel ourselves, as really like that. Hence the emphasis- "you also yourselves", we, us, are to see ourselves as God sees us, rather than merely accepting that He wishes to see us as He chooses to see us. His opinion of us in the ultimate reality for us- and we are to share that view.

Paul's emphasis is not so much that baptized believers will be resurrected when Christ returns, true as this is and important within his overall argument; but rather that having been raised with Christ, the new resurrection life of Jesus breaks through into our lives right now. Elsewhere Paul likewise talks of our participating in glory right now (2 Cor. 3:16), whereas the ultimate glory is yet to come and the transformation of our bodies (Phil. 3:21).

6:12 *Therefore do not let not sin reign* - We are to live out in practice the status we have in Christ. "Sin shall not reign over you" (6:14); but we must therefore make an effort to not let sin reign. Likewise in Rom. 8:9,12: "You are not in the flesh… do not live according to the flesh".

In your mortal body- Having said that "the body of sin" is to be destroyed (6:6) and that we are to live in the sphere of Christ rather than Adam, we have changed masters and should live and feel like that, Paul reminds us that our body is still mortal- reminding us that we are still awaiting the change of body which is to come at the final judgment when Christ returns.

That you should obey the lusts of it- There are within the human body the natural passions / desires to sin, "the passion of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). They aren't sinful in themselves- for the Lord Jesus was sinless and yet had our same "mortal body". But the fact they are the source of sin and are within our bodies explains why there is such a strong connection between sin and our bodies, leading to expressions such as "the

body of sin" (6:6) and "sinful flesh" (8:3). But this isn't to say that the body is itself sinful or that it's somehow a sin to be human.

6:13 *Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness*- "Instruments" is s.w. armour, weapon (Jn. 18:3; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4). We are called to fight, to serve in the army- of either sin or Christ. No passivity or wavering between the positions is therefore possible. We have changed sides. See on 6:23.

But present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness to God- The aorist tense could suggest a one time presenting of ourselves- at baptism? And if we didn't appreciate at the time of our baptism that this is what we were doing, we can do it now. Maybe that explains the otherwise difficult to translate tense usage here.

6:14- see on Rom. 6:12.

For sin shall not have dominion over you- Yet we still sin. But Paul is again talking about our changed status- sin is not now our Lord, our master; instead, Jesus is. *Kurieuo* ("have dominion") is clearly intended to contrast with *Kurios*, the usual Greek word translated "Lord" with reference to the Lord Jesus. See on Rom. 6:9. The Lord Jesus rose again *so that* He might be our Lord, s.w. "dominion", over us His people (Rom. 14:9). "Shall not" can be translated as "Sin will not have dominion" (ESV)- so that it's not a demand that we stop allowing sin to dominate, but rather an exaltation that the "sin" sphere of things will not in the end have dominion in our lives, because we are in Christ.

For you are not under law, but under grace- This would've been more radical to Jewish readers and listeners than we may appreciate; for Judaism's big issue has always been that the Law is required in order to curb or restrain sin, and that societies without the Law are more sinful than those influenced by it. But here Paul is saying that if we forget about the Jewish Law and live as believers justified by pure grace, this will have more practical power in delivering a man from sin's dominion than any attempt at obedience to a legal code. "Under" was appropriate to slaves 'under' a master. We are 'under' grace as our master rather than law. The strength of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:56); if the law isn't our master, then sin likewise isn't our master, and therefore sin will not ultimately dominate us.

6:15 *What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid!*- See notes on "under…" at 6:14. If we are under grace rather than law, then we will not be counted by God as sinning. We declared right, justified. Paul may mean there that we are not *counted as* continual sinners [even though we believers do keep on sinning, sadly], because we are under grace as a master rather than law. Or he may mean that those truly under grace don't keep on sinning, because the wonder of their position inspires them not to. This contrasts sharply with the Judaistic view that it is the Law which curbs sin. Paul is arguing the very opposite: that leaving the sphere of Law and coming under grace will actually curb sin.

6:16 *Do you not know, that to whom you present yourselves as slaves to obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey? Whether of sin to death*- See on 6:13. The obedience would seem to be a one time obedience- in baptism- an obedience to a form

of doctrine delivered to them (6:17). “The obedience of faith” which Paul spoke of in Rom. 1:5 he now interprets as baptism. Note the parallel between faith and obedience in Rom. 10:16.

Paul expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ. There's an example in Rom. 6:16: " Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are... whether of sin... or of obedience?". This is alluding to Mt. 6:24 concerning not serving two masters. Paul is surely saying: 'Come on, this is Matthew 6, you can't serve two masters! That principle ought to be firmly lodged in your heart!'. In terms of Paul’s argument about which status or sphere we are in, his point is simple: you can only be in one sphere or the other, either under law or grace, sin or obedience. It’s therefore impossible to continue sinning. in God’s view [and it’s His view of the matter which is the only thing worth anything]- because we are either justified in Christ, or not justified and condemned sinners. The tree brings forth either good or bad fruit (Mt. 7:18)- in that we are “in” either the good tree or the bad one. Paul deploys this argument to answer the objection that we may as well continue sinning- he’s saying not merely that we ought not to do that, but rather that ultimately we *cannot* do that, because we are either under sin or under obedience. Notice that he personifies “obedience” as a slave owner, to whom we now belong. The two slave masters in view here are called “sin” and “obedience”. We are clearly to identify “obedience” with the Lord Jesus. And Paul has just written about the singular and spectacular “obedience” of Jesus in dying for us on the cross (see on Rom. 5:19). This act made Jesus to be Lord and Master for us. We are obedient to His obedience, as it were. Which is the whole idea of baptism- we are buried together with Him, we die with Him, His death becomes ours, and thus His obedience unto death is ours.

Or of obedience to righteousness- The end result of our serving “obedience”, i.e. the Lord Jesus, is righteousness. But Paul’s argument has been that all our righteousness is as filthy rags, and righteousness has to be imputed to us. The end result of being under “obedience”, in Christ, is that righteousness is imputed to us, we are declared righteous, justified, as we stand before the final judgment. Lack of attention to Paul’s argument and the meaning attached to the terms being used in Romans can lead the casual reader of this verse to think that by acts of obedience we become righteous- and that is the very opposite of what Paul has been teaching all along.

6:17 *But thanks be to God, that whereas you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching which was delivered to you*- This must be interpreted in the context of Paul’s insistent theme that we have changed masters, changed status. “Handed over” could be an allusion to handing over a slave from one master to another- the form of teaching would therefore refer to the form or mould to which we are exposed under our new master, the Lord Jesus. In this case it would refer to post baptismal rather than pre baptismal teaching. Alternatively he may be referring to the fact that the teaching or doctrine of Christ had been delivered or handed over to them from Christ Himself (s.w. 1 Cor. 11:2,13; 15:3). However, it should be noted that Paul says that the baptized believer is handed over to the doctrine / teaching of Christ- and not the teaching to the believer. Perhaps the contrast is with Rom. 2:20, where we read of the “form of knowledge and of truth in the law [of Moses]”. We have been handed over to the form or mould of teaching which is in Christ rather than Moses.

Paul's writing that he thanks God for their change of status was maybe to encourage his readers to understand the degree to which in very deed they had changed status- because they seemed to doubt it, as we too tend to.

We are frequently spoken of as being slaves of God. At baptism, we changed masters (Rom. 6). Yet the implications of being a bond-slave are tremendous. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. And we cannot serve two masters. There's a powerful, powerful logic here. We are either slaves of ourselves, or slaves of God. Ultimate freedom to do 'what we want' is actually not possible. So we may as well take the path of slavery to the Father and Son. Unless we firmly accept this, life will become motion without meaning, activity without direction, events without reason.

The doctrines we believed at baptism were a 'mould of doctrine' (Rom. 6:17 Gk.)- they define the person we turn into. The calling of the Gospel is ongoing- it's not that we hear the call, respond to it, and the call in that sense ceases. There is a set of doctrines which Eph. 4:4-6 calls "the one faith"; which Rom. 6:17 calls "that form of doctrine" to be believed before baptism; "the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13).

"Repent ye and believe the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15) might seem to be in the wrong order- for surely belief of the Gospel comes before repentance. And so it does. But the point is, life after conversion is a life of believing the basic Gospel which led us to conversion and repentance in the first place. Thus Rom. 6 teaches that we were once servants of sin... and we expect the sentence to conclude: 'But now you are servants of righteousness'. But it doesn't. We were once servants of sin but now we have obeyed the form of doctrine delivered to us... and are *therefore* servants of righteousness. The service of righteousness is a result of accepting "that form of doctrine", perhaps referring to an early catechism or statement of faith taught to baptismal candidates, summarizing the power of the Gospel.

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (Jn. 8:34), but those in Christ are counted as not being the servants of sin, but of Christ (Rom. 6:17). The connection with Jn. 8:34 makes this tantamount to saying that they are reckoned as not committing sin.

6:18 *And being made free from sin*- An allusion to 1 Sam. 17:8,9? This would imply a manumission, a payment of a price by some gracious person to free a person from slavery. Note that the image isn't of one slave master buying a slave from another master. It's of genuine freedom being bought for the slave, by grace. But "being then made free", because of this, the freed slave decides to become a slave of the gracious Saviour who paid for their release. Being a slave of Christ is therefore described in 6:19 as a freewill yielding of our bodies, every part of them, to His service. 1 Enoch 5:7,8 and other Jewish writings spoke of 'freedom from sin' coming in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan; but Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* - see on 1 Cor. 10:11. [J. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4*(Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) pp. 248-259. The same phrase occurs with the same meaning in the Testament of Levi 14.1.]

You became slaves to righteousness- The change of status is so great that there can be no real question about who in practice we should serve. By status we are the servants

of righteousness- but that is not to say that we don't at times in our humanity serve sin in practice. We have yet to become in practice who we are in status. The language of 'being made free' and 'being made slaves' suggests the power of an external process working upon us; and that is the work of the Spirit.

6:19 *I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your human nature; but as you presented your limbs as slaves of uncleanness and iniquity, now present your limbs as slaves of righteousness unto holiness*- In Paul's case, being all things to all men meant that at times He sacrificed highest principle in order to get through to men; he didn't just baldly state doctrinal truth and leave his hearers with the problem of whether to accept it. He really sought to persuade men. He magnified his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, he emphasized the possibility of Gentile salvation, "If by any means I may provoke to emulation ['incite to rivalry'] them which are my flesh [the Jews], and might save some of them" (Rom. 11:13,14). This hardly seems a very appropriate method, under the spotlight of highest principle. But it was a method Paul used. Likewise he badgers the Corinthians into giving money for the poor saints in Jerusalem on the basis that he has boasted to others of how much they would give (2 Cor. 9:2), and these boasts had provoked others to be generous; so now, they had better live up to their promise and give the cash. If somebody promised to give money to charity and then didn't do so, we wouldn't pressurize them to give. And we wouldn't really encourage one ecclesia to give money on the basis of telling them that another ecclesia had promised to be very generous, so they ought to be too. Yet these apparently human methods were used by Paul. He spoke "in human terms" to the Romans, "because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); he so wanted to make his point understood. And when he told husbands to love their wives, he uses another rather human reason: that because your wife is "one flesh" with you, by loving her you are loving yourself. 'And', he reasons, 'you wouldn't hate yourself, would you, so – love your wife!'. The cynic could reasonably say that this is pure selfishness (Eph. 5:29); and Paul seems to recognize that the higher level of understanding is that a husband should love his wife purely because he is manifesting the love of Christ to an often indifferent and unappreciative ecclesia (5:32,33). And yet Paul plainly uses the lower level argument too. It is possible to discern an element of human appeal in some Biblical statements. Thus the Spirit encourages husbands to love their wives as themselves, because effectively they are loving themselves if they do this (Eph. 5:29). Yet we are also warned that a characteristic of the last days will be a selfish loving of our*selves*. Paul speaks of how he puts things "in human terms" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); e.g. he suggests that fear of the judgment alone ought to at least make us sit up and take our spiritual life seriously (2 Cor. 5:11), even though the tenor of Scripture elsewhere is that this shouldn't be our motivator.

We should note that Paul is almost apologizing for his metaphors, as if he had put something too crudely. His metaphors are 'humanly' quite acceptable- from the courtroom, slavery etc. Given the height and wonder of the grace we are considering, any metaphor, any similitude, any language- is inadequate and even borders on the inappropriate. And note that Paul is writing all these things, both the metaphors and the apology for them, under Divine inspiration.

The changeover from the downward spiral to the upward spiral ought to have begun at baptism; but as with some of the Roman believers in the first century, a believer can slip back into the downward spiral: "Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in

slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Rom. 6:19 NIV). The life of sexual impurity is an "ever increasing" downwards path; the endless quest for new relationships and sexual novelty doesn't need to be described.

Rom. 6:19 speaks of how the ever increasing downward spiral of obedience to sin is turned around at baptism, so that we begin an upward spiral of obedience to righteousness. God does good unto those that are good, but leads those who turn aside even further astray (Ps. 125:4,5). Those who are "[born] of God" are able to hear and understand God's words (Jn. 8:47)- and baptism is surely how we are born of God (Jn. 3:3-5). This seems to open up the possibility of yet higher growth once we are baptized- it's all an upward spiral, like any functional relationship.
Rom. 6:19-23 makes the contrast between how serving sin leads to ever increasing sin, whilst serving Christ results in ever increasing righteousness. We are all too aware of the upward (downward!) spiral of sin- we well know the feeling of losing our spiritual grip for an hour, day or week, and sensing how sin is ever increasing its hold over us. But by our union with Christ in baptism it is quite possible, indeed intended, that we should get into an upward spiral of obedience, in which one spiritual victory leads to another.

6:20 *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness*- Gk. 'not a slave of'. Again Paul is labouring the point that one cannot serve two masters. And he does so in a way which makes us think: 'That's stating the obvious! Why are you repeatedly stating the obvious?'. He does this because it's not obvious to us that we really are servants of "righteousness" rather than "sin". We wonder whether we are really counted as righteous or not. Note here that the names of the two slave masters are "sin" and "righteousness"- in Rom. 6:16 they were "sin" and "obedience". We are slaves of Christ, He is our righteousness, and it is counted to us; so "righteousness" is an appropriate title for Him, "the Lord our righteousness".

6:21 *What fruit had you at that time…*?- There was no fruit in slavery; it was existence, rather than a life lived.

In the things of which you are now ashamed? For the result of those things is death- Shame is associated with condemnation at the final judgment. We recognize we are condemned sinners, and feel the shame for that. The verse could be punctuated: "What fruit did you have then? That of which you are now ashamed". This is the great paradox in the Christian experience- feeling condemned for sin, and yet believing in our new status, that we are declared right before the judgment seat of God.

6:22 *But now being made free from sin, and having become slaves of God*- See on 6:18. We were made free from slavery, rather than being bought by a slave master from our previous owner. But we chose to become His slaves out of gratitude for His grace. The same Greek is found in 1 Cor. 9:19: "I have *made myself a slave* to all, that I might gain the more". The idea is that made ourselves servants / slaves, having been made free from our old master. The two slave masters are now called "sin" and "God".

You have your fruit unto holiness- and the result is eternal life- But Paul's whole intention of writing to the Roman church and ministering to them was so that they

would bear fruit (Rom. 1:13 cp. 15:28). If we truly understand that we are no longer in "sin" but the servants of God, in His sphere of things and His acceptance, then we will bear fruit in practice, it simply has to be like that, it's inevitable. The idea of bearing fruit is connected in the context to baptism into Christ. Jn. 12:24 records the Lord likening His death to a seed falling into the ground, going as it were into a grave under the soil, but rising again and bearing fruit. Again- all that is true of the Lord Jesus is true of us who are in Him. Paul has been saying that we were planted together with Him (6:5), buried with Him, rose with Him- and as He is the plant that bears fruit, so are we. We therefore aren't being exhorted to bear fruit, so much as being told that we have our fruit- for we are in Him. And naturally, this means we will try to live in practice as we are by status. But by status, we do now have our fruit- His fruit- and the end of all this will at the final judgment be "everlasting life". And yet it is quite legitimate to read the Greek here as meaning that living a spiritually fruitful life now is the "eternal life"- an idea in harmony with the repeated promises in John's gospel that we can right now live the kind of life we shall eternally live.

6:23 *For the wages of sin is death*- Used specifically of pay given to soldiers (Lk. 3:14; 1 Cor. 9:7; and every usage in the LXX is in this connection- 1 Esdra 4:56; 1 Macc. 3:28; 14:32). This would continue the military analogy which was used in Rom. 6:13- of presenting our limbs as armour, weapons [Gk.], to King Sin. See also the military term in Rom. 7:8.

The *wages* of sin and the *gift* of God are here contrasted. "God" and "sin" are the names of the two slave masters in 6:22. We noted under 6:22 *you have your fruit* that the everlasting life will be the end result of our service, given at the day of judgment at Christ's return. It may be that we are intended to visualize the wages of sin being paid at the same time. In any case, all believers, all servants of God, will die in any case. This isn't the wages of sin. Surely the "death" that is in view here in 6:23 is the second death at the day of judgment.

Asaph laments how the wicked seem to be so prosperous, and then remembers that one day God will awake. More than this, he comes to see that "they... *shall* perish: thou *hast* destroyed them... how are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they *are* utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:27,19). The wages of sin *is* death (Rom. 6:23)- not 'it will be death at the judgment', it *is* right now the response God makes to sin. Because God is without time, the judgment has effectively happened to them. We are come to "God the judge of all"- even now (Heb. 12:23).

But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord- Remember that the context of this whole section in Romans is that of becoming *in* Christ by baptism *into* Him. This is what associates us with the gift of eternal life.

Our natural man, the devil, is a personification of sin. He cannot be reformed; he can only be destroyed by death. "The wages of the sin: death" (Rom. 6:23 Diaglott) seems to suggest that Rom. 6:23 is not saying that we die for each specific sin we commit (you can only die for one sin anyway, because we only have one life); rather is it saying that the end of the natural man, "sin", the devil within us, is death. Therefore we must associate ourselves with the man Christ Jesus, both in baptism and in our way of life, so that the personification of Christ within us will be clothed with a glorious bodily form at his return.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

7:1 *Or are you ignorant brothers*- This continues the appeal to the baptized believers in Rome to not be ignorant of the implications of the things which they have believed and signed up for by baptism into Christ. See on Rom. 6:3.

For I speak to men who know the Law- This could suggest that this section is addressed to those within the ecclesia in Rome who knew the Law, i.e. who were Jews. There were Gentiles in the church (Rom. 1:5-7,13-15) for whom that phrase wouldn't be appropriate. Chapter 7 could therefore be considered as an appeal to the Jewish subgroup within the Roman church. The language of '*becoming* dead to the law' in 7:4 would only be appropriate to those who had once lived under it, i.e. Jews.

That the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives?- An allusion to common Rabbinical teaching that the only Jew exempted from keeping the Law is a dead Jew. Paul has been arguing in chapter 6 that we really did die in baptism. Therefore, we are dead- and the Jews themselves taught that a dead man didn't need to keep the Law.

Romans 6 (about sin)

"Sin shall not have (anymore) dominion over you: for you are not under the Law" (:14)

"Dead indeed unto sin" (:11)

"Being then made free from sin" (:18)

"As those that are alive from the dead... you have your fruit unto holiness" (:13,22), having left sin.

"Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (as a result of sin having dominion over you)" (:13,14)

"Therefore... we also should walk in newness of life" (:4)

Romans 7 (about the Law)

"The Law has dominion over a man... as long as he lives" (:1)

"She is loosed from the Law" (:2)

"She is free from that Law" (:3)

"You should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (:4), having left the Law.

"When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members... but now we are delivered from the law" (:5,6)

"We should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" of the Law (:6)

7:2 *For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband*- It's tempting to interpret this as a reference to the death of Christ ending the Law. But that interpretation runs into problems in 7:3, for there the woman- the body of believers- is married to "another man". See note on 7:4. Or it could be that Paul is seeking to make the simple point that the death of one person can free another person from a law / legal obligation; which is what happened in the death of Christ.

7:3 *So then if, while the husband lives, she be joined to another man*- "Be joined" doesn't translate the usual Greek word for marriage. *Ginomai* has a wide range of meaning; the idea may be of her sharing with, being with, another husband at the same time as she is married to her first husband. Rather than making any specific point about marriage (see on 7:4), Paul may be showing that it's not possible for a woman to have two husbands at the same time- "man" as in "another man" is the same Greek word translated "husband". This is being said in the context of seeking to persuade us how impossible it is for us to be in covenant relationship with the two spheres or positions [of law and grace, condemnation and justification] at one and the same time. This is both a comfort and a challenge to us.

She shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man- "Shall be called" uses a Greek term usually used about a Divine statement, i.e. she will be called *by God*.

7:4 *Therefore…*- connects back to 7:1. The point being made in 7:2,3 is that death means a person is free from keeping the Law. Paul isn't here teaching about the nature of marriage nor the conditions under which he considered remarriage could occur; his theme is that death frees us from the Law. And more precisely, it was by the death of another that the woman had been freed from a law- that law no longer applied to her, not because she had died, but because another had died. This is the significance of the death of Christ in freeing us from the Law.

My brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ- This is to be interpreted in the light of Col. 2:14, which also in a baptism context speaks of the Law being nailed to the cross. But it was the body of Christ which was nailed to the cross. If we are baptized into His body by baptism, nailed and crucified with Him, then the Law is dead to us too.

So that you should be joined to another- the metaphor is mixed and almost impossible to consistently interpret- demonstrating if nothing else that logical consistency wasn't of paramount importance to the Bible writers nor to the God who inspired their words.

To him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God- We are now freed from the Law, and are free to marry Christ and bring forth fruit, children, unto God. The fruit of the Spirit is what will last beyond the span of our lifetimes, just as the desire for us to have significance beyond the grave is part of the motivating factor in the desire to have children. The Greek for 'bring forth fruit' occurs four of its eight times in the New Testament in the parable of the sower. The good seed of the Gospel is to bring forth fruit in us. Yet this doesn't mean that Bible reading somehow brings forth fruit; it is our active intercourse and union with the Lord Jesus as a person which brings forth the fruit.

There is a frequent association of sin (the Devil) and the Mosaic Law throughout Romans (this is not to say that the law is itself sinful – it led to sin only due to human weakness). A clear example of this is found in Romans 6 talking about us dying to sin and living to righteousness, whilst Romans 7 speaks in the same language about the Law; thus "he that is dead is free from sin... you (are) *dead* indeed *unto sin*" (Rom.

6:7,11) cp. "You also are become *dead to the Law*" (Rom. 7:4). Other relevant examples are tabulated above on Rom. 7:1.

In the parable of the sower, the seed is surely the Lord Jesus (Jn. 12:24)- our eternal destiny is decided upon our response to Him and His teaching. We are bidden believe in or into Jesus. Belief involves the heart; it doesn't mean to merely give mental assent to some propositions. It must in the end involve believing in a person, with all the feelings and emotions this involves. We are married unto the Lord Jesus, in order that we might bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). All spiritual fruit is therefore an offspring, an outcome, of a living, daily relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is how crucial it is to know Him.

7:5 *For when we were in the flesh*- In the sphere of the flesh. The NIV "sinful nature" is a poor translation; no change of nature occurred when we were baptized. Rather did we cross over from one status to another, from flesh to Spirit. We still possess the same "mortal flesh" as we did before conversion.

The sinful passions, which were through the law, worked in our limbs to bring forth fruit to death- The Greek word translated "passions" is usually rendered "sufferings". Sinful passions are their own suffering. The word is only used again in Romans 8:18, speaking of how "the *sufferings* [s.w. "emotions"] of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed". The sufferings of this life are, for us, the sufferings related to sin.

7:6 *But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held*- "Discharged" is the same Greek word translated "loosed" in 7:2: the woman is loosed from the law of her husband. The suggestion is that Paul's audience had been married to the Law and now remarried to Christ because the Law had as it were died. This confirms our suggestion [see on 7:8] that Romans 7 is aimed at Jews who had once been associated with the Law but were now in Christ. The death of the Law is made parallel with the death of Christ, in that He nailed it to the cross, in the sense that He embodied the Law by perfectly obeying and fulfilling it. The intention of the Law was that if fully obeyed, it would lead to a perfect man- the Lord Jesus. In this sense it was "ordained to life". In this sense "the Law" and the person of Christ can be legitimately presented in parallel as they are by Paul here.

So that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter- Spirit… letter are likewise contrasted in Rom. 2:29 and 2 Cor. 3:6. It can be that we perceive even our service of God as the same old scene- the same round of daily Bible reading (although, why not try reading from another version or in another language?), the same cycle of church meetings and Bible schools. The same faces, the same issues. But our experience of grace means "that we should serve in *newness* of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). We don't *have* to serve God in the sense that He grants us salvation by pure grace, not by works. But just because we don't *have* to do it, we do. This is the power of grace; it doesn't force us to monotonous service, but should be a wellspring of fresh motivation, to do perhaps the same things with an ever fresh spirit. The pure *wonder* of it all needs to be felt- that *for nothing but pure faith* the Lord will grant us eternal redemption for the sake of the Lord's death and resurrection. Which is why Rom. 6:4 says that because of this, and our appropriation of it in baptism, we therefore live in *newness* of life, a quality of life that is ever new.

Through His death, a new and living way is opened (Heb. 10:20). We share the ever fresh life which the Lord lived from His resurrection. It does us good to try to imagine that scene- the Son of God, coming out of the grave at daybreak. He would have seen the lights of Jerusalem shimmering away in the distance, a few kms. away, as everyone woke up and went back to work, the first day after the long holiday. Getting the children ready, caring for the animals… it was back to the same old scene. But as they did so, the Son of God was rising to newness of life, standing alone in the fresh morning air, with a life that was ever new, with a joy and dynamism that was to know no end… His feelings are beyond us, but all the same, distorted by our nature, by our spiritual dysfunction, into *our* lives *His* life breaks through.

7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! However, I had not known sin, except through the law. For I had not known coveting, except the law had said: You shall not covet*- Philo and other Jewish writings taught that covetousness was the origin of every sin. James 1:15 may allude to this idea by saying that covetousness [s.w.; AV "desire"] gives birth to sin.

Although sin exists amongst people who don't know God's law, we come to "know" sin by the Law. The Greek *ginosko* translated "know" has a wide range of meaning; the idea could be that Paul had not known sin in the sense of not being responsible to Divine judgment for it- until he knew the Law.

Clearly perception of sinfulness grew in Paul after his conversion. He considered himself blameless in keeping the law (Phil. 3:6); and yet chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:16). He realized that sin is to do with attitudes rather than committed or omitted actions. I'd paraphrase Paul's personal reminiscence in Rom. 7:7-10 like this: "As a youngster, I had no real idea of sin. I did what I wanted, thought whatever I liked. But then in my early teens, the concept of God's commandments hit me. The command not to covet really came home to me. I struggled through my teens and twenties with a mad desire for women forbidden to me (AV, conveniently archaic, has "all manner of concupiscence"). And slowly I found in an ongoing sense (Gk.), I grew to see, that the laws I had to keep were killing me, they would be my death in the end". Paul's progressive realization of the nature of sin is reflected in Romans 7:18,21,23. He speaks there of how he came to *know* that nothing good was in him; he *found* a law of sinful tendency at work in him; he came to *see* another law apart from God's law at work in his life. This process of knowing, finding and seeing his own sinfulness continued throughout his life. His way of escape from this moral and intellectual dilemma was through accepting the grace of the Lord Jesus at his conversion. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he faced his death, he wrote to Timothy that he was " chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. It could well be that this is one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- for surely he had in mid the way the publican smote upon his breast, asking God to be merciful "to me *the* sinner" (Lk. 18:13 RVmg.). "Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners" is rooted in the Lord's words that He came to call sinners and to seek and save the lost (Mt. 9:13; 18:11; 1 Tim. 1:15).

7:8 *But sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment*- A military term, referring to establishing a base camp. This continues the image of sin as a military leader (see on Rom. 6:23).

Worked in me- In direct opposition to the common Jewish idea that the Law curbed sin. Indeed the Talmud in *b. Qidd. 30b* claimed that God said at Sinai: "I created the evil desire but I also created the Torah as its antidote; if you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into its hand" (1). Paul is arguing from experience- both Israel's over the years and his own- that the reverse is true. The very existence of commandment tends to lead to that commandment being broken, as every parent soon learns (or re-learns) in the parenting process.

All manner of coveting- AV "concupiscence". In gripping autobiography, Paul relates the innocent days when (as a child) he lived without the knowledge of law and therefore sin. But then, the concept of commandments registered with him; and this "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:8). "Concupiscence" is a conveniently archaic word for lust; and in the thinking and writing of Paul, the Greek *epithumia* is invariably used in a sexual context. See on 2 Cor. 12:7.

For apart from the Law, sin is dead and powerless- This connects with the fact that through baptism into Christ, we are "dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. 6:11). Sin depends upon the law for strength; but the Law died with Jesus; He fulfilled it perfectly, He achieved the intention, for Him, the Law was indeed ordained to life (Rom. 7:10). If the law is really dead, then sin is powerless- for those who are in Christ, who fulfilled the Law. It's almost too good news; that the end of law means the end of the power of sin. This was all especially radical for Jewish ears. The 'death' of the Law is a strong concept- and it challenges not only Sabbath keepers, but all of us who think that surely obedience to Divine law must have some role to play in our salvation.

A case can be made, especially from Rom. 7:8-10, that the whole of Rom. 7:7-25 is Paul talking about Israel- we have shown in notes on Rom. 7:1 that Paul is speaking in this section specifically to Jews. In this case, Paul would have so identified himself with Israel that he speaks in the first person, as if he personally 'is' them. He so loved his people that he saw all Israel's history personified as it were in himself. Another approach to bear in mind is that it was quite possible in first century literature to use *ego*, the first person singular, as a literary or rhetorical device without any reference to the author's personal situation. Thus it could be argued that the "And if I…" phrases in 1 Cor. 13:1-3 are an example of this, rather than Paul talking about himself (2).

The way in which Adam is to be seen as everyman is exemplified by how Paul speaks of his own spiritual life and failure in terms of Adam's encounter with sin in the form of the serpent. Note the allusions to Adam's fall in Rom. 7:8–11: "But sin [cp. The snake], seizing an opportunity in the commandment [singular – there was only one commandment in Eden], produced in me all kinds of covetousness [the essence of the temptation to eat the fruit]... I [as Adam] was once alive apart from the law [Adam was the only person to ever truly exist for a time without any law], but when the

commandment [singular – to not eat the fruit] came, sin sprang to life and I died [as Adam], and the very commandment that [seemed to] promise[d] life [cp. The hope of eating of the tree of life] proved to be death to me. For sin [cp. the snake] seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me [s.w. 2 Cor. 11:3 about the serpent deceiving Eve] and through it killed me". Note how Rom. 7:7–13, with all the Adam allusions, speaks in the past tense; but in the autobiographical section which follows in Rom. 7:14–25, Paul uses the present tense – as if to suggest that both Paul and by extension all of us live out the essence of Adam's failure. He was everyman, and his salvation through the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, can be everyman's salvation if he so chooses. But in our context we note the pointed – and it is pointed – omission by Paul of any reference to a Satan figure.

7:9 *And I once was alive apart from the law*- Paul presumably refers to his earliest childhood or babyhood, when he wasn't accountable to the Law. 7:9,10 appear to be alluding to God giving the Law to Israel. See on 7:8. In this case, Paul is speaking of himself in solidarity with Israel; for it could never be really said that a Jewish child was once without the Law. Indeed, first century Judaism emphasized this point- that Jewish children are under the Law (3). Throughout Romans 1-8, Paul is provocatively seeking to answer potential Jewish objections and strengthen the case of Christ's Gospel against them. We have pointed out many examples of how he alludes to and deconstructs contemporary Jewish writings and opinions, sometimes at the cost of writing in a way which is apparently obtuse and difficult for Gentile readers to understand. And yet he now openly identifies himself with his beloved people. This, surely, is our pattern in seeking to persuade others- to identify with them, rather than merely lecture them. It almost seems that in the same way as Adam is set up as everyman, so Paul wishes himself personally to seen as every Jew. The way he elsewhere describes himself as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" with impeccable Jewishness would confirm this (Phil. 3:5). See on Rom. 7:11.

But when the commandment came- A reference to Paul's Bar-Mitzvah, or his attaining the age of responsibility to God.

Sin revived- The only other time the word is used in Romans is in Rom. 14:9, where we read of the Lord's resurrection as Him 'reviving'. Clearly the personified 'sin' here is being set up as the very antithesis to the Lord Jesus.

And I died- A reference to being in the dock before God, tried and condemned as a sinner. So certain is that sentence of ultimate death that it was as if Paul had died. This interpretation is, I suggest, in keeping with the previous metaphors in Romans with regard to death. So instead of tending to life and blessing, and curbing sin, the Law instead accented sin and led to the condemnation of death.

7:10 *And the commandment, which was intended to life*- This presumably implies that perfect keeping of the law would have resulted in a person living the life of God, the kind of life which will be lived in the eternal life (which might also be implied in Lev. 18:5 cp. Rom. 10:5; Ps. 19:7-10; Ez. 20:11; Lk. 20:28). Death for such a person would therefore be necessary because of their relation with Adam, but would in another sense be unjust, in that they had not sinned. The perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus therefore required His resurrection. His eternal life wasn't given to Him by grace, but He was entitled to it by obedience. He had no pre-existent eternal life; He

was given eternal life because of His obedience. And His life is counted to us who are "in Him" by grace. See on Rom. 7:12.

This I found to be to death- "Found" is s.w. Rom. 7:18,21. Paul obviously examined his life and therefore can speak of what he had found / discovered about himself. This level of self-knowledge is surely our pattern… for the unexamined life isn't life but mere existence.

7:11 *For sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it- slew me*- Alluding to Gen. 3:13: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate". The allusion is to Adam and Eve in Eden. In chapter 5 (and see on Rom. 3:23), Paul has repeatedly taught that Adam is everyman. And now he includes himself in this, by applying the language of the failure in Eden to himself. Likewise his finding the commandment ordained to life becoming the means of death (7:10,13) may reference Gen. 2:16,17. Yet whilst Adam is indeed everyman to Paul, Adam was perceived as Israel in much Rabbinic writing; and Paul saw himself as the personification and epitome of Israel (see on Rom. 7:9,10). The Greek translated "deceived" really means to seduce. How did sin seduce Paul through or by means of the Law of Moses? Surely in the sense that Paul fell for the temptation to justify himself by means of obedience to that Law. But because he didn't keep the Law perfectly, he was therefore condemned to death, and in a sense, received the sentence- and in that sense sin by means of the Law "slew" Paul. The only other time the word for 'deceived / seduced' occurs in Romans is in the practical section, which in this case again alludes to this doctrinal section: "[the Judaizers] by fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple", as the serpent deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3 s.w.). Just as Paul deceived himself, fell to the seductive idea that we can be justified by works of obedience to the Law, so the Judaizers were teaching the same. By so doing, they were sin personified- they were doing the work of "sin"- using the attraction of obedience to a legal code to seduce believers into a position where they were in fact going to be condemned to death- because under that sphere, there can be no justification, no declaring right, for those who have in even one sense infringed Divine law. It's all a complicated yet powerful way of saying that we simply must not and cannot be in the sphere of relying upon works; which means we have to just accept the gift of salvation by grace, much as all within us cries out against it.

7:12 *Thus the law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous and good*- Paul hastens here to emphasize that the Law itself isn't sinful or wrong in itself; it is indeed "holy, just and good" (a common Jewish description of their Law); but the knowledge of any legal code creates accountability for sin. Only in that is there the connection between the Law and sin. The Law was "ordained to life", and I have suggested under 7:10 that this could mean that perfect obedience to the Law would have led to living the life of God, to moral perfection. The Law could not of itself give eternal life, in that it could not undo the mortality which was to pass upon all Adam's descendants. The Law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness toward others and devotion to God. Significantly, the Lord Jesus is described in the same words- the Holy and Just One (Acts 3:14), as if He was such on account of the way His obedience to the Law developed such a character.

7:13 *Did then that which is good become death to me? God forbid! But sin was shown to be sin, by the way it worked death in me through that which is good; and thus*

through the commandment, sin became shown as indeed exceedingly sinful- There was no actual change in the Law, in that it didn't once offer life and then changed to offer death. The Law was of itself holy, just and good- but it was used [by God?] to make sin "appear" as sin, to accent and highlight sin for what it is; and through man's failure to keep the Law, sin was indeed shown to be an exceedingly great sinner (this is how the Greek behind "might become exceeding sinful" can be translated"). I find it significant that in Paul's sustained personification of sin in these passages, he never once uses the terms "devil" or "satan". He clearly saw the problem as human sin, which he personifies because one cannot have abstract "sin", in that according to the Bible, sin is committed by and within the minds of personal beings, and in no other realm or dimension. It's appropriate therefore that sin be personified.

We must doggedly hold on to the interconnections of thought within Paul's argument in Romans. Chapters 1-5 convict all of sin, demonstrating that works can in no way save us. Chapter 6 then outlines how we can be saved; through association with Christ through baptism and a life "in Christ", which will result in God seeing us in the exalted way He does. Chapter 7 basically goes on to say 'But, of course, you'll still sin, even though chapter 6 has explained how God doesn't look at that side of you if you truly try to live "in Christ" '. Paul says many things about his life in Rom. 7 which seem to consciously connect with his description of life before baptism in Chapter 6 (e.g. 7:13 = 6:23; 7:14 = 6:17; 7:23 = 6:12,13; 7:24 = 6:6; 7:25 = 6:16,17). The reason for this is that after baptism, we have two people within us; the man of the flesh, who totally dominated our pre-baptismal life, is still within us; but (as Chapter 7 so graphically shows) he is now in mortal conflict with the man of the Spirit, with whom we identify our real selves. Chapter 8 then goes on to encourage us that despite this conflict, sin is dead in Christ, and if we are in Him, then this is really how God sees us. Therefore Rom. 8 stresses that our state of mind is so crucial; if we are led of the Spirit-man, then we are assured of salvation at that point in time. Rom. 9-11 then appeals specifically to Israel to accept the glorious truth of all this, and then Chapters 12-16 show the practical response we should all make. Recognizing the existence of the new and old men within him, Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; "I myself serve the law of God", but "my flesh" serves sin. Likewise David asked God not to hide His face from him, David *personally*, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's *sins* (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord.

7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal*- But "in Christ" he was not carnal (1 Cor. 3:1 s.w.). Again he has in mind states, positions, spheres. "Carnal" is literally 'fleshly'. He points up the contrast between the flesh and Spirit. We cannot get into the 'Spirit' sphere by obeying the Law, even though the Law is "spiritual", given by and of the Holy Spirit. The way to get into the sphere or status of the Spirit isn't by obedience to a spiritual Law, because we keep failing to be obedient. We enter the sphere of the Spirit by baptism into Christ, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). He is "the Spirit" in that He embodies the Spirit of God- and therefore this is His title in Rom. 8:26. And Romans 8 will argue further that it is by our acceptance of our new status by grace, believing that we really are "in Christ" and justified by God's grace, that the Spirit will work in our lives; so that we are indeed in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Sold unto sin- As if he was a slave to the "sin" master. This is how the word is used in Mt. 18:25 and many times in its LXX usage. Yet in chapter 6 he has exalted that in Christ, we died to the power of sin (6:2) and are not under sin (6:18,22). So what does Paul mean? He may mean that he *had been* sold under sin; maybe using a literary rhetorical device which is relevant to the unredeemed Jews rather than himself personally; maybe he is at this point totally identified with Israel and is personifying Israel under the Law without Christ; or is it that he is admitting his personal failure to walk the talk he has outlined so eloquently in chapter 6; or is he recognizing that although we have changed status and masters with our real self, the inward man who delights in God's law (7:22), we are still human and that human side of us still sins? My own suggestion is that Paul is here quoting a phrase from Rabbinic writings, although it would seem that the source has been lost to us. This would be in keeping with his style throughout Romans 1-8. He would then be using the Jewish writings themselves to demonstrate the misery of the human position without Christ; and this would fit in with the way at times in Romans 7:7-25 he appears to be consciously personifying Israel.

7:15 *For why I do what I do, I do not understand*- Gk. to know, recognize, perceive, approve. The word has a wide range of meaning, so interpretation cannot be too forcefully pressed here, but the idea may be that Paul is sharing his impression that the sinful things he does, he performs almost unawares, almost unconsciously, and he may be alluding to the image of slavery- mindless obedience, actions performed as automatisms. This is not to justify nor minimize human sin, but to rather make the point that it is performed within the context of being a slave to sin; and by status, we have changed masters. Note that Paul concludes this section by saying that in his mind he serves as a slave the law of God, whilst with his flesh he is still the slave of sin (Rom. 7:25). Yet all the same, we are ultimately "in Christ", with no condemnation possible, because we serve Him (Rom. 8:1).

Ps. 139 reminds us how God knows us so well, psychologically as well as physically. David's response to this is that such knowledge is too wonderful for him and he cannot attain it (Ps. 139:6). The simple point being made is that we cannot know the extent to which God knows us. Nor do we know all God knows about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is a huge comfort in a world where we beg more than anything: "Please understand me". It is common to throw in to our sentences: "Do you get what I mean? You get me?". And this desire is often ultimately not met in our human relationships. The priceless comfort of this Psalm is that this most basic human need is met in God's knowledge of us. Even our eternal future is unknown to us- "It does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2) but believing the truth expressed in this Psalm, we can be at peace about that too. We do not in fact know ourselves; God does. This is why the Psalm concludes with a request for God to "search me" and correct me- because it is outside my own ability to do so. Paul laments that he doesn't understand his own actions: "For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate" (Rom. 7:15). Paul admits that "I know nothing against myself" but he is not thereby justified (1 Cor. 4:4). We see ourselves in a darkened mirror ["through a glass darkly"] but only then, at the Lord's coming, face to face- with ourselves: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Only then shall we see ourselves as God sees us. And that is surely the function of the day of judgment- it is

for our benefit. All searching to 'find yourself' in this life is vain, because our natures are intrinsically limited so that we cannot, at least not ultimately. The wonder of salvation is that we shall find ourselves, we shall know ourselves as God knows.

For I do not do what I intend- AV "would", which means 'to will', and occurs frequently in this section (Rom. 7:15,16,18,19,20,21). Paul is saying that what he wills to do, he simply lacks the will to do; he laments the weakness of his will in being obedient. The interlude about the election of Israel in Romans 9-11 practically exemplifies the theology of Romans 1-8; and this theme of Paul's weak will is commented upon in Rom. 9:16: "So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy". It's not that salvation is only for he or she who somehow finds within themselves some steel will against sin. It is not of him that wills, but of God's grace. Were it a question of steel will, it would be a matter of works; but due to our change of status, it isn't a matter of steel, but rather of God's grace and our acceptance of it. In fact, Rom. 9:18 goes further, and states that it's not a question of *our* will but of God's will. Some He has mercy upon, as He wills; others He hardens, as He wills. And we in Christ are for sure those whom He has 'willed' to have mercy upon. And as exemplified by the choice of unspiritual Jacob over nice guy, man of the world Esau- that Divine will in election simply doesn't depend upon works. Otherwise it wouldn't be grace; indeed, the whole concept of predestination and Divine calling regardless of works is raised by Paul to demonstrate the principle- that it's not by works or lack of them that we are acceptable to God.

But instead I do what I hate- This contrasts with the triumphant passages in Romans 6 which speak of our change of status from being under sin to being under Christ. That contrast is surely intentional. We could say that Paul is now in chapter 7 talking of our practical experience, of how things are on the ground. They're bad; sin is strong and we are weak. But he emphasizes this in such a graphic manner in order to point up the wonder of the fact that all this notwithstanding, we are by *status* justified, declared right before God, have left the sphere of the flesh and are in that of the Spirit. The reality of present failure makes our changed status all the more wonderful. Perhaps another comfort from all this is that if we truly *hate* sin (cp. Rev. 2:6) rather than love every moment of it, then we are somehow on the right track and are in fact like Paul within the sphere of the Spirit in our hearts.

Paul's autobiographical passage in Romans 7, where he describes his sinfulness and the results of it, is actually expressed in terms of Adam's fall in Eden. So many phrases which he uses are lifted out of the LXX of Genesis 3. The evident examples are: "I would never have known what it is to covet, if the Law had not said, You must not covet [cp. Eve coveting the fruit]... when the command came... sin [cp. the serpent] beguiled me... to kill me... sin resulted in death for me by making use of this good thing... who will rescue me now from the body of death?". Adam is presented to us as 'every man'; and so Paul applies this to himself, and yet through the allusion to 'every man' in Adam, he sets himself up also as our example.

7:16 *But if I do what I would rather not do, then I agree that the law is good*- Gk. 'to speak together with'. The very fact we struggle against sin, we have a will not to disobey the Law, is in fact speaking together with the Law, agreeing that it is good. Whilst in the primary context Paul is writing to Jewish Christians with the Mosaic Law in view, the principles are the same for any Divine law at any time. The comfort

is that if we feel we 'would not' sin / break the Law but end up doing so, then actually, we are speaking in unison with the Law, we are not actually in disagreement with it.

7:17 *So now it is not I that do it*- The same Greek as in Rom. 6:9, where "no more" means 'not any longer', as in Rom. 7:20. For those in Christ, like Paul, our sins are no longer done by us but are considered as committed by the old man, the Adam, the status, sphere and person we are no longer identified with. We are to understand our sins as somehow separate from the real me, the 'me' with whom we finally identify. 'It's no longer me, but sin who sins' seems to be the idea… as if Paul is dissociating himself from himself; and that's a position which surely all true believers can identify with.

But the sin which dwells in me- An allusion to the Jewish concept of the *yetser ha ra*, the inclination to evil. The Rabbis taught that this can be curbed by the Law. But Paul is saying that the Law actually empowers this inclination, and the victory is through God's gracious counting of us as right in Christ. See on 7:19 *the good that I would*- a reference to the supposed good inclination in man, the *yetser ha tob*. The very idea of sin dwelling within me suggests that "sin" and "me" are different categories, even if they are related.

7:18 *For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing*- The idea could be 'I have come to realize'. Do we analyse our own sinfulness as deeply as Paul did? See on Rom. 7:7.

For the will to do good is present with me- Surely an allusion to the disciples in Gethsemane, with willing spirits but weak flesh (Mt. 26:41). They were in the wrong, their weakness in stark contrast to the watchful, sweating Lord Jesus as He struggled against sin. And Paul invites us to feel the same. The Greek for "present" occurs only here and in Rom. 7:21. It means literally 'to lie near' and could have in mind the language of Gen. 4:7, where sinful Cain was encouraged that a sin offering lay near him, outside the door, ready for him to confess his sin over and sacrifice.

But to actually do- Paul confessed to an inability to translate his will into action. Yet in 7:25 he will soon rejoice that he had found the answer in Christ, which we have consistently interpreted as a reference to our being "in Christ" by status in Him. The Greek for "perform" occurs later in Romans, where Paul glories of the many things "which Christ has *wrought* [s.w. 'perform'] by me" (Rom. 15:18). For that not to be a statement of pride nor trust in the works which Paul has so often exposed as valueless before God, we must understand Paul as totally committed to the idea of Christ working or performing through him. He has finally found "how to perform" the works he had so wished to- by believing totally in his "in Christ" status, feeling the extent to which he was now at one with Christ, and thereby sensing the extent to which Christ was working His works through him, the works he would love to have performed whilst under the Law, but found himself simply not strong willed enough to perform.

What is good is not present- In the context must surely refer to the Jewish Law which was the "good [thing]" (Rom. 7:12,13,16). There was no "good thing" within Paul's flesh, no natural tendency to fulfil that Law; and so he found no way to totally obey that Law as he had so desperately wanted to in his youth.

When Paul laments that he cannot find "how to perform that which is good", he is speaking about the Law of Moses. For the context of Romans 7 repeatedly defines the Mosaic Law as that which is "holy, just and good… the law is [the] good [thing]", the law of God in which Paul delighted (Rom. 7:12,16,22). The "no good thing" which dwelt within Paul was therefore a description of his inability to keep the Mosaic Law, rather than any reference to human nature- for the "good thing" has just been defined as the Mosaic Law (Rom. 7:18). But all this was to create the lead in to the realization that now in Christ, there is now no condemnation.

7:19 *For the good which I would like to do I do not do*- A reference to the supposed good inclination in man, the *yetser ha tob* , which the Rabbis said was strengthened by the Law (see on 7:17). Paul seems to be saying that this good inclination is a myth, or if it exists, it has little cash value in the battle against temptation. The way of escape is through God's grace in Christ. W.D. Davies demonstrates beyond cavil that Paul in this section of Romans is constantly alluding to and critiquing the Rabbinic ideas of the *yetser ha tob* and the *yetser ha ra* (4). "The good" must connect with the same word being used in Rom. 7:12,13 to describe the Law of Moses as "good". Paul so wished to be perfectly obedient to the Law- but found it impossible.

But the evil which I would not do, that I practice- The same words are to be found in Paul's warning that Divine condemnation, "tribulation and anguish", awaits every man who 'does evil' (Rom. 2:9). Paul was so aware that his sin did in fact merit the term "evil", and condemnation before God's judgment; and he practiced it, he is not referring to an occasional slip up. The more we appreciate the extent and implications of our sin, the deeper will be our sense of relief and glory at the wonderful way we are 'declared right' by God.

7:20 *But if do what I would not wish to do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me*- See on Rom. 7:17. He sees fit to repeat the teaching of v. 17, so important is this- that we are not to identify our real self with our sinful side. The old self is dead in baptism, as explained in chapter 6.

7:21 *So I find then a principle*- A "law", which often in the context refers to the Law of Moses. Paul may mean 'I find then with respect to the Law'. He could conceivably be using "law" merely in the sense of "principle.

That evil is present, although I wish to do good- The same word has just been used in 7:18, where the desire to do good is likewise "present" or lying next to Paul. The impression is of the two desires, to do good and to do evil, are lying next to Paul; he must decide which one to take up, but he almost automatically seems to pick up the "evil".

7:22 *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man*- Hating the evil, delighting in God's law, yet finding oneself doing exactly what we don't wish to do… all this is exactly the experience of believers in Christ today. We really are in Paul's position, and have every reason to share in his later positivism- for it is based on the fact that we don't do the works we need to, yet we are saved by grace.

Paul had an amazing commitment to unity in the brotherhood. One could say that it

was this which led him to his death, and certainly to political self-destruction in the politics of the early church. For his desire to unite Jewish and Gentile Christians was humanly speaking a loser- the Jewish converts simply would not give up their allegiance to the synagogue, with all the political and economic benefits this involved; nor would they really accept Gentiles. And Gentiles were never going to accept Jewish observances, indeed Paul knew this to be spiritually wrong. I submit that the whole epistle to the Romans is an exposition of the Gospel which has Jewish-Gentile unity as its underlying burden. This becomes apparent in the opening chapters. This to me is the key to understanding Romans 7. There Paul opens his heart and speaks frankly of his own inner conflicts. He says that he delights in [keeping] the law of God, yet he has a principle within him which seeks to make him captive to the law of sin (Rom. 7:22). I suggest he may be referring to his love, as an ex-Pharisee, of the Law of Moses, but this leads him to desire to keep the whole Law, including the *halakah* [the ordinances of the Rabbis]. He speaks of his struggle to both ignore the Jewish laws, and yet keep them. He concludes that he cannot keep them adequately, and so he surrenders to justification by faith in Christ alone. I read Paul as saying that he initially accepted justification in Christ, but then after his conversion he went through a period of seeking to keep the Law, and "sin revived". And so he strongly concluded that he must throw himself solely upon Christ's grace.

1 Pet. 3:4 speaks of the spiritual man within us as "the hidden man of the heart... a meek and quiet spirit". This confirms that this "man" is the personification of a spirit, or attitude of mind. Thus our real spiritual person is "hidden". The world therefore cannot understand us, or be truly close to the believer who has the spiritual man utmost in their heart. The Gospel itself is a "mystery" ('something hidden'), yet this hidden mystery is the dynamic power in our "hidden man" of the Spirit. All that is hidden will be openly revealed in the Kingdom (Mt. 10:26). The inward man of Rom. 7:22 is what is so important; yet the LXX in Lev. 3:14-16 uses the same word to describe the fat surrounding the intestines, which God appeared to so value in the sacrifices. It was not that He wanted that fat in itself; but rather He saw that fat as representing a man's essential spirituality, that which is developed close to the heart, unseen by others, but revealed after death.

7:23 *But I see*- Gk. to behold, view. Paul is speaking as it were from outside of himself, or more accurately, from outside of the hopeless sinner whose behaviour and weakness he so laments. This device serves to indicate the degree to which he chose to be identified not with that 'person', but with the man Christ Jesus to whom in his mind, in his deepest heart, he belonged and ultimately identified with. Looking at our position this way, it becomes apparent that what I would term 'ultimate identity' is the ultimate question of our whole existence- who in our hearts do we identify with, wish to be with, love rather than hate? Christ, or sin? We see in this whole passage the very clear answer in the case of Paul. I can say at this time, it's clear in my own case. And I know it is in that of so many believers.

A different law in my limbs- Paul speaks of a battle between two laws. A battle is usually unto death, but in this case, Paul is taken captive, and captives taken in battle [if they were spared] always entered slavery. So Paul implies he is in slavery- at least, in the flesh. The 'law' is perhaps that of 7:21- the principle that whenever he would do good, there is another reasoning which appears next to ["present" AV] that desire to do good. And this principle invariably wins. But we are tempted to see an

association between that law / principle and the Law of Moses. For the very same word is used, and if Paul simply meant 'principle', he could have used such a word in Greek.

Warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my limbs- A related word is used in James 4:1, about lusts warring in our bodies. The existence of such warring isn't wrong in itself, it's part of being human; it's which side wins the battle which counts; and even more so, which side we in our deepest hearts identify ourselves with.

7:24 *Wretched man that I am!*- The Greek word is elsewhere used about the feelings of the rejected before God's judgment (James 5:1; Rev. 3:17), likewise in the LXX (Is. 47:11; Mic. 2:4; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:15). Paul feels as if he is even now standing before the judgment seat of God, and is condemned- yet suddenly he rejoices that he is in fact amazingly saved by Christ. This is the very theme of the earlier sections of Romans- that we are suddenly declared right, justified, as we stand condemned in the dock before God. This lends weight to the suggestion that Romans 7 is indeed autobiographical of Paul, declaring the process of his own conversion, yet telling the story, as it were, in terms which present him as personifying every Jew under the Law.

Who shall deliver me– The same word occurs in Romans in the excursus about Israel in Rom. 11:26- where Christ is "the deliverer" who comes to deliver hopelessly sinful Israel, whom Paul embodies in this section in Romans 7.

Out of the body of this death?- Yet Paul has argued at the beginning of Romans 7 and elsewhere that just as the body of the Lord Jesus died on the cross, so every believer has already died with Christ. And yet clearly Paul still feels trapped within the body, with all the temptations which are part of being human.

Romans 7 and 8 are so opposed to each on surface level reading. At the end of Romans 7, Paul is lamenting 'Oh wretched man that I am!'. At the end of Romans 8, he is rejoicing in the utter certainty of salvation, apparently lost for words [even under inspiration] to gasp out the wonder of it all. So huge is the difference of spirit that expositor after expositor has concluded that this must all be read biographically- as if in Romans 7 Paul is speaking of his life before conversion, and goes on in Romans 8 to describe his life afterwards. But Greek tenses [unlike Hebrew ones] are precise. The tenses in Romans 7 make that a very strained reading. Paul is saying that he *right now* feels utterly frustrated by his constant doing that which he doesn't want to do, his apparent inability to do good, and his wretchedness. I submit that the two chapters dovetail together. It was only though the appreciation of personal sin which we meet in Romans 7 that Paul could reason through to the paean of praise and confidence which he reaches by the end of Romans 8.

The Bible has so much to say about death, depicting us as having a "body of death" (Rom. 7:24). And yet humanity generally doesn't want to seriously consider death. Yet death is the moment of final truth, which makes all men and women ultimately equal, destroying all the categories into which we place people during our or their lives. If we regularly read and accept the Bible's message, death, with all its intensity and revelation of truth and the ultimate nature of human issues, is something which is

constantly before us, something we realistically face and know, not only in sickness or at funerals. And the realness, the intensity, the truth… which comes from this will be apparent in our lives.

7:25 *Thanks be to God- through Jesus Christ our Lord!*- In the sense that we can become "in Christ" and all that is true of Him becomes true of us.

So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin- The classic statement of personal identity, the climax of the whole exclamation of relief, the answer to all the spiritual frustration and anguish of this chapter. He himself, his real self. Identified with being a slave of God; but his flesh continued to serve sin.

Notes
(1) See E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979) Vol. 2 pp. 425-428.
(2) Other possible examples from the NT and from throughout contemporary writings are given in R.H. Gundry, *The Old is Better: New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) pp. 229,230 and J. Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) pp. 73-91.
(3) See S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) Vol. 2 p. 771.
(4) W.D. Davies, *Paul* and *Rabbinic Judaism*: *Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948) pp. 19-27.

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*– Referring back to the idea of Rom. 5:16,18, which are the only other places in the NT where the word occurs. We have been declared right before God's judgment; there is now no condemnation any more. Even though in Rom. 7:24 Paul has been saying he feels the wretchedness of condemnation as a sinner (see note there).

Who walk not after the flesh- Added by AV. Too easily the wonderful promise that there is no condemnation for those in Christ can become muted by this apparent rider, that we must walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Yet Paul has been lamenting throughout the preceding chapter 7 that he walks after the flesh. His argument throughout the letter so far has been that although we continue committing sin, by status we are in Christ. The condemnation, the adverse verdict, has been removed. We are justified, declared righteous. And this is because we are located "in Christ". Paul is surely aware of the apparent contradictions and tensions within his argument- so he's surely foreseeing our objection, that we still walk after the flesh. And he states that we who are in Christ Jesus do not walk after the flesh. It's not a condition- as if to say 'There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ *if* we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh'. For this would make salvation contingent upon our 'walking', our works- and his whole argument has been that salvation is by grace and not works. Those who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh is therefore a description of, rather than an exhortation to, those who are in Christ. His Spirituality is counted to them. By status we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, and this is confirmed by the

Spirit dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9). Rom. 7:5 likewise speaks of our being "in the flesh" as something in the past, our previous status. Another possibility is that "walk after" here describes not to a total way of life, but rather a following after, an inclination towards, rather than a final arriving at the destination. And that again fits in so precisely with our position as believers in Christ today- as Paul has been saying in Romans 7, we incline after, follow after, dearly aspire to, the things of the Spirit; even if we don't attain them as we would wish.

8:2 Paul starts to speak here in chapter 8 about the Spirit. He has explained that we are declared right by God, even as we stand in the dock condemned; he has said that we must believe this, and that faith in this rather than any works is what makes it true for us. He has then started to explore the mechanics of how it all works out- that we believe "into Christ" by baptism into Him, whereby we are counted as Him; and so we have changed spheres, positions, identities, from "sin" to "Christ". He has observed that this doesn't mean that we don't sin, and he laments the power of sin within him, always eager to point out the Law has strengthened sin rather than helped us overcome it, and that therefore grace is the all important basis of our salvation. He characterizes the two positions or spheres in various terms, and in chapter 7 he starts speaking of them as "flesh" and "spirit". He observes that there is in himself a struggle between the two, but his real self definitely identifies himself with the Spirit rather than the flesh. Being in the Spirit is the same as being "in Christ", and "the Spirit" is a title of Christ in Rom. 8:26,27. Romans 8 now proceeds to explore the function of "the Spirit" in more depth.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free- The spirit of life in Christ sets us free from sin (Rom. 8:2); but Gal. 5:1 simply says that "Christ" has set us free [the same Greek phrase] from sin. The Man Christ Jesus is His "spirit of life"; the man and His way of life were in perfect congruence. They always were; for in Him the word was made flesh. Rom. 6:18,22 explain simply that we are "made free from sin" by baptism into Christ. Here we are given more detail; we were made free from the principle of sin and death, the law which Paul had observed at work within him in chapter 7, that our sinful desires are stronger than our spiritual intentions, and therefore "in the flesh" we are condemned to death. Our slavery to this principle has been overcome by "the spirit of life in Christ". Rom. 6:18,22 says that we were simply freed from sin by becoming "in Christ" by baptism and belief into Him. Rom. 8:2 is saying that this operates, is effectual, by "the spirit of life in Christ". This could mean that the spirit of life which was in the Lord Jesus Christ as a person- the perfection of spirit or character which was His, which was like God- is counted to us by our status "in Christ". It could also, or alternatively, mean that this status we have is as it were mechanically made effective by the work of the Spirit, which sanctifies us before God. It's not so much that the Spirit enters our hearts and makes us righteous, for in chapter 7 Paul has been lamenting how we still sin and are in one sense still enslaved to sin. Rather it could be that "the Spirit" works in our lives to make us sanctified before God, rather than in the realities of daily life. The "sanctification of the Spirit" which we read of elsewhere in the NT (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:29; 1 Pet. 1:2) would therefore refer to *how* God counts us as righteous, as in Christ, with a spirit like His. In this sense Christ is made unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). It's by the working of the Spirit. We can on one hand simply accept that God counts us as righteous, as Christ, because we are "in Him".

But probing further as to how, mechanically as it were, this is the case- the answer is, 'Through the work of the Spirit sanctifying us, making us holy in His sight'.

Paul's writings are packed with allusions to the Jewish ideas about the "ages" ending in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan. Paul was correcting their interpretations – by saying that the "ages" had ended in Christ's death, and the things the Jewish writings claimed for the future Messianic Kingdom were in fact already possible for those in Christ. Thus when 1 Enoch 5:7,8 speaks of 'freedom from sin' coming then, Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* (Rom. 6:18–22; 8:2).

From the law of sin and death- As lamented in Rom. 7:23,25. The law of sin there refers to the principle of sin within us that keeps on beating us, winning the struggle against our weak spirituality. But *even this* has been overcome because of the status we have "in Christ" and by the work of the Spirit this involves.

The New Testament develops the theme of 'living in the spirit'. We can often understand 'spirit' in the NT to mean the dominant desire, the way of life, the essential intention, the ambience of a man's life. The idea of life in the Spirit is often placed in opposition to that of living under a legal code. We are asked to live a way of life, rather than mere obedience to a certain number of specific propositions. And yet whilst we are free from legal codes, we aren't free to do as we like. We are under "the law of the spirit" (Rom. 8:2), "the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). The law of Christ isn't only His specific teaching, but the person of the real, historical Jesus. This is the standard of appeal which should mould the spirit of our lives. We must live "according to Christ" (Rom. 15:5; Col. 2:8), and the character of Jesus is the basis of Paul's appeals to us to live a spiritual life (Rom. 15:3,7,8; 1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:2,25; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Thess. 1:6).

8:3 *For what the law*- Obedience to the Law.

Could not do- S.w. in Romans only at Rom. 15:1: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the *weak*", those who 'can not'. The connections between the doctrinal and practical sections of Romans are so frequent that this link too is surely intended. The "weak" Paul had in mind were therefore the Jewish believers who still trusted in the Law; patience with the legalistic, acceptance of those whose faith in Christ's grace is weak, bearing with the ungracious, is really the test of our Christ-likeness. For He does this with us so very often.

In that it was weak through the flesh- "Weak" is s.w. Mt. 25:36 "sick". Our attitude to the weak / spiritually sick is our attitude to Christ personally- because amazingly, they especially represent Him. "Weak through the flesh" is surely alluding to the essence of what Paul has been writing in Romans 7- that our flesh is so weak. The implication is that our weakness is related to an attitude that keeping the Law would lead to justification. And this in turn confirms my suggestion that Romans 7 is a section specifically written to first century Jewish converts who had once been under the Law of Moses. The same word occurs in Rom. 5:6- when we were "without strength", weak, Christ died for us. Our weakness, our spiritual weakness, is therefore no barrier to God's love and Christ's devotion to us. Amazing, but true.

God, sending His own son- The connection with Phil. 2:7,8 suggests this 'sending' was specifically in the crucifixion. Likewise God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die on the cross (Jn. 3:16).

In the likeness of sinful flesh- This seems to be parallel with "in the likeness of men" and "in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2:7,8). "Sinful flesh" refers therefore to 'sinful humanity', rather than implying that we are sinful and offensive to God simply by reason of being human beings. The spotless lamb of God had full human nature, He looked like a man because He was a man, and therefore He looked just like the same men who regularly perform sinful actions. Whatever we say about 'human nature', we say about the Lord Jesus- for He bore our 'nature' and yet was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It's actually very hard to Biblically define what we mean by 'human nature'; it's not some intrinsic piece of 'sin' that somehow is metaphysically ingrained into us, upon which the wrath of God abides. So I prefer to speak rather of 'the human condition' to avoid this impression. In passing, let's get it clear that Rom. 8:3 doesn't speak of something called 'sin-in-the-flesh'. Students as varied as John Carter and Harry Whittaker [in *The Very Devil*] have faithfully pointed out that this is neither grammatically nor contextually correct. The Lord Jesus condemned sin; and where and how did He condemn it? In "the flesh", in that He too lived within the nexus of pressures and influences of this sinful world. He appeared just another man, so much so that when He stood up and indirectly proclaimed Himself Messiah, those who knew Him were amazed; because He had appeared so very ordinary. Truly He was in "the likeness of sinful flesh", yet without personal sin. See on 2 Cor. 7:1.

It could even be argued from Rom. 8:3 ("in the likeness of sinful flesh") that the Lord Jesus appeared to be a normal sinful human being, although He was not a sinner (see on Jn. 2:5,10). This would explain the amazement of the townspeople who knew Him, when He indirectly declared Himself to be Messiah. Grammatically, "it is not the noun "flesh" but the adjective "sinful" that demands the addition of "likeness"" (1). He appeared as a sinner, without being one. Of course we can conveniently misunderstand this, to justify our involvement with sinful things and appearing just like the surrounding world, in order to convert them. But all the same, it was exactly because the Lord Jesus appeared so normal, so closely part of sinful humanity, that He was and is our Saviour and compelling example. I have elsewhere argued that Rom. 8:3 is alluding specifically to the Lord's death, where He was treated as a sinner, strung up upon a tree like all those cursed by sinful behaviour, although in His case He was innocent. Rom. 8:3 speaks of the Lord Jesus as being "in the likeness of sinful flesh" in order to achieve our redemption. The Greek word translated "likeness" elsewhere is used to express identity and correspondence- not mere external 'appearance' (consider its usage in Rom. 1:23; 5:14; 6:5; Phil. 2:7). Scholars, even Trinitarian ones, are generally in agreement on this point. Two examples, both from Trinitarian writers commenting upon this word in Rom. 8:3: "Paul consistently used "likeness" to denote appropriate correspondence or congruity. Thus Paul affirmed Jesus' radical conformity to and solidarity with our sinful flesh (*sarx*)" (2). "The sense of the word (likeness) in Rom. 8:3 by no means marks a distinction or a difference between Christ and sinful flesh. If Christ comes *en homoiomati* of sinful flesh, he comes as the full expression of that sinful flesh. He manifests it for what it is" (3). The total identity of the Lord with our sinfulness is brought out in passages like Rom.

8:3, describing Jesus as being "in the likeness of sinful flesh" when He was made a sin offering; and 1 Pet. 2:24, which speaks of how He "his own self… in his own body" bore our sins "upon the tree". Note that it was at the time of His death that He was especially like this. I believe that these passages speak more of the Lord's moral association with sinners, which reached a climax in His death, than they do of His 'nature'.

"For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin" (Rom. 8:3) – cp. Gal. 4:4–5, "Made of a woman, made under the Law (cp. "sinful flesh") to redeem them that were under the Law". The drive of Paul's argument in its primary context was that having been baptized, they should leave the Law, as that was connected with the sin from which baptism saved them – it introduced them to salvation by pure grace in Jesus. The Hebrew writer had the connection in mind when he wrote of "*carnal* ordinances" (Heb. 9:10; 7:16). To be justified by the Law was to be "made perfect by the flesh", so close is the connection between Law and flesh (Gal. 3:2,3). "We (who have left the Law)... have no confidence in the flesh (i.e. the Law). Though I might also have confidence in the flesh..." (Phil. 3:3–4), and then Paul goes on to list all the things which gave him high standing in the eyes of the Law and the Jewish system. These things he associates with "the flesh". See on Col. 2:14.

"Likeness" is s.w. Rom. 6:5, we are planted together in the "likeness" of Christ's death. His being made like us is to be responded to by our being made like Him, starting in a baptism into His likeness.

"Sinful flesh" has just been used by Paul in Rom. 7:25 [also Rom. 7:5], in lamenting how in our 'flesh' status, we seem to so easily serve sin as our master. The Lord Jesus had our nature, the same struggle against a tendency to unspirituality, egged on by living in a social environment where sin is everywhere and ever present.

And for a sin offering- The Greek *peri hamartias* "is the Septuagint's technical term for the sin offering" (4).

Condemned sin, in the flesh- As a judicial action, the passing of sentence, s.w. Mk. 14:64 "they all condemned Him to be worthy of death". This is how and why there is no condemnation for those in Christ (8:1). In the earlier chapters of Romans, Paul likened us as standing ashamed and condemned in the dock before the judgment seat of God; but then declared right, justified, by grace. And if we believe in that grace, it shall be true for us at the final judgment. But here the image changes slightly- for it is "sin", not just ourselves personally, which was condemned on the cross by the fact that Christ died there as a human who never yielded to sin. Remember that someone or something can be "condemned" by someone else in the sense that that person shows the condemned party to be in the wrong in comparison with their behaviour, e.g. Noah condemning the world around him (Mt. 12:41,42; Lk. 11:31,32; Heb. 11:7). It was perhaps in this sense that the Lord condemned sin by His sinlessness and obedience unto death. The context of this phrase "condemned sin" in 8:3 is to be found in 8:1- there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ", and Paul is explaining why- because not only have they been declared right, but as "in Christ", all that is true of Him becomes true of us. He was not only uncondemned by sin, but He went onto the offensive- and condemned sin.

8:4 *That the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us*- Paul explores how in fact we have been declared righteous, justified in a legal sense. All that is true of Christ becomes true of those who are in Him. He perfectly fulfilled the Law, and I have suggested earlier that this in a sense entitled Him not to have to die. No longer was Adam literally everyman; there was one Man, the Lord Jesus, who did not sin like Adam did. The righteousness or "requirement" of the Law was ultimately love, love unto death, even the death of the cross. Both "love" and Christ's death on the cross are elsewhere stated to be the fulfilment of the Law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). We who have broken the Law are counted as in Christ, and therefore we are counted as having fulfilled it to its' ultimate term- love unto the death of the cross. The passive verb form of "might be fulfilled" suggests that we are reading here about something being done for or in us; the fact it is fulfilled "*in* us" rather than *by* us confirms that we aren't reading here some exhortation to do the righteousness of the Law, but rather a statement about what has been fulfilled in us- by the representative death of Christ for us and our identification with it. Thus we are changed by status from being condemned lawbreakers to being counted as having ultimately fulfilled it. In a clearly parallel passage in terms of thought, 2 Cor. 5:21 says that God made Christ "sin" for us "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". The Law was fulfilled in the perfect character of the Lord Jesus and finally in His death. Baptism into death means that we are counted as having died with Him- and therefore we too fulfilled the Law to perfection.

Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit- cannot mean, given the context, that our righteous 'walk' fulfils the Law- for we stand condemned by it. Rather is this again a reference to the two spheres of life- flesh and Spirit, Adam or Christ, out of Christ or in Christ, condemned or justified. We are to "walk", to practically live, in the sphere of the Spirit. I am inclined to interpret the idea of "walk after" as meaning 'to be occupied with', as the Greek is indeed elsewhere translated in the AV. If our orientation is around the Spirit and not the flesh, then we are demonstrating that indeed our change of status has been for real. Because we are "in Christ", the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us insofar as it was fulfilled in Christ and has been counted to us.

Paul states that because of the Lord's death "as an offering for sin", thereby the 'commandment ["requirement" RVmg.] of the Law is fulfilled in us' (Rom. 8:3,4). But in the practical part of that same letter, Paul defines the requirement / commandment of the Law to be one thing- simply "love" (Rom. 13:10). Love as God understands it is that we keep or fulfil His commandments (1 Jn. 5:3). What, then, is the connection? How could the Lord's death on the cross lead to the fulfilment *in us* of the Law's commandment / requirement of love? Quite simply, because it is now impossible for a man to be passive before the cross, and not to be inspired by Him there towards a life of genuine love. Paul isn't simply making some mechanistic, theological statement- that the cross fulfilled the Law, because it fulfilled all the types etc. It fulfilled the Law in that the Law intended to teach *love*; and the cross and dying of the Lord Jesus is now the means by which we can powerfully be inspired to the life of love which fulfils the entire Law.

8:5 *For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh*– Where our mind is becomes the crucial definition of whether we are in the Spirit status or that of the

flesh. The definition of 'minding' the things of God or of the flesh is therefore important. The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter for 'savouring' the things of men rather than God (Mt. 16:23); Phil. 4:10 translates the word as 'to care for', Col. 3:2 as 'affection'. Being spiritually minded isn't therefore a question of not sinning- for Romans 7 has made it clear enough that believers do continue sinning after baptism and yet can still confidently rejoice in hope of the final redemption. It's rather a question of wanting spiritual things, loving them, savouring them, having them in our heart, just as Paul could say that in his heart he loved and rejoiced in God's law, although in practice he continued sinning. This I believe is where most believers stand. So loving, admiring and delighting in spiritual things, but feeling bad because their flesh still so easily gives way to temptation. That failure isn't excusable, for Paul began Romans by pointing out that the perfect, sinless Lord Jesus all the same lived in our flesh.

But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit- As in "after the flesh", the Greek word *kata* is used. This really means in this kind of context 'to be concerned with, to be around, in the sphere of'. This is exactly the idea we have been trying to express- we are to be concerned with, have in our hearts, the Spirit rather than the flesh.

8:6 *For the mind of the flesh is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*- The definition of 'walking after' the flesh or spirit spoken of in 8:5. If we are in the sphere or realm of the Spirit, of Christ, then we will think about those things in our hearts. If we have believed, known to be true and felt the truth of those things which Paul has so far explained- we will have these things uttermost in our hearts, be enveloped by them. I take what Paul writes here to be a description of our status, rather than a command to be spiritually minded rather than carnally minded. For by status we are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit (8:9). This fits the context of the argument so far in Romans- which has always been about a change of status, and our living in ever growing appreciation of that status change that has occurred. The mind of the flesh "is death", here and now; whereas the mind or *phronema* of the Spirit "is life" here and now. *Phronema* means the inclination, the purpose, the intention. It doesn't mean that we will consciously think of spiritual things all the time (not that this is any bad aim or desire). Rather our intentions, inclinations, should be to the Spirit and not the flesh.

8:7 *Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be*- This is defined in 8:5,6 as the mindset which inclines to flesh rather than Spirit; that reads trashy novels rather than God's word; than thinks of money and cars and holidays and restaurants and fine clothes and expensive jewellery... rather than the things of God's people and His service. That willingly thinks about banality rather than the things of Jesus and the Spirit. That doesn't really think much about the things of God's Kingdom but rather the things of this world. This kind of mindset is hatred towards God. So says Paul. This is the mindset of those who are in the flesh status, who mind the things of the flesh (8:5). Note that Paul is here talking mindsets, not total sin nor total righteousness. This kind of mindset of the flesh can never be "subject" to God's law, His principles, His Spirit. It is self-centred rather than God cantered. Yet the same Greek word for "subject to" occurs in Rom. 8:20, where we read that we have been subjected beneath the state of vanity which there is in this fallen world, and yet we in Christ have been subjected to this in hope. The point is, whatever sense we have of being 'subjected under' the things of the flesh

and indeed this present world, this is involuntary. It's not what our real self would wish for. We have subjected ourselves under the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3), become servants to that wonderful concept that His righteousness has been imputed to us. We find ourselves therefore in subjection to this righteousness and yet involuntarily living in subjection to the sinful state we find ourselves in.

8:8 *And they that are in the flesh*- Not so much in status, for we are all still "in the flesh" in the sense Paul describes in Romans 7. Paul is surely speaking of being fleshly minded, having a mindset which is of the flesh not the Spirit. This simply cannot please God.

Cannot please God- The Greek definitely suggests that God Himself has emotions which can be excited. And this is an amazing idea- that we here on earth, so very far from Him in so many ways, can touch the heart of God. Notice that the other references to 'pleasing' in Romans are to pleasing our neighbour (Rom. 15:1-3)- our attitude to God, and His pleasure in us, is related to our attitude to our neighbour and our pleasure in him or her.

8:9- see on Rom. 6:12.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit- By status, by position. Note from 1 Cor. 3:16 that believers, even those who have the gifts of the Spirit, can still be "carnal" or fleshly in some aspects of their actual behaviour. Hence Paul must be talking here in positional terms.

If the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his- This could imply that Paul doubted whether some of his readership really were in the sphere of the Spirit. However, this would contradict the entire tone of this section and the argument so far- that all those baptized into Christ must be considered by us as unquestioningly "in the Spirit". It would also jar with the otherwise positive tone Paul takes towards the Roman believers, speaking in 8:12 as if "we", he and his readership, are all in the same status. "If so be" can be read quite comfortably as meaning 'Seeing that'. This is how it is translated in 2 Thess. 1:6, "*Seeing that* it is…". We can be assured that our status is "in the Spirit" rather than "in the flesh" by the fact that the Spirit dwells in us. If we don't have the Spirit of Christ, then we are not "his"- and the Greek for "his" would I suggest better be translated "Him", or even "He himself". We are reckoned as Christ Himself because we are in Him by faith and baptism into Him. His Spirit is counted as our spirit, in the sense that His character, His personality, His totally obedient mind, are counted as ours. So we aren't so much as reading that we had better ensure we are spiritually minded and have the mind of Christ; we are being assured that we can be sure we are "in Him" because we are counted as Him, His perfect mind and character, His spirit, are counted as ours. Hence Paul can write with such confidence that "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). We do not in fact think like Him, at least, our mind and spirit are not of themselves like His were and are. But His mind / spirit is counted to us, because of our status in Him. And "the spirit of God" is paralleled with the spirit of Christ in the sense that Jesus was perfectly like God in the way He thought, felt and acted. And this is counted to us. We thereby have also the mind of God counted to us- the family spirit is counted to us as we have been adopted into that family of Father and Son (Rom. 8:15).

8:10 *And if Christ is in you*- Note the parallel with the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ (8:9) and "the spirit" later here in 8:10. Paul is now exploring what it means to be "in Christ". It's not just that we opted into Him through baptism; He is in us as much as we are in Him. "Christ in you" is an idea Paul elsewhere uses (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27). The exposition of the Spirit which follows in Romans 8 is further insight into what it means to be "in Christ", to be declared right by God, and to believe it insofar as believe into Christ by baptism. The words "in" and "Christ" have been frequently used already by Paul in describing us as "in Christ". But there's a mutuality in our position- we are in Him, but He is also in us. Whilst we need exhortation to live as "in Him", Paul here isn't exhorting us- rather is he rejoicing in our status, and seeking to persuade us of it. "If Christ be in you" shouldn't be read as something uncertain- the idea is clearly "Seeing that Christ is in you".

The body is dead because of sin- Because we are in Christ and He is in us, our body is counted as His dead body. The idea has been common throughout Romans 6- because of our baptism into Him, we are "dead to sin" (6:2), "he that is dead is freed from sin" (6:7), "truly we are dead to sin" (6:11). It's as if the day of judgment has come already for us- it was the day of our baptism into Christ. We have sinned and so were counted as if we had already died. How did we die? In that we symbolically connected ourselves with the death of Christ. In going under the water, therefore, we not only align ourselves with Christ's death; we also state our recognition that we have sinned, and that sin brings death. Through doing so, we are enabled to rise again with Christ- as if our final, literal justification in resurrection to eternal life will just as surely take place. In this sense, it can be said that baptism is related to salvation. Not that dipping in water as a ritual can itself save anyone, but because that association with the death and resurrection of Christ really does save- involving as it does a willing recognition of our sinfulness and just condemnation, and only thereby resulting in a part in the resurrection. All this indicates the importance of repentance before baptism; it outlaws any kind of infant baptism, and likewise any attempt to claim a consciously performed baptism into the Lord's death and resurrection, after repentance, is in any sense invalid and requires rebaptism by other hands.

But the Spirit is life because of righteousness- This surely uses "righteousness" in the way it has been earlier used in the letter, with reference to the righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to all those in Him. It is from the Spirit that we shall reap life eternal when Christ returns (Gal. 6:8), but through association with the death and resurrection of Jesus in baptism, His righteousness really is counted to us. But as His spirit is counted to us, so in a sense it does actually become our spirit- as Paul has been saying in Romans 7, although in the flesh we sadly do sin, yet in our spirit, which is the spirit / mind of Christ, we delight in God's law.

We feel at home with Paul's matchless confession of his innate tendency to sin, so strong that "When I would do good, evil is present with me... how to perform that which is good I find not". Yet it is no accident that this dire recognition of the seriousness of our spiritual position in Romans 7 should lead straight on to Romans 8, one of the most positive passages in all Scripture. It is instructive to trace the parallels between these two chapters. For example, Paul's lament "I am carnal" (Rom. 7:14) is matched by "To be carnally minded is death" (8:6). His argument in Romans 6-8 runs

along these lines: 'We are all carnally minded by nature; but Christ had our nature, yet achieved perfection. If we are in Christ by baptism and by His spirit/disposition being seen in us, then God will count us as Christ, and will therefore raise up our bodies to immortality, as His was'. The fact we still retain the old nature in this life means that we will be aware of the tremendous conflict within us between flesh and spirit. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin" (Rom. 8:10). Paul obviously didn't mean that we would not have the power of sin active in our natures any more- the preceding chapter 7 makes that crystal clear. The obvious connection with Rom. 6:11 explains the point: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin". The apostle recognized his own innate sinfulness and spiritual failures which were solely his own fault ("When I would do good...", Rom. 7), yet he was confident of salvation (Rom. 8). This was because he intensely believed in Christ's perfection, and that he was in Christ, and that at baptism he had received the condemnation of death which he deserved. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). There is the certainty of salvation.

8:11 *But if the Spirit*- Seeing Paul is talking about positions, status, and rejoicing so positively about it all, it seems appropriate to choose the equally valid translation "Seeing that the Spirit…".

Of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you- As often in the NT, the Spirit of God is paralleled with the spirit of Christ which was mentioned in v. 10 and previously. Interpretation becomes difficult largely because of the very wide range of meaning in the word "spirit". I don't mean so much that the same word has many different meanings, but rather that within that one word is a range of meaning. God's "spirit" refers to both His power and His mind, His thinking, His attitude, His character, personality. All He does is a reflection of His mind, just as human actions, the use of human 'power', is a reflection of the spirit within the person. Hence to think thoughts is judged by God as if the action has been done. The spirit of God and the spirit of Jesus are therefore parallel- because Jesus was at one with the Father. Yet as His prayer of John 17 demonstrates, that unity of spirit between the Father and Son is now shared with us who are in Him. It was the Spirit of God which raised up Jesus from the dead, and that same spirit / disposition of mind is counted to us, and is indeed in us- Paul has said this in Romans 7, where he rejoices that despite his lamentable practical failures, in his heart, in his spirit, in his deepest person, he is without doubt with God and delights in His ways. Paul, and all true believers, have a heart [or, a spirit] for God- despite the failures of the flesh. So the spirit / personality of Jesus- which is and was the very essence of righteousness- is counted to us, as if we are Him; and yet in our deepest selves, as believers, His spirit *is* in fact *our* spirit. Because this spirit within us is the spirit of Jesus and God, we can be assured of a resurrection like Christ's- for the spirit of God raised up Christ from the dead, and we have identified with that hope through baptism into His death and resurrection. The spirit / mind of God is also His power; not naked power, like electricity, but a power which is at one with His mind, which acts in congruence with what He really thinks and is, without posturing or hypocrisy. It's therefore the case that since that spirit dwells in us- because we are in Christ and His spirit is counted as ours, and because we have a spirit / heart for God as outlined in Romans 7- therefore we shall surely be raised from the dead as Christ was. This is what Paul has said in Romans 6; but he explains here on what basis that happens. It happens on the basis of the spirit of God, or the spirit of Christ, which is counted as ours, and which is in fact actually ours

within our deepest heart, the weakness of the flesh notwithstanding. The spirit of God is not just a mental attitude, it is also His power, and it was that same spirit which raised the dead body of Christ from the dead. And it shall do the same for us at the last day. The Spirit of Jesus, His disposition, His mindset, His way of thinking and being, is paralleled with His words and His person. They both 'quicken' or give eternal life, right now. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth [present tense]… the words that I speak unto you, they are [right now] spirit, and they are life… thou hast [right now] the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:63,68). Yet at the last day, God will quicken the dead and physically give them eternal life (Rom. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:22,36). But this will be because in this life we had the 'Spirit' of the eternal life in us: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by [on account of] his spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). The NT describes our final redemption as our "soul" and "spirit" being "saved"; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5). This means that our spiritual development in this life is directly proportional to the type of person we will be *for evermore*. If, for example, we develop a generous spirit now, this is "a good foundation" for our future spiritual experience (1 Tim. 6:19). This is a stupendous conception, and the ultimate fillip to getting serious about our very personal spiritual development. Our mortal bodies will be changed to immortal, Spirit nature bodies according to the Spirit which *now* dwells in us (Rom. 8:11 Gk.). The attitude which we have to the Lord Jesus *now* will be the attitude we have to Him at the day of judgment (Mt. 7:23 cp. Lk. 6:46).

He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you- Paul's expectation and assumption seems to have been that Christ would return in the lifetime of his readership, and that instead of dying and being resurrected, they would come before the judgment seat of Christ in their current mortal bodies, and then be changed. He hints at the same when he speaks of how mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and our present "vile body" shall be "clothed upon" but not, he hopes, dissolved in death (2 Cor. 5:4). How could Paul, writing under inspiration, make an apparent mistake like this? I suggest that he was writing *as if* the return of Christ was imminent, because that is how we should live; part of the Christian life is to live as if we expect His return imminently. Another option is that perhaps the second coming was indeed scheduled for the first century; but the failure of various human preconditions resulted in this not happening and it being deferred [perhaps issues like the repentance of Israel, the spiritual maturity and unity of the body of Christ, or their spreading of the Gospel and making converts from all nations].

8:12 *So then brothers, we are debtors-* Note the positive tone Paul takes towards the Roman believers, speaking here as if "we", he and his readership, are all in the same status. Given the wonderful certainty of our salvation, we can't be passive. The Greek translated "debtor" is usually translated 'sinner' in the sense of having a debt to God. Paul has said that his debt is to preach the Gospel to others [1:14 s.w.]. The fact we truly shall be raised to eternal life, have been counted right, as having the spirit of Christ Himself- cannot be merely passively accepted. We have a debt to live appropriately, and one aspect of that debt is to share the great hope with others. And in our personal lives we likewise cannot be passive to this great salvation. We must make some realistic effort to bring our life spirit into conformity with the spirit and

works of the Father and Son. We cannot go on living for the flesh, just indulging ourselves.

But not to the flesh, to live after the flesh - This verse is really saying the same as Rom. 6:1- we cannot continue living fleshly lives on the basis that we shall be saved by grace anyway. This is a repeated concern of Paul's- that his bold, positive message that we who are in Christ shall be saved by grace regardless of our works could so easily be misunderstood, leading to passivity and sin rather than the vigorous, joyful practical response which is really the only thing we can do if we really 'get it'. The practical section of Romans uses the same word in saying that Gentile believers have a debt to help their poorer Jewish brethren (Rom. 15:27). Be it in preaching the Gospel or in practical care for others, we are paying back our debt to God through paying to others- as if the debt to Him has been transmuted, and we are to pay Him back through giving to others, both spiritually and practically.

8:13 *For if you live after the flesh*- Paul happens to use this same phrase 'to live after' in describing his life 'living after' Judaism (Acts 26:5). As he has implied elsewhere in his argument, to live according to law, hoping for justification by works, is in fact not spiritual but fleshly. Again, the point is made that legalism doesn't defend the law and curb sin, rather does it encourage unrighteousness and spiritual failure.

You must die- Note the change from the otherwise positive spirit earlier in this section ["we"]. As all believers have the "mortal body" of which Paul spoke in Rom. 6:12, it would seem that Paul is here threatening some kind of spiritual death; or, 'you shall die eternally at the coming day of judgment'. He starts to balance out all his positive talk with this warning that we cannot just continue in sin, unaffected by the change in status and justification we have received by grace. Perhaps Paul here is alluding to the serpent's lie: "You shall *not* surely die", and putting the record straight again.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body- See on Rom. 8:14 *led by the Spirit*.

You shall live- Yet the whole tenor of Paul's argument has been that it is not by steel willed battle against the flesh that we shall attain the life eternal. He laments in Romans 7 that we simply don't have that strength of ourselves, but rather are we saved by our status in Christ. We "shall live" only because of the life of Christ being given to us at our resurrection, because we are in Him. The deeds of the body are therefore 'mortified' not in our own strength- as Paul makes clear in Romans 7, we simply lack the power to do this- but on account of the Spirit. We are made dead to the law by our participation in the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4 s.w.). Here in 8:13 we learn that we mortify the flesh by "the Spirit". The spirit of Christ in this sense *is* Christ personally. Hence "the spirit" is used as a title of Christ later in this chapter (Rom. 8:26,27). "The spirit" isn't defined, i.e. as to whose spirit it is- because the spirit / mind of God is that of Christ and is that which is to be found in the believers. So I suggest the idea is that we shall live "if", or 'because of the fact that', the Spirit- the Lord Jesus- puts to death the deeds of the flesh in that we are in Him, and in Him was no sin, no deed of the flesh. His death on the cross is counted as our death- several usages of the Greek verb "mortify" used here are actually speaking of the death of Christ on the cross (Mt. 26:59; 27:1; Mk. 14:55; 1 Pet. 3:18). And significantly, the word occurs a little later in Romans 8- "For [Christ's] sake we are

killed ['mortified'] all day long, we are counted [s.w. imputed, reckoned as] the sheep for the slaughter [i.e. Christ on the cross]" (Rom. 8:36). So we are counted all day long as mortified, put to death, with Christ; for we are counted, 24/7, as being in Him, counted as the sacrificial lamb. His dead body becomes ours. It is in this way that through / on account of our being in "the Spirit", "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18), we have the deeds of our flesh put to death. As Romans 7 labours, this doesn't mean that we will not commit the deeds of the flesh. But we have identified ourselves with Christ, with His body, and in this sense those deeds of the flesh are rendered meaningless.

8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God*- The Greek may not imply mere guidance but something stronger- the Spirit leading us where *it* chooses. The same word is used about animals being led. It is the Spirit which mortifies the deeds of the body (8:13) more than us doing so. We want to know, of course, whether we really are "in Christ", whether we really have His spirit. The phrase "led by the spirit" is found only in Lk. 4:1, where the Lord Jesus was led by the spirit into the place of testing. Perhaps the connection is intentional. As Jesus the son of God, the prototypical child of God, was led by God, into testing, to the cross, and to resurrection- so it will operate in our lives and lead us, who are also the sons of God. The overall impression may be of allowing the Spirit, which operates in the lives of all in the sphere of the Spirit, to lead us and do things in our lives. We who have a heart for God have surely sensed God leading us, over and above our own will; and as Paul goes on to develop, this may involve elements of predestination and Divine calling which were over and above our own will to control. Sensing these things, this Divine leading, is an encouragement that truly we are God's sons, as Jesus was supremely- for the spirit of the Father works in us His children. In the context, Paul has been arguing that for those in Christ, His death becomes theirs. The Greek word for "led" is repeatedly used about the 'leading' of God's Son to His death (Lk. 22:54; 23:1,32; Jn. 18:28; 19:4,13), "led as a sheep to the slaughter" (Acts 8:32). We have commented under 8:13 that 8:36 speaks of all those in Christ as likewise being "the sheep for the slaughter". Every detail of the Lord's death and sufferings becomes ours. "Led by" could just as well be rendered "led *in* the Spirit", with reference to Christ as "the Lord the Spirit". This would suggest that our status "in Christ" means that we are going to be treated like Him- led as He was, to testing, to the death of the cross, to resurrection. Paul many times during his trials was "led", just as Christ was. This same Greek word occurs many times in the Acts record regarding Paul. He wrote here from personal experience.

These are children of God- not in the sense that the Spirit makes us sons of God, but that the children of God are characterized (among other things) by the Spirit leading them. "Sons of God" would've been understood by the Jewish readers and hearers as a phrase referring specifically to Israel (Ex. 4:22; Jer. Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Hos. 11:1); Paul's emphasis is that now all in Christ and within the sphere of the Spirit are now God's children, regardless of their ethnicity. But above all, all who are "in" the Son of God (Rom. 8:3), in Christ by baptism, are likewise therefore "sons of God". The spirit that was in Christ must therefore be in us, or rather, be allowed to work in and with us. This phrase is preparing the way for the appeal to be conformed to the image of God's Son which is coming up in Rom. 8:29.

Jesus was led of the Spirit at His time of testing (Lk. 4:1); and Paul uses just those

words of us in our present experience of trial (Rom. 8:14). His victory in the wilderness therefore becomes a living inspiration for us, who are tempted as He was (Heb. 4:15,16).

8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again*- "Bondage" is associated with the Mosaic law in Gal. 4:24; 5:1; Heb. 2:15. They received the Spirit at baptism, as all believers do; but it was not a spirit of fear.

To fear- The contrast is between bondage [slavery] and adoption; and therefore between fear and 'crying Abba, Father'. The fear Paul has in view must surely be the fear of not being good enough, the phobia about rejection at the day of final judgment. This fear of rejection is associated with bondage to a legalistic system, of obeying rules in order to seek acceptance with God. Such a system is itself bondage, slavery. And the image of slavery has been used by Paul with reference to slavery to sin. Once again, he associates sin with legalism and attempted justification through obedience to the Law- for this is where that mindset leads in practice. The implication seems to be that although Paul's readership had received the "spirit of adoption", yet they still feared. Paul is seeking to convince them of their high status in Christ, and to perceive, to the point of it affecting their feelings [e.g. of fear or otherwise], that really- it's all true. The good news that seems too good to believe is really as good as it sounds.

But you received the spirit of adoption- The fact we have become sons of God [see on Rom. 8:14] by means of being in Christ, the Son of God, means that God will send His Spirit into our hearts, to make us more natural members of the family we have now joined by status. Gal. 4:6 thus speaks of how "God sent forth the spirit of *His* Son into *our* hearts". Thus *our* hearts have to become transformed to be like that of *His* Son. This can be so successful that we even call to God as Abba, daddy. Note that the Spirit and our hearts are connected- this Spirit works on the human heart, miraculous gifts aren't in view here. The NRSV renders: "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!', it is that very spirit bearing witness" (8:15,16). The feeling we have toward God as Abba is proof enough that He has sent His Son into our hearts. The obvious question is begged: Is that how we feel? God wants us to feel like that towards Him. We can and should be able to! This is one of the most bottom line questions for us as believers; not what theological position we have on this or that point, not what precise statement of faith we follow with what clarifications or caveats, addendums or amendments; not whom we fellowship; not how smartly we have lived our lives even. But whether we really feel to God as Abba, Father. If it takes a woman three divorces or another man 10 years in prison or another a lifetime's battle with alcohol- this is the end point to which we are being brought. This is the "witness" that we really are God's dear children, if we feel like that toward Him, if we can call Him "Abba, daddy" just as the Son of God did in prayer. If we do, then "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (8:16). And Gal. 4:6 becomes so true of us: "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father". Roman law legislated that the adopted child took over the full identity of the adoptive father; what was true of that family became legally true of the adopted person- a concept which was apparently foreign to Greek and Jewish culture, but the concept would've been appreciated specifically by the Romans. The idea is similar to the concept of righteousness being "imputed".

There is only one Spirit- the spirit of God, of Christ, of the true believer, of adoption-

is all the same. The statement here that those in Christ received "the spirit of adoption" must therefore surely be paralleled with the frequent comments elsewhere in the NT that the believer has "received" [s.w.] the Spirit at conversion, just as the apostles "received the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 7:39; 14:17; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:33,38; 8:15,17; 10:47; 19:2; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 3:2,14). Whilst the apostles had their receipt of this gift confirmed by miraculous displays of Holy Spirit gifts which have now been withdrawn, the assumption is clear from that list of verses that after "the hearing of faith" and baptism into Christ, the Spirit was "received" (Gal. 3:2 etc.). Baptism was seen as bringing about the receipt of this gift (Acts 19:2; Gal. 3:14 cp. 27-29). When we became "in Christ" at baptism, we were counted as Christ. Just as He called God "Abba", so we can. The way Jesus addressed God in this way is wonderful, indeed beautiful. It almost seems inappropriate that this personal relationship of the Son to the Father, calling Him "Daddy", should be observed by us even; and yet now Paul says that it has been applied to *us*, seeing we are truly "in Him". We have received such an extraordinarily realistic "spirit of adoption" that really, as Jesus was God's Son, so are we. Through the work of the Spirit, even the virgin conception and birth of the Lord Jesus is now no barrier between Him and us; for in essence, our spiritual rebirth and adoption as God's children is such that we too are God's very own children just as He was. Our excuse for not fully following Him is that 'Well He was a bit different to us, you know… virgin birth and all that'. If we grasp what Paul is saying, this now has far less validity. For the same Spirit which caused the virgin conception is what has birthed each believer, and through the spirit of adoption we too can feel towards God as "Abba", just as His Son did. The unity between Father and Son has now been realized between the Father and all His children; the prayer of John 17 to this effect has now been answered. At least, potentially, and if we will accept the answer. And yet, it has to be said that we do not feel to God as Jesus did. The Lord Jesus could not have written the bitter lament about spiritual failure which we find in Romans 7. As we have often concluded, the answer is that we are asked to believe that really we are indeed "in Christ", and seen, counted and felt towards by God as if we really are His beloved Son.

Whereby we cry- "Whereby" can be rendered "in whom". Because we are in Christ, we have His spirit, God's Spirit. We "cry"- in allusion to how in Gethsemane, the Son of God "cried" to God as "Abba". He there really can be our pattern. The Greek for "cry" really means to scream or croak- the idea is very much of a baby or young child crying out to "daddy".

Abba, Father- In prayer, we address God as Abba, Father- precisely because "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). I take these passages to refer to the way successful prayer involves the spirit / will of a believer becoming united with the Spirit / will of the Father and Son. Gal. 4:6 says that it is the Spirit of Jesus who prays to God "Abba, Father"; but Rom. 8:15 says that it is us of course who pray to God "Abba, Father". We are not slaves but God's very own dear children. The spirit / will / mind of the Lord Jesus is therefore seen as the mind of the believer. And thus Paul could write that it was no longer he who lived, but Christ who lived in him (Gal. 2:20). The whole of the new creation groans or sighs in our spirit; and Jesus, the Lord the Spirit groans in prayer for us too. God's Spirit is to dwell in us, right in the core of our hearts (Rom. 8:11; Gal. 4:6)."We cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), as our Lord did then (Mk. 14:36). We can, we really can, it is possible, to enter into our Lord's intensity then. Paul saw his

beloved brother Epaphroditus as "heavy" in spirit (Phil. 2:26), using a word only used elsewhere about Christ in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:37; Mk. 14:33). Luke and other early brethren seemed to have had the Gethsemane record in mind in their sufferings, as we can also do (Acts 21:14 = Mk. 14:36). I have wondered, and it's no more than me wondering, whether it could be that Rom. 10:9,13; Acts 22:16 and the other references to calling on the name of the Lord at baptism imply that the candidate for baptism made the statement "Jesus is Lord!" after their confession of faith or just before their immersion, and then they shouted the word "Abba! Father!" as they came out of the water, indicating their adoption as a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Biblical prayers rarely request things; if we ask according to God's will, we will receive (1 Jn. 5:14); and yet if God's word dwells in us, we will ask what we will, and receive it (Jn. 15:7). Thus if our will is purely God's will, we will receive answers to every prayer. That our will can be God's will is another way of saying that our spirit can be His Spirit. This is why several passages speak of how God's Spirit witnesses with our spirit (Rom. 8:15,16,26; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13). It's why the early church sensed that not only were they witnessing to things, but the Holy Spirit of God also (Acts 5:32; 15:28). His Spirit becomes our spirit. Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer" , although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point. *Desire* is also seen as effectively praying for something (Rom. 10:1; Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:14). Weeping, desiring, waiting, meditating etc. are all acts of the mind, or 'spirit' in Biblical terminology. There is therefore a big association between our spirit or state of mind, and prayer. The spirit (disposition) of Christ which we have received leads us to *pray* "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). "Praying in the holy spirit" (Jude 20) is to be seen in this context. Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

8:16 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God*- See on 8:15 *spirit of adoption*. The Greek can be read as "The Spirit himself bears witness *to* our spirit, that we are the children of God". But the idea seems to be of a joint witness- our spirit is in fact *the* Spirit, and bear witness [in a legal sense] that we are really God's children. As we have observed several times, there is only essentially one Spirit- God's, Christ's, the believer's, are all the same spirit. Paul uses the same idea in Rom. 9:1, where he asserts that his conscience [and he may as well have said his spirit, for the idea of essential, inner personality is the same] bears joint witness [s.w. 8:16] with the Holy Spirit. God's personality, His Spirit, is congruent with the person who has a spirit / heart for God. This meeting of minds between God and the

believer is what confirms to us that we really are His children. Being His beloved children isn't dependent upon our moral perfection- we must keep remembering that we are reading the words here in their context as the extension of what Paul was saying throughout Romans 7:15-25.

Paul here reverts to the image he used in chapter 3, of us for a moment acting as the judge (3:4), deciding whether God's promises and claims about us are in fact true, or lies. Our own spirit and God's Spirit bear legal witness- to whom? To us as the judges. They both testify, that really we are the children of God. Not only is the spirit of Christ, His righteousness, counted as ours; but God's spirit / mind really is ours in experienced reality. Thus we are joint witnesses in the box together, and v. 17 will develop this theme- joint heirs, joint sufferers, and thus jointly glorified together. All because of our connection with Him, we are counted as Him. Note how Paul seems to be aware of the huge doubt there would be about these things in the hearts of the baptized believers to whom he writes; and such doubt is with us today. Hence the enormous relevance and power of what he writes, and the need he felt to appeal to detailed intellectual argument in order to prove his point time and again.
Imputed righteousness is given us on the basis of our faith. This means that insofar as we can believe all this is true, so it will be. In this sense "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16). We are His dear children (Eph. 5:1), the pride and joy of Almighty God, counted as wonderful and righteous by Him. Personal Bible reading and reflection are so important; for there the individual finds the essence of God's will and strives to make it his or her very own. This is how we can come to understand Rom. 8:16, which says that in prayer, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that is within us. Thus even although "we do not know how to pray for as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us" (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit of the Father and Son speaks in us when we pray (Rom. 8:15), if our will / spirit is theirs. To put this in more technical but I think very telling terms: "The subject-object scheme of 'talking to somebody' is transcended; He who speaks through us is he who is spoken to". It's perhaps the thought behind Mt. 10:20: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you". This is why Paul can thank God that he finds himself praying constantly for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:3)- because he recognizes that not only can we influence God by our prayers, bur He influences us in what we pray for.

8:17 *And if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ*- Very much the ideas of Gal. 3:27-29, where Paul taught that baptism makes us the children of God and join-heirs with Christ of what God promised Abraham. For all that is true of Christ becomes true of us. If He was the seed of Abraham, then so are we; and what was promised to the seed personally thus becomes true for us all. Again, Paul is seeking to explain to the Romans the significance of their baptisms. The law taught that the firstborn was to have a double portion above his brethren. But we are made joint-heirs with Christ, the firstborn (Rom. 8:17). This is yet another paradox of grace. Likewise in the parable of the prodigal son, both sons receive equal inheritance, rather than the elder son getting more.

If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with him- Again, "if so be" is a misleading translation. This phrase is common in this part of Romans. It an indeed mean "if so be", but the idea is equally of "seeing that…", "although…"- and this is how it is commonly translated elsewhere. The good news Paul is teaching is

almost unbelievable, too good news- and it was for the translators too, who for the most part have chosen to give a 'conditional' feel to the message by inserting all these "if…" statements as if they are conditions. But this impression contradicts the colossal positivism which Paul has, positivism expressed in the face of his own admission of failure in Romans 7; and such translation also fails to give due weight to the idea of positions, status "in Christ" as opposed to in Adam, which is so fundamental to Paul's argument. Because we are in Christ, we are joint heirs with Him; and seeing that we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified with Him in that we will share in His resurrection. This is the very teaching of Romans 6:3-5; baptism into His death and resurrection means that for sure we will be resurrected as He was. Note that we co-suffer with Christ right now- which suggests that He also in some sense suffers in this life, the essence of His cross is lived out in His experience even now, as He suffers with our sufferings, and we with His. The only other time this Greek word for co-suffering occurs is in 1 Cor. 12:26- we co-suffer with the sufferings of other members of the body of Christ. This is one way in which "we suffer with Him"- to have an empathetic mind. Whilst we must strive for this, Paul's point is more that we do suffer with Him, because we are in Him; just as in Romans 6 he has demonstrated that we suffered, died, were buried and rose again with Christ, because we are "in Him". The suffering and groaning of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:17, 22-26 could have specific reference to the 'groaning' he has just been making about his inability to keep the Mosaic Law. Our helplessness to be obedient, our frustration with ourselves, is a groaning against sin which is actually a groaning in harmony with that of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who makes intercession for us with the same groanings right now (Rom. 8:26). Indeed, those groanings are those spoken of in Heb. 5:7 as the groanings of strong crying and tears which the Lord made in His final passion. In this sense, the Spirit, the Lord the Spirit, bears witness with our spirit / mind, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). This clinches all I am trying to say. Our inability to keep the Law of God leads to a groaning against sin and because of sin, which puts us into a unity with the Lord Jesus as our Heavenly intercessor in the court of Heaven. But that wondrous realization of grace which is expressed so finely in Romans 8 would just be impossible were it not for the conviction of sin which there is through our experience of our inability to keep the Law of God. Our failure and groaning because of it becomes in the end the very witness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). God thereby makes sin His servant, in that the experience of it glorifies Him.

8:18 *For I reckon*- S.w. to count, impute. As God counts us as in Christ, imputing us as having suffered and died with Him, we too in our turn must impute this to ourselves; and if we do, then we will realize that if our present sufferings are in fact seen by God and imputed by Him as being a part in the sufferings of Christ- then we can truly rejoice in the certainty that we will surely share in His resurrection life. If God counts us as He does, we should count ourselves that way too, and have feelings and emotions which are appropriate to such an exalted position.

That the sufferings of this present time- Elsewhere Paul emphasizes that if we are "in Christ", then His sufferings become ours in the same way as His glory and victory become ours too. The tribulations of Rom. 8:35 could therefore be understood specifically as aspects of Christ's sufferings, with Rom. 8:36 likening us in our sufferings to the sheep for the slaughter, which spoke of Christ facing the cross. See on Rom. 7:5. The only other time in Romans that Paul uses the word here translated

"sufferings" is in Rom. 7:5, where he speaks of "the motions [s.w. sufferings] of sin". He may be implying that even the sufferings caused by our sins are part of the sufferings which connect us to Christ- for His sufferings were directly because of His bearing of our sins. This is a very profound thought- that even the sufferings of our sins serve only to connect us to the sufferings of Christ, in a mutual bond; for He suffered because of our sins. And for those in Him, our connection with His sufferings is the guarantee of our resurrection to glory with Him.

Are not worthy to be compared with the glory- The contrast between present suffering and future glory is common in Jewish texts. But they all tended to emphasize that the individual who does righteousness will receive personal glory (e.g. Apocalypse of Baruch, 2, 15:8). Paul is saying that the glory to which we look forward is a sharing in the glory of Christ in a material way. This glory exists now in that Christ exists glorified, but that glory must yet be revealed in us literally (1 Pet. 5:1).

Which shall be revealed in us- The "glory" is something internal, rather than referring to some unusually Divine light or cloud of shekinah glory, as imagined by 1st century Judaism and many others today. The Greek for "revealed" carries the idea of revealing, taking the lid off something to expose it. We are in Christ and He is thereby in us- the whole thing has a mutual quality to it. He dwells in us not only in that His righteous character, His spirit, is counted to us- but in actual fact, it is placed within us. This is the "spirit" which Paul will go on to claim is in fact within us. It doesn't mean we are thereby made righteous in our actual thoughts and actions- for he has bitterly lamented in Romans 7 that this isn't actually the case. At the day of judgment, when we share in the Lord's resurrection just as surely as we have in this life shared in His sufferings, that glory, that spirit, that personality within us shall be revealed openly. Perhaps Peter uses flesh and spirit in the same way that Paul does, when he says that believers are "judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. 4:6), just as Jesus was likewise judged (1 Pet. 3:18). We are considered by our peers as mere human beings, they may even judge us for the kind of failures in the flesh which Paul admits to in Rom. 7:15-25. But God judges us according to the "spirit", the fact that the spirit / character of Christ is counted to us, and in some hard-to-define sense is in fact latently placed within us. And this of course is how we should seek to perceive our weak fellow believers.

8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creation awaits the revealing of God's children*- This could imply that the believers aren't really revealed for who they are in this life. This shouldn't encourage our hypocrisy nor the idea that we can be a believer whose faith is invisible to the world; but it's some comfort too. Because we look, smell, speak and act identically, for the most part, to the unbelievers around us. The huge difference in status and position has to be perceived by faith alone in this life. This "manifestation" is the same word as used in 8:18, "revealed"- see notes on 8:18. The whole of creation is somehow looking forward to the revelation of the Christ that is within us. Christ, the spirit of Christ, is concealed deep within our flesh and will be manifested at the last day, even though we as it were feel the baby kicking, as Paul describes in Rom. 7:15-25 when he speaks of the two persons struggling within him. On a different scale, we are as it were concealed deep within the creation, as the seed, the germ, which will sprout forth into the full Kingdom of God when Christ returns. All that is material and fleshly, this present system, will no longer conceal the Christ within us personally, and on a global scale it will no longer conceal *us*, who we really

are. This element of hiddenness explains why we simply cannot judge others. Here in this closing section of Romans 1-8 there also seems a connection of thought with the opening section of Romans 1-8, where Paul wrote of how the invisible things of God which were as it were hidden within creation are in some sense declared to those who know God (Rom. 1:20)

8:20- see on Rom. 8:7.

For the creation- Given the way Paul writes of "they" as opposed to "ourselves" in 8:23, the creation here perhaps refers to all peoples (or maybe even, all created things) apart from the believers.

Was made subjected to vanity- The connection with the opening of the entire section in Romans 1 continues. There Paul used the same word to describe how sinners 'become vain' (Rom. 1:21). They willingly glory in the fallen state of creation, seeking out every opportunity to gratify sinful desires. Although we are indeed "subject to vanity", we don't need to in our own turn 'become vain'. If we can be made free from the daily grind in order to serve God, let us chose it. Let's not fill our minds and lives with the things of basic human existence, gathering food, reproducing, indulging sexual desire. In one sense, as part of God's creation, we are subject to vanity- and perhaps that's why Paul uses the same word in the practical section of Romans to say that we "must needs be subject" to worldly powers (Rom. 13:1,5). By doing so we accept how things are in creation at this time. The idea of submission is quite a theme in Romans. Our natural mind, the status / person "in Adam", isn't submissive to God's law and never can be (Rom. 8:7); the natural creation, of which our fleshly, human side is a part, is subject, in submission to, vanity. Yet we are to submit ourselves- our real selves- to God's righteousness (Rom. 10:3).

Not of its own will- This continues the parallel between the believer in Christ's fallen and weak state, and the state of the entire creation. Again, this is a development of the theme of Rom. 7:15-25- that we sin because of our weakness in dealing with the state we find ourselves in, but our sin isn't wilful- it is in fact committed not willingly, "that which I would / will not" (Rom. 7:19).

But by reason of Him who subjected it in hope- A reference to God. This is a major deconstruction of the popular idea of 'Satan', who was and is supposed by many to be the one who has tied the world down under the consequences of sin. But it is *God* who has done the subjecting, and therefore He has done it "in hope", which He will be the One to bring to realization.

8:21 *The creation itself also*- Ultimately, the creation will share the deliverance which we personally experience now and shall experience in its final term at the Lord's return. The *whole* of creation earnestly looks forward to the manifestation of the sons of God. The whole of creation was made "subject to vanity, not willingly" - it was not their fault that the curse came upon them. "The *whole* of creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together", longing to share in the manifestation in glory of God's spiritual creation. The sadness and bitterness of the animal creation is due to their longing for that day of "the glorious liberty of the children of God" in which they will share.

Shall be delivered- the same word has been used by Paul in speaking of how even now, we have been delivered from slavery to sin and death by becoming "in Christ" (Rom. 6:18,22; 8:2). The same word is also used about our having been made free from slavery to the Mosaic Law (Gal. 5:1), which connection could suggest that the "creation" here has some specific reference to the entire Jewish system.

From the bondage- Gk. 'slavery'. The idea of being in slavery to sin and the Law has been common in Paul's argument so far. The believer in Christ is saved from such slavery- and God's long term plan is that the entire creation will share in this redemption too.

Of corruption- Used by Paul in Col. 2:22 with special reference to the Law of Moses. But he also uses the word in explaining how our present corruptible body shall be changed to incorruption when Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:42,50). The whole creation will be changed and redeemed as we personally will be. In this sense the work of the Lord Jesus will bring about the creation, or re-creation, of a new earth without the results of Adam's sin. His achievement on the cross in this sense saved the world and not just the believers.

Into the liberty of the glory of the children of God- The redemption and freedom from corruption which the believers shall experience will be experienced by all of creation. When at the end of Romans 11 Paul appears to rejoice in the totality and universality of Divine redemption in Christ, he may well have this in mind. Not that all human beings who have ever lived will be saved, but rather that the whole of creation, in a physical sense, will be saved / delivered just as the believers will have been. Our freedom is 'of glory' in the sense touched upon in Rom. 8:18- the glory of the character of Christ which is latent within us but which is yet to be revealed openly. Paul always uses the Greek word used here for "liberty" to exalt how believers in Christ have been set free from the Jewish law (1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 2:4; 5:1,13). He clearly has this at least as a subtext in his argument here, encouraging us to wonder whether by 'all of creation' he has in view "all Israel". In this case, his argument would be brought to its full term in Rom. 11:26, when he exalts that finally "all Israel shall be saved". When Paul speaks of "all [AV "the whole"] creation" in Rom. 8:22, this is the same word translated "all" in Rom. 11:26. They will finally share in the blessed redemption made possible by the Messiah whom they crucified, they will also experience the glorious liberty from sin and the Law which was the strength of sin, which was exalted in by those like Paul whom they persecuted and reviled. For it is those who received Jesus as Christ rather than rejected Him as did the Jews, whom the NT styles "the children of God" (Jn. 1:12). In this sense, Paul in this very context notes that the Jews under the Law are not the true "children of God"- but the believers in Christ are (Rom. 9:8).

This "liberty" in which the NT so frequently exults (Lk. 4:18; 1 Cor. 10:29; Gal. 2:4; 5:13; James 1:25; 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:16) will be fully revealed in the freedom of the Kingdom: "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). As it will be then, so now: we will not be free to do what we like morally, but within the context of God's covenant, we are free, totally and utterly free, in our service of Him.

8:22 *For we know that the whole creation* – Gk. “all” creation, s.w. Rom. 11:26 “all Israel”. See on Rom. 8:21.

Has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now- Groans together with whom? Perhaps the idea is that creation together, all parts of it, groan together. But I suggest the groaning is together with us and the Lord Jesus. The Greek for “groan” is used about the groaning of the Lord Jesus in intercessory prayer in Mk. 7:34. The believers in Him likewise groan in awaiting the change of our nature which shall come at Christ’s return (2 Cor. 5:2,4). This is the groaning we have heard throughout Romans 7:15-24, groaning at the hopelessness of our position as sinners. Paul perceived [“for we *know*”, Gk. ‘perceive’] that he wasn’t alone in his groaning, but there is even within the natural creation some premonition that a redemption is yet to come, and a groaning in discontent at the present situation. Thus he didn’t perceive nature as at peace with itself, as many today naively imagine. Rather is it groaning with us. And if we follow up Paul’s hints that “all creation” has some reference to “all Israel”, their groaning which he perceived would have been in terms of ‘not having found that which they sought after’, as he put it in Rom. 11:7; they sought righteousness but didn’t find it (Rom. 9:31). They were looking for the right thing in the wrong places and by the wrong way. And yet their groaning, our groaning, the groaning perceived in the natural creation, are in fact but birth pangs- we groan and travail in pain together. The birth which this leads to is the new day of God’s Kingdom, the final birth of the Spirit which believers in Christ have experienced in prospect through baptism. And again, Paul’s sub textual reference to the bankruptcy of the Law to save is still there, for the only other time he uses this word for “travail” is in his allegorical comment that Judaism is barren and doesn’t travail, and yet the true Zion is in travail, groaning to bring forth many children (Gal. 4:19,27). And yet he is perhaps hinting that just as the Jews subconsciously knew that Jesus was Messiah [“this is the heir, let us kill him”], so the Jewish system was in fact groaning and travailing towards the bringing forth of faith in Christ. The same idea of travailing in birth pangs is to be found in the descriptions of the situation just before the return of Christ (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:3). The significance of Paul’s emphasis that this is happening ‘right up until now’ might then be a hint that he expected the return of Christ imminently. However, as previously touched upon in this exposition, it could be that Paul believed we should live as if the return of Christ is imminent; he therefore interpreted prophecy, Scripture and contemporary situations in that manner, just as we should. The groaning of creation and of ourselves also is therefore but the prelude to something far better- the actual birth at the second coming of Christ. My own interpretation of the radical changes in natural phenomena on earth at this time is that it’s all an indication that creation is indeed groaning, now as never before, in a subconscious pleading for the Lord’s return.

The groaning and travailing could be a reference to natural disasters and the animal violence which there is within this fallen world. Our groanings, our struggling in prayer, is transferred to God by the Lord Jesus groaning also, but with groanings far deeper and more fervently powerful than ours (Rom. 8:22,23 cp. 26). See on Rom. 8:17; Col. 2:1. Romans 8 teaches that there is in fact just one Spirit; the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God, and is "the Spirit" in the believer (Rom. 8:9-11). There is "one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4). If the will of God is in us, if His will is embedded in our conscience, we will ask what we will, what our spirit desires, and it will be granted.

This is because if our Spirit is attune with the Spirit of God and of Christ, our desires, our wish, is transferred automatically to Him. Whatever we ask being in the name of Christ, being *in* His character and the essence of His spirit, will therefore be done (Jn. 15:16). It doesn't mean that saying the words "I ask in the name of Christ" gives our request some kind of magical power with God. It must surely mean that if we are in Him, if His words abide in us, then we will surely be heard, for our will is His will. We are guaranteed answers if we ask in His name, if we ask what we will, if the word dwells in us, if we ask according to God's will... all these are essentially the same thing. If we are truly in Him, if the word really dwells in us, if our will has become merged with God's will, then we will only request things which are in accordance with His will, and therefore we will receive them. Thus the experience of answered prayer will become part of the atmosphere of spiritual life for the successful believer. The Lord knew that the Father heard Him always (Jn. 11:42). It is for this reason that the prayers of faithful men rarely make explicit requests; their prayers are an expression of the spirit of their lives and their relationship with God, not a list of requests. It explains why God sees our needs, He sees our situations, as if these are requests for help, and acts accordingly. The request doesn't have to be baldly stated; God sees and knows and responds. This is why Romans 8 appears to confuse the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ in the believer, and Christ himself as "the Lord the Spirit". Yet what Paul is showing is that in fact if we are spiritually minded, if our thinking is in harmony with the Father and Son, prayer is simply a merger of our Spirit with theirs; the idea of prayer as a means of requesting things doesn't figure, because God knows our need and will provide. The whole creation *groans*; we ourselves *groan* inwardly; and the Spirit makes intercession with *groans* that can't be uttered. Clearly enough, our groans are His groans. He expresses them more powerfully and articulately than we can. It has been observed: "As I read Paul's words, an image comes to mind of a mother tuning in to her child's wordless cry. I know mothers who can distinguish a cry for food from a cry for attention, an earache cry from a stomach-ache cry. To me, the sounds are identical, but the mother instinctively perceives the meaning of the child's nonverbal groan. It is the inarticulateness, the very helplessness, of the child that gives her compassion such intensity". In deep sickness or depression it can simply be that we find formal, verbalized prayer impossible. Ps. 77:4 speaks of this: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (formally, to God). It's in those moments that comfort can be taken from the fact that it is our spirit which is mediated as it were to God. Tribulation is read as prayer- hence even the Lord's suffering on the cross, "the affliction of the afflicted", was read by the Father as the Lord Jesus 'crying unto' the Father (Ps. 22:24). This is sure comfort to those so beset by illness and physical pain that they lack the clarity of mind to formally pray- their very affliction is read by the Father as their prayer.

8:23 *And not only the creation but we ourselves*- A fair emphasis by Paul on the fact that our groaning are in some sort of harmony with the groaning of all creation. If we understand ‘all creation’ as “all Israel”, Paul’s emphasis on the commonality of our groaning together would be as if to say ‘Jews and Christians aren’t that far apart really; we are united by our groanings’. And he argued the same at the opening of his argument in Romans 1-3; that Jew and Gentile are united by the desperation of their sinfulness, their common need for redemption.

Who have the firstfruits of the Spirit- I have explained earlier that Paul is teaching that the spirit or personality / mind of Christ is counted to us by imputed righteousness;

but more than that, the Spirit of Christ is actually placed within us, although that spirit of Christ which dwells within us is latent, hidden beneath the flesh and failures of which Paul speaks in Romans 7. As we are in Christ, so He is in us, indwelling us by His Spirit. Clearly enough, the resurrected Christ is the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23), and we shall only be the firstfruits "afterward... at his coming". Yet because all that is true of Christ is true of we who are counted in Him, we too are the firstfruits. "The Spirit" could refer to Christ personally, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RVmg.).

Groan inwardly- Paul writes this in explanation of his groaning within himself which is outlined in Rom. 7:15-24.

As we wait eagerly for- The Greek rather carries the idea of expecting. For if we are in Christ, His sufferings counted as ours and ours as His, then our ultimate salvation is assured. We are therefore expecting it, rather than waiting to see what shall happen at His return.

Adoption as children and the redemption of our bodies- Continuing the image of adoption which was introduced in 8:15. We have already received the spirit of adoption. We are adopted unto God for the sake of our being in Christ, the supreme Son of God (Eph. 1:5). We are God's adopted children in that we are in Christ, the ultimate child of God. But as has been lamented in Romans 7, our body, our flesh, is still as it is, unredeemed, and in practice unable to be subject to God's law. We with Paul and with all creation, groan for redemption from this situation. Gal. 4:5 speaks of the death of Christ as being required "to redeem that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". The ideas of redemption, adoption and "sons" are repeated. So although we have attained such adoption as God's sons in that we are in His Son by status, we long for the physical manifestation of that redemption which we have received- and we groan for it. Note that "the adoption of *sons*" isn't sexist language; it is as sons that we are adopted rather than as daughters or androids because we are counted as in God's Son, Jesus, who happened to be male. We are counted as Him. The status we have received in Him is one of redemption, we are labelled as it were "redeemed". We in Christ have already received this redemption by grace (Rom. 3:24). He is "redemption" and we are in Him (1 Cor. 1:30). Consistently Paul speaks of 'redemption' as being "in Christ" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), and we have been baptized into Him and are counted in Him, as Paul has laboured throughout Romans so far. But our bodies still need that redemption, and we await / expect it at the Lord's return. Eph. 1:14; 4:30 likewise speak of "the day of redemption" as the second coming of Christ, and yet urge us to believe that we "sealed" by our receipt of the Spirit, as a guarantee, that this day will really come for us. The "spirit" referred to is the same as here in Romans 8- the indwelling of Jesus personally within all them who are "in Him", and the counting of His spirit to them by imputed righteousness.

Just as our minds have received the spirit of adoption, so our bodies will be transformed at the final judgment into a body like that of Jesus (Phil. 3:20,21).

8:24 *For in hope were we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?*- "In hope were we saved" is better translated as "saved in hope". God's grace and the blood of Christ, believed in by faith, are what saves, rather than hope of itself. We have been saved, but in hope- for the fullness of salvation will only be revealed when Christ returns. As commented under 8:23, we have been redeemed, but

the redemption of the body is our expectation at the second coming. Note that the Greek for "hope" means a confident expectation- the English 'hope' tends to carry a somewhat less confident flavour of meaning, the implication being that we 'hope for the best' rather than confidently await. But because we are saved in Christ, our hope is certain. Likewise the Greek translated in this section as "wait" better translates as 'confidently await'. We're not waiting to see what happens, but rather awaiting with confidence what must surely come for us- the redemption of our body. Anything less than this approach wouldn't have left Paul pulling out of his groaning within himself of Romans 7 with the confident cry of rejoicing, the scream in the night, of Rom. 7:25- that he has indeed found the way of escape and deliverance through Christ. Jesus personally is "our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). And we are in Him. But we don't physically see Him yet, nor physically have we seen the redemption of our bodies. We therefore wait, or await confidently, the fulfilment of the hope which is now reserved for us (Col. 1:5).

8:25 *But if we hope for what we do not see, then we with patience wait for it*- Why does Paul labour his point here- that we don't have ["see"] what we know is coming for us, therefore we must patiently wait for it? Maybe to encourage patience in the waiting- perhaps the crux of his argument in these verses is on the word "patience". But maybe he is back to addressing the old worry which he know lurks in every reader: Why, then, am I still such a sinner right now, today? Given that reality, how then can I so confidently await the future redemption? And Paul's answer is that yes we have been redeemed, but no we don't see that redemption physically, no, we don't yet see it, but we are patiently awaiting it in confidence. Despite all our weakness and failure in the flesh. Our waiting is paralleled with the awaiting of all creation for the manifestation of God's children [the same word is used in Rom. 8:19,23,25]. The New Testament associates this 'waiting' with the faithful awaiting of Christ's return (s.w. 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). Yet here in Romans we are awaiting the manifestation of ourselves as the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). Christ is us and we are Him, if we are in Him and He in us. His manifestation or 'coming' (s.w. 1 Cor. 1:7, we wait for the manifestation / coming of Christ) will be the same as the manifestation of the sons of God, all those who are in Him. His manifestation will therefore be ours; His glory shall be manifested in us in that day [s.w. Rom. 8:18] just as He personally shall be manifested. And thus we read that in a sense, Christ shall return with all those who are in Him with Him; for the faithful shall be snatched away to meet Him in the air, as clouds (1 Thess. 4:17), and then He shall come to earth with clouds, of the faithful believers (Rev. 1:7). In this sense the second coming of Christ is likened to the new Jerusalem, the spotless bride of Christ, coming down from Heaven to earth (Rev. 21:2). His manifestation is ours, for all that is true of Him is true of us. Our *hupomone* ['joyful endurance', AV "patience"] in awaiting the return of Christ is therefore possible because we are awaiting our redemption. We can only joyfully await His coming [and *hupomone* can carry an element of 'joy' within the wide flavour of its meaning] if we are confident that His coming means our redemption rather than our judgment to condemnation. If our attitude to the return of Christ is that we shall only then find out, only then will our destiny be sorted out- then we are of all men most fearful and uncertain. But clearly enough for those in Christ, His revealing physically to the world shall be our revealing. His coming is going to be ours. "For thee he comes, His might to impart, to the trembling heart and the feeble knee".

8:26 *And in like manner*- A phrase hard to interpret in this context. The sense may be

more of “And even moreover”, “even so”; “And now guess what, even more...” might be the dynamic sense. That apart from us having a wonderful hope which we confidently await, it’s not all jam tomorrow. The spirit, both as the Lord the spirit, i.e. Jesus personally, and also as His spirit which indwells us, is actively at work even now.

The Spirit also- A title for Christ personally. See on Rom. 7:14.

Helps our infirmity- “Helps” occurs in the LXX of Ex. 18:22 and Num. 11:17, where Moses is the one helped. Paul is suggesting that each believer can rise up to the pattern of Moses; he was no longer to be seen by Jewish believers as some distant, untouchable, stellar example of devotion. He was a pattern that through the Spirit could be realistically attained; although the point is being cleverly made that he too had weakness that needed Divine help. Paul made it a credo of his own life, and urged other believers to follow his example in this, that he would labour to support [s.w. help, Rom. 8:26] the weak (Acts 20:35). For we are all weak, and helped only by grace. But the Greek word Paul uses for ‘helps’ also carries the meaning of ‘to participate it’. It clearly has this sense in 1 Tim. 6:2, “partakers [participators in] the benefit”. The Spirit participates in our infirmities and thus helps us; just as we should seek to empathize as far as we can in the infirmities of others, both practical and moral. The “infirmities” Paul has in mind would seem to be the infirmity of spirit he laments in Rom. 7:15-24; our moral weakness. The same word is used of how the Lord Jesus in His ministry fulfilled the prophecy of Is. 53:4 that on the cross He would ‘take our infirmities’ (Mt. 8:17). These “infirmities” according to Is. 53:4 were our sins, but sin’s effect is manifested through sickness. The moral dimension to these “infirmities” has already been established by Paul in Romans, for in Rom. 5:6 he uses the word to describe how “when we were yet *weak* [s.w. ‘infirm’], Christ died for the ungodly; and he explains his sense here as being that “when we were yet *sinners*” (Rom. 5:8). Jesus as the Lord the Spirit engages with our infirmities, on the plane of the spirit, the deep human mind and psyche. What He did on the cross in engaging with our moral infirmity He did in His life, and He continues to do for us in essence. He does not turn away in disgust at our infirmities, rather through His Spirit within us He engages with them, perhaps deep within our subconscious, beneath our conscious will. The allusion to Mt. 8:17 seems certain- for there we read the same word for “infirmities” and “took” is *lambano*, a form of which is used by Paul in saying that the Spirit “helps” our infirmities. We are therefore led to understand “the Spirit” as a title of Christ personally. That title is used, however, because of the fact that in this context, His Spirit, His personality, is within us, He personally indwells us within our spirit; as we are in Christ so He is in us. His strength is perfected through our weakness (s.w. “infirmities”; 2 Cor. 12:9). He knows even now the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15; 5:2). If the Lord Jesus so engages with our weaknesses, we therefore ought to unhesitatingly “support the weak” [s.w., 1 Thess. 5:14].

For we do not know how to pray- Mt. 20:22 = Rom. 8:26. This is an example of where appreciating the links with the Gospels opens our understanding of Paul's letters. Paul is implying that we are like the mother of Zebedee's children, in that when we pray, we know not what we ask for in the sense that we don't *appreciate* what we ask for. I know what to pray for: my redemption, and that of others. Read wrongly, Rom. 8:26 implies we haven't the foggiest what on earth to ask God for. But we *do* know what to ask for; the point is, we don't *appreciate* what we

are asking for, just as that woman didn't appreciate what she was praying for when she asked that her two boys would be in the Kingdom.

A related word for "pray" is used in this same context by Paul in Rom. 9:3, where he says that he "could wish", s.w. "pray", that he himself were condemned by God so that Israel might be saved. His allusion is to Moses' prayer that he would be excluded from God's book rather than Israel be excluded from the Kingdom. But Paul learnt the lesson from how God responded to Moses- that He doesn't accept substitutionary sacrifice. Paul is admitting he too doesn't know how to pray for Israel as he ought, but he leaves their salvation in the hands of their Saviour, whilst so earnestly desiring it in his own spirit.

As we ought- We don't seem to have within us to pray as we *ought*, i.e. as we [s.w.] 'must'. It's not that we just don't know what to pray about; we don't pray as we ought to / must, and yet our gracious Mediator makes intercession with unutterable groans. And the older Paul can lament his failures to preach as he "ought", as he *must*, and therefore he appeals for prayer that he will witness to the Gospel as every believer of it *must* (Eph. 6:20; Col. 4:4).

But the Spirit Himself- A clear reference to Christ, whose spirit indwells us and is in dialogue with *our* spirit on some unconscious level. Our innermost spiritual desires are thereby transferred to God by our Heavenly mediator. And our innermost desire is to be right with God, to obtain salvation, deliverance from this body of death and life of spiritual failure. Now we can better understand why all we are reading here flows on naturally from his groaning of spirit in Romans 7. The Lord Jesus indwells us, His spirit perceives the spiritual groaning of our spirit, and transfers it as it were to Himself; for if we are in Christ, then He is in us. And His intercession for us is in that sense successful; our salvation was obtained on the cross thanks to His own groaning in spirit there, and this guarantees that He will obtain it for us [the idea of 'intercession', we have noted, includes that of 'obtaining'].

Makes intercession for us- A return to the legal metaphors. The Lord Jesus is our interceder, the counsel for the defence, and also an emotional witness, pleading with groanings to the judge in support of our case. The Greek for "intercession" cannot be taken too far, but it is derived from the verb 'to obtain'. The obtaining of our salvation, the winning of our case, was achieved on the cross, in the groanings of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the stake; but in essence, He groans for us still in intercession, and in doing so, His groaning are in sympathy with our groaning for salvation. The type of groanings of spirit of Rom. 7:15-24 become the groanings of our Heavenly intercessor. He is not separate from our frustrations at our failures; He takes them fully on board. The crucial thing is that we have them; that we can read Rom. 7:15-24 with empathy and know that 'That's me'. Which I believe most readers of these words can indeed say.

With groanings- Heb. 5:7 comments that Christ prayed "with strong crying and tears". These words are certainly to be connected with Rom. 8:26, which speaks of Christ making intercession for us now with "groanings which cannot be uttered". One might think from Heb. 5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross. But Rom. 8:26 says that his groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental

striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as he hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what he now goes through as he intercedes for us with the Father. Heb. 5:7 describes Christ on the cross as a priest offering up a guilt offering for our sins of ignorance. He did this, we are told, through "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears". This must surely be a reference to "Father forgive them". Those were said with a real passion, with strong crying, with tears as He appreciated the extent of our sinfulness and offence of God. There is a connection between these words and those of Rom. 8:26,27, which describes Christ as our High Priest making intercession for us "with groanings". "Groanings" is surely the language of suffering and crucifixion. It is as if our Lord goes through it all again when He prays for our forgiveness, He has the same passion for us now as He did then. Think of how on the cross He had that overwhelming desire for our forgiveness despite His own physical pain. That same level of desire is with Him now. Surely we can respond by confessing our sins, by getting down to realistic self-examination, by rallying our faith to truly appreciate His mediation and the forgiveness that has been achieved, to believe that all our sins, past and future, have been conquered, and to therefore rise up to the challenge of doing all we can to live a life which is appropriate to such great salvation. The suffering and groaning of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:17, 22-26 is in my view a reference to the ‘groaning’ he has just been making about his inability to keep the Mosaic Law [see on Rom. 7:18]. Our helplessness to be obedient, our frustration with ourselves, is a groaning against sin which is actually a groaning in harmony with that of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who makes intercession for us with the same groanings right now (Rom. 8:26). Indeed, those groanings are those spoken of in Heb. 5:7 as the groanings of strong crying and tears which the Lord made in His final passion. In this sense, the Spirit, the Lord the Spirit, bears witness with our spirit / mind, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). This clinches all I am trying to say. Our inability to keep the Law of God leads to a groaning against sin and because of sin, which puts us into a unity with the Lord Jesus as our Heavenly intercessor in the court of Heaven. Because of this, we are declared justified, there are no credible accusers, and the passionate intercessor / advocate turns out to be the judge Himself. Thus through our frustration at our own failure, we are led not only to Christ but to the certainty of an assured salvation. But that wondrous realization of grace which is expressed so finely in Romans 8 would just be impossible were it not for the conviction of sin which there is through our experience of our inability to keep the Law of God. Our failure and groaning because of it becomes in the end the very witness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). God thereby makes sin His servant, in that the experience of it glorifies Him. How God works through sin is revealed in the way that although God always provided food for Israel in the wilderness, He ‘suffered them to hunger’ for 40 years, in order to try to teach them that man lives not by bread alone, but by God’s word (Dt. 8:2,3). The Jews in the wilderness despised the food God gave them as worthless (Num. 21:3); they went hungry not literally, but in the sense that they despised the manna of God’s provision. And He allowed them to have that hunger, in order that He might [try to] teach them about the value of His word. He didn’t simply punish them for their ingratitude. He sought to work through it in order to teach them something. Even the process of rejection results in the victims coming to ‘know the Lord’.

Which cannot be uttered- In the same way as our inner groanings for salvation, for deliverance from how we are, are unspoken, rarely verbalized (although Rom. 7:15-24

is a fine exception), so His intercession for us isn't in human words, it's a dialogue of the Spirit with God, a meeting of innermost minds. Our sinfulness and desire to be free from it is articulated through the spirit of God's perfect Son, to the mind or spirit of God Himself. Intercession, therefore, isn't a question of translating words which we say in prayer into some Heavenly language which is somehow understandable to God, rather like a translator may interpret from one language to another. It is our spirit which is perceived for what it is and articulated before God. This explains why both in Biblical example and in our own experience, our unspoken, unformulated desires of the spirit are read by God as prayers and responded to. I devote a whole chapter in my analysis of "Prayer" to exemplifying this Biblically, but we should also know it from our own experience. Desires which we had, above all we asked or thought, are read by God as prayers and responded to. Paul gives an example of this in saying that Elijah made intercession to God *against* Israel (Rom. 11:2,3), when clearly it was his thoughts in this context which were being interpreted as prayer. Perhaps the statement that the Lord Jesus intercedes for us without human words, in terms which "cannot be uttered", is intended as a comfort to those who feel they're 'not good at praying' because they don't know how to put it all in words. Verbalization skills are hardly a prerequisite for powerful prayer- because some people are more verbal, better with words, than others. Rom. 8 speaks of the importance of being spiritually minded, and then goes on to say that our spirit, our deep inner mind, is transferred to God by Christ, called by His title "the Lord the spirit" , *without* specifically spoken words. This is surely proof enough that the Lord does not mediate our prayers as an interpreter would, from one language to another, matching lexical items from one language with those from another. "We know not what to pray for", so the Lord Jesus reads our inner spirit, and transfers this on a deep mental level, without words, to the Father. The whole process of mediation takes place within the Lord's mind, with the sort of groanings He had as He begged the Father to raise Lazarus (Rom. 8:26 cp. Jn. 11:38), and as on the cross He prayed with strong crying and tears for our redemption (Heb. 5:5 cp. Is. 53:12). The Lord Jesus is the same yesterday and today. That same passion and intensity of pleading really is there. This is why the state of our mind, our spirit, is so vitally important; because it is this which the Lord Jesus interprets to the Father. The Lord's Spirit struggles in mediation with crying and groaning (Rom. 8:26), as He did for the raising of Lazarus. There is a further connection with Heb. 5:5, where we learn that the Lord prayed on the cross with a like intensity. And this Lord is our Lord today. He can be crucified afresh, therefore He has the capacity for struggle and mental effort. The Greek for "groanings" in Rom. 8:26 also occurs in Mk. 7:34: "Looking up to heaven, he *sighed* and saith unto him, Ephthatha". The sighing of intense prayer by the Lord was His more spiritually cultured reflection of the number one desire of that man's spirit, as was His groaning and tears for Martha's desire to be granted, and Lazarus to be raised. It has been wisely observed that the language of Christ's mediation can be quite misunderstood. The picture we should have "is not that of an orante, *standing* ever before the Father with out-stretched arms... pleading our cause in the presence of a reluctant God... but that of a *throned* Priest-King, asking what He will from a Father who always hears and grants His request". The description of Christ groaning in spirit to transfer our spirit to God (Rom. 8:26) is a reflection of the fact that we groan for redemption and the coming of the day of the liberty of God's children (Rom. 8:22,23), when what is guaranteed by "the firstfruits of the Spirit" which we have, will at last be realized. "All things work together for good" to this end, of forgiveness and salvation. It certainly doesn't mean that every story ends up happily-ever-after in this life. "We

know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26) seems to be some kind of allusion back to the mother of Zebedee's children asking Christ to get her two sons the best places in the Kingdom (Mt. 20:22). He basically replied 'You know not what you pray for', in the sense of 'you don't appreciate'. It may be that Paul in Rom. 8 is saying that in our desire for the Kingdom, in our groaning for it, we don't appreciate what we ask for as we ought, yet Christ nonetheless makes powerful intercession for us to this end. Because there is only "one Spirit", even the terms "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" can be paralleled because they are manifestations of that same one Spirit: "Ye are... in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you... the Spirit is life... if the Spirit of (God) that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you... the Spirit (Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Cor. 3:18 R.V.) maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:9-11,26). See on Jn. 7:39.

Ps. 139 reminds us how God knows us so well, psychologically as well as physically. David's response to this is that such knowledge is too wonderful for him and he cannot attain it (Ps. 139:6). The simple point being made is that we cannot know the extent to which God knows us. Nor do we know all God knows about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is a huge comfort in a world where we beg more than anything: "Please understand me". It is common to throw in to our sentences: "Do you get what I mean? You get me?". And this desire is often ultimately not met in our human relationships. The priceless comfort of this Psalm is that this most basic human need is met in God's knowledge of us. Even our eternal future is unknown to us- "It does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2) but believing the truth expressed in this Psalm, we can be at peace about that too. We do not in fact know ourselves; God does. This is why the Psalm concludes with a request for God to "search me" and correct me- because it is outside my own ability to do so. In the same spirit, Paul admits that "we know not what to pray for as we ought", and trusts that the Lord Jesus transmits his essential spirit to God and mediates for him accordingly: "The Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). Paul laments that he doesn't understand his own actions: "For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate" (Rom. 7:15). Paul admits that "I know nothing against myself" but he is not thereby justified (1 Cor. 4:4). We see ourselves in a darkened mirror ["through a glass darkly"] but only then, at the Lord's coming, face to face- with ourselves: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Only then shall we see ourselves as God sees us. And that is surely the function of the day of judgment- it is for our benefit. All searching to 'find yourself' in this life is vain, because our natures are intrinsically limited so that we cannot, at least not ultimately. The wonder of salvation is that we shall find ourselves, we shall know ourselves as God knows.

8:27 *And he that searches the hearts*- A clear reference to God, whom many Bible passages present as the One who searches human hearts. God knows and recognizes what the Lord Jesus is ‘saying’ because He Himself anyway knows the true state of our hearts, searching our motives and the inner thoughts which lay behind the external actions and words which are judged by men. Hence we can be judged [harshly] by men according to the flesh, but justified by the God who knows our spirit (1 Pet. 4:6). The ‘searching’ of human hearts is also done by the Lord Jesus (s.w. Rev. 2:23), as

well as by God. And their findings are of course congruent. In this sense, the intercession of the Lord Jesus is “according to God” [Gk.], or “the will of God” [AV], or to fill out the ellipsis another way, ‘according to the searching of God too’.

Knows what is the mind of the Spirit [Jesus], because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God- God who knows our minds knows the mind of Christ too. Because His mind is our mind, His Spirit is intertwined with, in dialogue with, reflective of, our deepest spirit in our inner, spiritual person. The hearts / minds of the believers are in this sense the mind of Christ; for due to our status in Him, “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). Thus the mind of Christ as He comes before the Father in intercession for us is at one with God’s mind, as well as at one with our mind. In this we begin to see the profound depths, or something of them, of what it means to be “in Christ”, and how, mechanically, if you wish, reconciliation is achieved between God and man through Christ. The Lord Jesus does not just transfer our words to God as pieces of language. Seeing that we do not know how to properly express ourselves to God, He transfers the thoughts of our spirit to God (Rom. 8:26,27). It is in this context that Paul encourages us to have a spiritual mind in our daily life; because that is relayed to the presence of God by the Lord Jesus, "the Lord the Spirit”. Therefore our whole lives can be a life of prayer, lived out in the presence of the Lord God. However, we are encouraged to pray with our human words as well; indeed, Scripture is full of examples of men doing just this.

8:28 *And we know that to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose- all things work together for good*- A reference to the eternal “good” of the Kingdom age, i.e., ‘so that we might enter the Kingdom’? The future Kingdom is called “good things” in Is. 52:7 (quoted in Rom. 10:15) and Jer. 8:15. *All things work together for good* doesn’t mean that somehow everything will work out OK for us in this life- for so often they don’t. We are asked to carry the Lord’s cross, to suffer now and be redeemed in glory later at His return. “All things” may refer to “all creation” in Rom. 8:22, as if to say that everything in the whole of creation works together for our ultimate “good”. But that “good” must be defined within Paul’s usage of the term in Romans; and he doesn’t ever use it in the sense of material good in this life. Consider how he uses the word: “Doing good”, righteous behaviour (Rom. 2:7,10); “a good man”, a righteous man, maybe in reference to the moral purity of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:7); “no good thing dwells within me... the good that I would do, I do not” (Rom. 7:18,19). Remember that Paul is writing Romans 8 in commentary upon and extension to his lament in Romans 7 that he cannot do the good that he would. Now he is taking comfort that in the bigger picture, man is not alone in creation; all things in this world are somehow working together within God’s master plan so that we shall in fact do good, be righteous; both in our lives in Christ today and ultimately for eternity in God’s Kingdom. For those who “love God”, who in their innermost beings delight in God’s law, somehow life works out, albeit in a very complex way, so that we may do that which is good, and have the goodness of Christ’s righteousness eternally counted to us. Despite having lamented that he himself fails to “do good” as he would wish (Rom. 7:19), Paul urges us all to “do good” in the practical section of Romans. We are to cleave to the good, overcome evil with good, do good, be wise to that which is good and simple concerning evil (Rom. 12:2,9,21; 13:3; 16:19). Clearly Paul doesn’t wish us to understand his frustration with his human condition as any excuse for giving up the effort. And the indwelling spirit of Christ seeks to orchestrate all things in the whole of creation to work together so that we may succeed in that

doing of good. Snow in Latvia or flash floods in Australia may be brought about by cosmic forces which operate exactly so that we may... help up that old man who has slipped on the ice, take in that family who lost their home. And of course it all works out far more subtly than this, hour by hour. God has begun a "good work [s.w.] in us" and will bring it to completion in the day of Christ's return (Phil. 1:6). And all things in the whole of creation are somehow orchestrated to that end. Thus at baptism we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10). And He gives us "all sufficiency to abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8), we are sanctified and prepared [Gk. 'provided for'] to perform every good work God intends for us (2 Tim 2:21); fully equipped by God to do every good work in His purpose for us (2 Tim. 3:17). Each time in these verses, the Greek word for "good" is the same as in Rom. 8:28. All this puts paid once and for all to the idea that we can do no good work because we don't have the money, the life situation, the resources. We have every sufficiency to do those good works intended for us; but we must "be ready to every good work" (Tit. 3:1), prepared to grasp the moment, living in the spirit of *carpe diem*. And thus we shall be 'established' in every good work we put our hands to (2 Thess. 2:17), none shall ultimately harm us if we follow after performing these good works (1 Pet. 3:13), we shall be made perfect or completed "in every good work in the doing of His will" (Heb. 13:21). All things work together for good especially when the "good works" are in the context of assisting others towards the Kingdom. Paul's concise summary of us in this verse as those who "love God" recalls 1 Jn. 4:20,21; 5:2- we only love God when we love others. The uncommon Greek word translated 'work together' is to be found in the great preaching commission in Mk. 16:20, where it is observed that the Lord Jesus 'worked together with' those who sought to preach the Gospel in all the world. This appears to be a comment upon the Lord's promise that in this work of preaching the Gospel, He would be with His preachers unto the end of the world (Mt. 28:20). Whilst this can be understood as the end of the age, it seems to me that the Lord is saying that in taking the Gospel to the whole world, He will be with them in it, right to the ends of the world- be it in witnessing to Amazonian Indians or to your unbelieving family in a run down apartment block in Moscow or London or New York. We are workers together with Him in the work of saving others (2 Cor. 6:1); yet all things in all creation are also working together to this end. By becoming part of that huge operating system, dynamized as it is by God's Spirit, we will experience God working with us. Somehow, resources become available; somehow we meet the right people. But all this happens if we are those who "love God". If our love for Him and the furtherance of His glory in human lives is paramount, then we will naturally find ourselves part of this positive, triumphant system which always is lead in triumph in Christ. Paul uses the same Greek word translated 'work together' in the practical section of Romans, where he three time speaks of his brethren as his 'workers together', or co-workers (Rom. 16:3,9,21). I suggest that Paul has in view here that he was co-working with those brethren as co-workers with God. The co-working he refers to doesn't simply mean that these brethren worked together with Paul. They were co-workers in the sense of being like Paul, co-workers- with God. All this isn't only encouragement to those faced with decision making on a large scale- e.g. a mission organization wondering if they have the resources to open a new front of work, or provide significant care to a needy group. More personally, it applies to each of us. We each have good works before ordained that we should walk in them, live a way of life which achieves them (Eph. 2:10). We need to ask the Lord to reveal what they are, to review our station and place within life's network and perceive them, remembering that "the unexamined life isn't

worth living", and seek to go for them. The idea is commonly expressed that for now, I shall work in my career, in my business, and then I shall have the resources to serve God as I vaguely imagine I could in some specific way. Manic capitalism has succeeded in commodifying everything, turning everything into a price tag. But the good works God has in mind for us aren't usually of that nature. Kindness, acceptance, comfort, forgiveness, interest in others' needs and sufferings... these are the essence of being as Christ in this world. This is Christianity, Christ-ness, being like Christ. For He achieved all He did "with a minimum of miracle" as Robert Roberts put it, and with hardly any cash behind Him. And so all this working together towards ultimate "good" shall be possible and is possible, for those who in the core of their hearts truly "love God". This is another allusion, surely, to Romans 7:15-24, where Paul is saying that in his heart he loves God, but is frustrated by his flesh. I have no doubt that most of you my readers are in this category- of loving God. The Jewish mind would've been jogged by the reference to 'loving God' to the classic definition of loving God- to love Him with our heart and mind (Mt. 22:37). And this is exactly what Paul is saying he does in Romans 7, delighting in God's law in his mind, despite serving sin in his flesh.

Here Paul starts to introduce the concept of calling, election according to God's purpose. He doesn't just start talking of Divine calling and predestination without a context. His whole message in Romans 1-8 is that we are saved by grace; and the fact there is some element of predestination and calling over and above our will and works is solid proof that salvation is by grace- and that we who know we have been called, in that we have heard the call of the Gospel which contains that call, really are those who have been chosen to live eternally. Again and again, the message Paul preaches here is too good news. We struggle to qualify what he is saying, to allow our works and obedience a greater factor in the final algorithm of Divine salvation. But time and again we return to the question- why do I know all this, why am I reading these words, hearing this call, when so many others have lived and died without it? Why is it that I 'get it' about God, but my brother or my sister was never interested from babyhood? Why me, why her, why you, and not the guy next door? For all our philosophy, wise cracks and clever words, there is no abidingly satisfactory answer. It is of God's grace and not of ourselves. Paul specifically connects our calling with God's grace in 2 Tim. 1:9: "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace". Note how the ideas of calling, grace and God's purpose all run together here as they do in Rom. 8:28. The "purpose of God" is further defined in Rom. 9:11 as not depending upon human works. We were called because we were called, by grace, quite independent of what works we would or would not do. Eph. 1:11 says that we are "predestinated according to the purpose of [God]". The whole idea of calling according to a predetermined Divine purpose means we are predestinated. We need not struggle over whether we have been called or not. The call, the invitation to the Kingdom, is in the Gospel. Any who hear it have been called. If I invite you to an event, you are invited, you are called to it. Lest there be any doubt, Paul began Romans by assuring us that we are called just as surely as he was (Rom. 1:1,6,7). He opens 1 Corinthians the same way- speaking of his calling and then using the same word to describe how his readers are likewise the called (1 Cor. 1:1,2,24). The calling of God is "without repentance" in the sense that we can never be disinvited, become 'uncalled' (Rom. 11:29). And if we are called, then we are predestinated (Eph. 1:11). Whilst calling doesn't mean final acceptance with God- for we must make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), to

not be saved at the last day would require us to have wilfully fought against the predestined desire of God to save us, to have reasoned against destiny. Paul's great theme in Romans 1-8 is that we are "in Christ" by status through having believed into Him by baptism. This connects with this theme of calling according to the Divine purpose, because God 'purposed His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Eph. 3:11). If we are in Him, then we are in God's eternal purpose, we will continue eternally because God's purpose for us is eternal. We would have to wilfully reject that status if we are to somehow come out of that eternal purpose. Being "in" God's purpose means that His purpose, His will, His Spirit, is to become ours- hence Paul can use the same word to speak of his "purpose" in life (2 Tim. 3:10).

"According to His purpose" can be applied to the first clause of the verse, "all things work together for good" within the overall purpose of God to save us. It doesn't have to modify the idea of our calling. Joseph stands as a pattern for us all. When Paul wrote that all things work together for our good (Rom. 8:28), he was echoing how in all the grief of Joseph's life, the rejection by his brethren, the cruel twists of fate [as they seemed at the time]... *God meant it for good* (Gen. 50:20). This same wonderful process will come true in our lives- for they too are equally directed by a loving Father. God's whole purpose, according to Paul, is that we should become like His Son-and to this end all things are directed in God's plan for us (Rom. 8:28,29). To achieve the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" is the 'perfection' or maturity towards which God works in our lives. As we read of Him day by day, slowly His words and ways will become ours. The men who lived with Jesus in the flesh are our pattern in this; for the wonder of the inspired record means that His realness comes through to us too. Time and again, their spoken and written words are reflective of His words, both consciously and unconsciously.

8:29- see on Rom. 6:5.

For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained- We are called for sure, therefore we were predestinated for sure, and therefore we personally were foreknown. To the Jewish mind, it was the prophets and Messiah who were personally foreknown. And Paul uses this shockingly exalted language about each of us, reasoning back from the basis that we know we have been called. His logical path is irresistible, at least intellectually. But in practice it amounts to an almost too good news. We were predestinated to be saved, to be part of God's eternal purpose, a plan for us which shall last for ever. It would require a battle of wills against God, a conscious, wilful desire *not* to be in that purpose any more, to make us no longer a part of that purpose. No wonder we should strive to spread the invitations to that Kingdom far and wide, to call people to the Kingdom. We who have heard and accepted that call are even now part of a plan, a purpose, which shall last eternally- this is the significance of God's purpose with us being an "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). This may explain why often we feel that God is indeed working with us, that we are part of some far bigger cosmic plan, but we're not sure exactly where it's going to end. All we can do is to play our part in that purpose as enthusiastically as possible, knowing that we are playing a part in some unseen purpose, which shall have eternal consequences. Why was the train cancelled, the airport closed by snow? So that for those who wish to be part of God's purpose, who "love God", we had time to make a phone call to brother X or pay a visit to sister Y or stay the night with family Z, so that we might play some part in encouraging them towards God's Kingdom? We cannot see it clearly, but we sense

something of God in these things, even in death itself. The situation gets the more complex, the waters muddied, in that both we and others can at times and in some ways not respond as God intends, or not as far as He intended. And so the eternal purpose is in a sense thwarted, God's intentions delayed or forced by human failure to be rescheduled, reinterpreted, fulfilled in other ways or at other times. But all the same, we continue to play our part as best we can, as far as we can, loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind, not on a hobbyist, part-time level; and so we shall eternally continue.

To be conformed to the image of His Son- This is parallel to our being fully born into the family of God, of which the Lord Jesus is the firstborn. Whilst the process of being formed after the image of Christ is ongoing in this life, it will come to full term only at our final birth of the Spirit when we enter God's Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5). The Greek for "conformed" is used only in one other place, in Phil. 3:21, where we read that at Christ's return, our vile body shall be "fashioned like unto" [s.w. 'conformed'] the now glorious body of Christ. The conforming is therefore referring to our final change of nature at Christ's return, even though the conforming process begins in this life (Rom. 12:2). The end point, therefore, isn't so much eternal life, but to be like Christ, the Son of God. Paul has been arguing that we are counted as Christ now, His character, personality and spirit are counted to us. But finally we shall be changed into persons like unto Christ Himself. But the form of Jesus to which we shall be conformed in that day is the "form" which He had on earth- for Phil. 2:6 speaks of the Lord Jesus as having "the form of God" at the time of His final spiritual climax in the death of the cross. This *morphe* or "form" refers not to His 'very nature', as Trinitarians wilfully misinterpret this passage, but rather to the image of God mentally. Who Jesus was in His time of dying was in fact "God"; not that He 'was God' then, but in that His character and spirit finally matured to an exact replica of who God is in essence. And this is who or what we are counted as today- for all in Christ are counted as Him. And this is who we shall be conformed to in the final triumph at the day of His coming. Our calling is to be like Him; not simply to have eternal life in God's Kingdom. More essentially, the call of the Gospel is a call to be like Him in this life, and to then be finally made like Him. The parables which explain the good news of the Kingdom therefore speak of how life can be lived now, in forgiveness, service, kindness etc. This is the good news of the Kingdom life; the good news isn't simply an invitation to live eternally in a future Kingdom on earth; rather is it the good news of a form of life that can be lived now and shall eternally be lived to its intended fullness. When Paul writes of our being transformed into "the image of Christ" (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) he seems to have in mind Ez. 1:28 LXX: "The appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord". "The glory" in Ezekiel is personified- it refers to a person, and I submit that person was a prophetic image of Jesus Christ. But Paul's big point is that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the Lord's glory (2 Cor. 3:16- 4:6); just as he did on the Damascus road, and just as Ezekiel did. It follows, therefore, that not only is Paul our example, but our beholding of the Lord's glory propels us on our personal commission in the Lord's service, whatever it may be. See on Acts 9:3. Martial described a crucifixion victim [in *Liber Spectaculorum*]: "In all his body was nowhere a body's shape". We are to be "conformed to the image of [God's] son" (Rom. 8:29)- to share His *morphe*, which was so marred beyond recognition that men turned away in disgust (Is. 52:14 cp. Phil. 2:7). The mind that was in Him then must be in us now (Phil. 2:5).

That He might be the firstborn among many other children- Because we shall be made like Him morally, we will have the essential family characteristic: moral perfection. We will thereby become God's children also, as He was and is. We shall become His "brothers" in that we have been counted as Him now, and then shall be made like Him. So the language isn't thoughtlessly sexist, rather is it reflective of how we shall be made like Him. Through the resurrection, Christ became "the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15,18; Rev. 1:5); the same Greek phrase for "all creation" is to be found in Rom. 8:22. The idea may be that ultimately all creation somehow will follow this same path to glory, to ultimate reconciliation with God. And yet Col. 1:23 uses the same phrase in this context to speak of how the Gospel has been preached to "all creation", in fulfilment of the great commission to take the Gospel to "all creation" (Mk. 16:15 same phrase). "Firstborn among many brothers" here in Rom. 8:29 therefore becomes parallel to being the firstborn of "all creation" in Colossians 1. In the end, "all creation" will be God's redeemed children. And we will only be there because someone went out into our world and preached the Gospel to the "all creation". In this lies the eternal significance of calling others to that Kingdom by obeying the great commission.

8:30 And *whom He foreordained, those He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified, and who He justified, these He also glorified*- This is partially a recapitulation of the argument of Rom. 8:29; a repeating for emphasis of something which is almost too good news to believe. We were called because we were predestinated; and Paul has earlier outlined in his argument that we who are in Christ have been "justified", declared right, at the judgment seat of God. We haven't yet been glorified, in that our bodies haven't yet been changed, the final day of judgment hasn't yet come. But Paul uses the past tense as if it has already happened. This 'prophetic perfect' was a Hebrew style which was quite grammatically acceptable, even if it may seem strange when translated into other languages such as Greek or English. Paul's point is that if we are in Christ, declared right before God's judgment right now, then we can be assured of final salvation, the glorification of the body- should Christ return at this moment, or if we should die at this moment. For tomorrow of course we might throw it all away. But we are not to worry about tomorrow in that sense; we can rejoice here and now that we are saved and are as good as ultimately saved and in the Kingdom. We have already been predestinated, already called, already justified- and therefore in prospect, already glorified. Yet again, Paul succeeds in making us gasp for breath, struggling as we do with the too good news of the Gospel. It is the Lord Jesus who has now been "glorified" (s.w. Jn. 12:16; Acts 3:13); and seeing that all that is true of Him is now true of us who by status are now "in Him", it can be also said that we have been in this sense already glorified. Perhaps the practical section of Romans connects to this verse when we read in Rom. 15:6,9 that the Gentiles shall glorify God for His mercy; because He has glorified us, we are to glorify Him.

"Also glorified" is true from God's standpoint, outside of our kind of time. For that glory has yet to be revealed in us (1 Pet. 5:1).

8:31 *What then shall we say to these things?*– Paul returns to the rhetorical, legal style which he used earlier in Romans. The phrase could be an allusion to a legal one; as if to say to the accused or to the jury: 'What then do you say to these things?'. We are

invited to be the jury at our own trial. The evidence that we shall be saved is devastating; nothing can be said against it. Or it could be that Paul is in the place of the defence, going on the attack against the prosecutor. What can be argued against all this evidence? And there would have to be silence. The case is set in concrete. The arguments simply cannot be answered. Paul has previously thrown down the challenge after some of his previous depositions of evidence in this very public case of God's Gracious, Certain Salvation vs. All Human Doubts And Fears. Four times he has challenged: What then shall we say to this (Rom. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7)? And there can only be silence. But Paul's rhetorical style is almost aggressive; he is the counsel for the defence who is on the offensive rather than the apologetic and defensive. But it seems Paul isn't satisfied with winning the case. He drives it home now in the final verses of this chapter in a kind of *tour de triumph,* a victory lap before all of creation. He is exalting, both intellectually and emotionally, in God's grace and the certainty of our salvation. But he's not exalting just for the sake of it; he is aware of his own cries of frustration with his own failure which he voiced in Romans 7, and he is aware of how cautious and weak in faith are we his readers, who struggle to believe the goodness of this good news, this Gospel of grace. And so he has to hammer it home. "What shall we then say to these things?"- i.e. 'what form of words, of 'saying', is adequate response to them?' (Rom. 8:31; Paul uses that phrase seven times in Romans, so beyond words did he find the atonement wrought in Christ). Words aren't symbols sufficient for our experience of God's grace and love; all commentary is bathos, like trying to explain a symphony in words; we experience a collapse of language. What remains, I suppose, is to live, to exist, in the sober knowledge of this grace, to never lose sight of them in our hearts; and all the rest, the rest of life and living and all the decisions and responses we are supposed to make, will somehow come naturally.

If God is for us, who can be against us?- The songs of the suffering Servant are applied to us in Rom. 8:31, where Paul exalts that "if God be for us, who is against us?"- alluding to Is. 50:8 "The Lord God is helping me- who is he that would convict me?". If we are in Christ, we like Him cannot be condemned. In the legal context, if the judge of all is legally "for us", then there effectively is no accuser, nothing and nobody standing against us. It's as if Paul has rightly guessed his readers' response: 'OK Paul, I have nothing to say against your argument, but all the same you don't know what a sinner I am, what a line of sins I have waiting there to condemn me'. And Paul's exultant answer is that if God is "for us"- and he has demonstrated this time and again, that God quite simply wants to save us- then nothing and nobody, not even our own sins, can ultimately stand against us. The idea of God being "for us" is repeated twice elsewhere in Romans. In Rom. 5:8 we read that God commended His love toward us in that Christ, His Son, died "for us". This is the extent to which God is "for us". And in Rom. 8:34, Christ makes intercession "for us" to God the judge; and yet God the judge is also "for us". All this legal language is only metaphor, and all metaphors break down at some point if pushed too far. If in this case we push it too far, we would end up saying that God is somehow unjust, His sense of legal justice lacks integrity and so is worthless in an ethical, moral sense. However, the broad brush impression is that in the highest, ultimate court analysis of our case, both the judge and the counsel for the defence are passionately "for us" on a personal level. In God's case, He was "for us" to the extent of giving His Son to die "for us", for the sake of our sins and failures for which we are in the dock. Col. 2:14 uses the same phrase to describe how the Mosaic Law which was "against us" has been taken out of

the way through Christ's death; and Paul has argued that the strength of sin is in the Law. If that is taken away, then sin will not have power in the lives of those who are "in Christ", in whom such law and legality is now no more. As an aside, it should be noted that when the Lord told John to "Forbid not; for he that is not against us is for us" (Lk. 9:50 Gk.), He could have been referring to God; as if to say that we don't need to as it were defend Him against possible impostors, because God Himself is the One who is not against us but for us. In this case, here in Rom. 8:31 we would have yet another of Paul's allusions to the Gospels; his point would be that if God is for us and not against us, then nothing at all nor anybody, not even ourselves and our sins, can be against us.

8:32 *He that spared not His own son*- Perhaps alluding to how God commended Abraham for not having spared his son (Gen. 22:16). As noted on Rom. 8:31, God our judge is "for us" in that He gave His own Son to die "for us", for our sins. The idea of God not sparing people is usually used in the sense of 'not sparing them from condemnation', and it is used like this twice elsewhere in Romans (Rom. 11:21 [twice]; 2 Cor. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:4,5). The Lord Jesus bore our sins in that He identified with them; and the Old Testament idea of sin bearing meant to bear condemnation for sin. As the representative of we who are sinners, He in some sense died the death of a condemned man; His final cry "Why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) was surely rooted in the Old Testament theme that God will forsake sinners but never forsake the righteous. He felt *as* a sinner, although He was not one. The language of God not sparing His own Son could be read as meaning that God treated Him as condemned, in the sense that the Lord Jesus was to such an extent our representative. If this is the correct line of interpretation, then Paul would again be tackling our objection that we are such awful sinners that perhaps his fantastic news of grace still doesn't apply to us personally. And he would be answering it by saying that because we are in Christ and Christ in us, Christ died as our representative, deeply identifying with us as characters and persons and thereby with the sinfulness and failure which is such a significant part of us. And therefore as our representative He died and rose again, so that we might be able to believe 'into Him' and thereby share in His resurrection and glorification.

God 'spared not' His own son is alluding to the LXX of Gen. 22:16, where Abraham spares not his son. The Greek phrase is elsewhere used about God not sparing people when He assigns them to condemnation (Rom. 11:21; 2 Cor. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:4,5). The Lord Jesus knows how not only sinners feel but how the rejected will feel- for He 'bore condemnation' in this sense. We should be condemned. But He as our representative was condemned, although not personally guilty. He so empathized with us through the experience of the cross that He came to *feel* like a sinner, although He was not one. And thus He has freed us from condemnation. When Paul asks in Rom. 8:33,34 'Who can accuse us? Where are those people? Who can condemn us, if God justifies us?', he is alluding to the woman taken in adultery. For the Lord asked the very same rhetorical questions on that occasion. Paul's point is that we each one are that woman. We are under accusations which we can't refute. The Lord never denied her guilt; but He took it away. The Lord comforted her that no *man* has condemned her nor can condemn her, and He who alone could do so, instead pronounces her free from condemnation.

But delivered Him up for us all- The Greek is three times used in Is. 53 LXX about the handing over to Jesus to His death. The moment of the Lord being delivered over by Pilate is so emphasized. There are few details in the record which are

recorded verbatim by all the writers (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:25; Jn. 19:16). The Lord had prophesied this moment of handing over, as if this was something which He dreaded (Mk. 9:31; 10:33); that point when He was outside the legal process, and must now face His destruction. The Angels reminded the disciples: "Remember *how* he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men" (Lk. 24:6,7). The emphasis is on "*How*", with what passion and emphasis. Rom. 4:25 makes this moment of handing over equivalent to His actual death: " Who was *delivered* (s.w.) for our offences, and raised again for our justification". So much stress is put on this moment of being delivered over to crucifixion. The Gospel records stress that Pilate delivered Him up; but in fact God did (Rom. 8:32); indeed, the Lord delivered Himself up (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). Always the same word is used. These passages also stress that He delivered Himself up, and was delivered up, *for us*. It was *our salvation* which motivated Him at the moment of being delivered up. Perhaps it was at that moment that He had the greatest temptation to walk through the midst of them and back to Galilee. As the crowd surged forward and cheered, knowing they'd won the battle of wills with Pilate..."take ye him and crucify him" ringing in His mind... this was it. This was the end. How He must have been tempted to pray again His prayer: "Let this cup pass from me...". Jerusalem was a small town by modern standards, with no more than 10,000 inhabitants. There must have been faces in that crowd which, through swollen eyes, He recognized; some whose children had benefited from His miracles, whose ears had heard His discourses with wonderment. The emphasis on this moment of delivering up is so great that there must have been an especial sacrifice on the Lord's part. But He "gave himself up" to *God* not men (1 Pet. 2:23); He knew He was giving Himself as an offering to *God* as the crowd came forward and the soldiers once again led Him. The almost terrifying thing is that *we,* for the sake of our identity with Christ, are also "delivered up to death" (2 Cor. 4:11). We are asked to share, in principle, the height of devotion that He reached in that moment.

How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things- If so much was given to us by the death of Christ, if God gave His Son for us, then how much 'easier' is it for Him to give us absolutely anything. For nothing compares to the gift of God's Son to die; this is the ultimate gift from God to man. To give us eternity and forgiveness for our sins is in far less than the gift of the blood of His Son. And further, if God gave us His Son in order to save us, in order to "give us all things"- is it really feasible that having given us His Son *so that* He might "give us all things", He would then *not* "give us all things"? Again, Paul's logic is intrusive and powerful. We may shut the book, stop reading or listening, but the force of the argument silently echoes within our narrow and fearful minds. God did "not spare" His Son- by contrast, He "freely gave" Him [Gk. 'to grace with'], His Son was indeed "all things" to God, His only and beloved Son. Seeing God gave us Him, it's obvious that He is going to give us the things which that gift was given in order to make possible. "Shall He not with Him also" could be a reference to the resurrection- if God gave us so much in the *death* of His Son, think how much more was achieved and given to us through His resurrection. "With him" could be read another way, however- as referring to how Christ will meet the believers "in the air", and they shall come "with him" to judgment (1 Thess. 4:14), with Him their judge clearly "for them". However we must remember Paul is driving here at our fears that our sins are too great for the good news, however good it is, to be true for us personally. The Greek translated "freely give" is a form of the word *charis*, grace, and is often translated "forgive". It's the same word used in Lk. 7:42, where God 'frankly forgives' all the sins / debts of His

servants. Perhaps Paul has this in mind. If God gave up His Son to die for us, in order to achieve forgiveness for our sins, then rather obviously, surely, He will "frankly forgive" or "freely give" us forgiveness for all things, all and any sin. We shouldn't think that this is somehow harder for God than to give us His Son to die for our sins. He has already done that. And so giving us the forgiveness which Christ died to attain isn't therefore so difficult. If we are in Christ, then God has "quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us [s.w. "freely give" in Rom. 8:32] all trespasses". The "all things" of Rom. 8:32 can thus be understood as "all our trespasses". And so Paul goes on to triumph in Rom. 8:37 that we are conquerors in "all things", over all our sins, because we are in Him that loved us.

8:33 *Who shall lay anything to the charge–* Again, legal language. Where is our accuser? Can anyone accuse us of anything? No, insofar as we are "in Christ". The allusion is to the Gospels, to the way the Lord Jesus could calmly challenge: "Which of you can convict me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46). If He could not be seriously accused of sin, neither can we. The records of the Lord's trials are perhaps also in view here- for the accusers failed to produce any case which held together (Mk. 14:59). All this takes on striking relevance to us, as we stand in the dock before the righteous judgment of God- and are declared right, without any credible accusers. This of course is only possible because we are "in Christ". The only other time the Greek for 'lay to the charge' occurs is in the records of Paul's own trials, where again no credible accusation was found against him (Acts 19:38,40; 23:28,29; 26:2,7). As so often, Paul is reasoning from his own personal experience. He knew what it felt like to stand in court and see your accusers' case just crumble before your eyes. He makes the point in his own defence that there is no proof of anything of which he is accused, and that significantly the witnesses against him aren't even present in the courtroom (Acts 24:13,19)- all very much the scene of Rom. 8:33. And he says this is true for each one who is in Christ. God is the prosecutor- yet He is the one who shall search for Israel's sin, and admit that it cannot be found (Jer. 50:20). God is both judge, advocate for the defence, and prosecutor- and this is God is *for us*, the guilty! Rom. 8:33,34 develops the figure at length. The person bringing the complaint of sin against us is God alone- for there is no personal devil to do so. And the judge who can alone condemn us is the Lord Jesus alone. And yet we find the one 'brings the charge' instead being the very one who justifies us, or as the Greek means, renders us guiltless. The one who brings the charge becomes this strange judge who is so eager to declare us guiltless. And the judge who can alone condemn, or render guilty, is the very one who makes intercession to the judge for us- and moreover, the One who died for us, so passionate is His love. The logic is breathtaking, literally so. The figures are taken from an earthly courtroom, but the roles are mixed. Truly "if God be for us [another courtroom analogy], who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31). This advocate / intercessor is matchless. With Him on our side, 'for us', we cannot possibly be condemned. Whatever is 'against us'- our sins- cannot now be against us, in the face of this mighty advocate. Let's face it, the thing we fear more than death is our sin which is 'against us'. But the assurance is clear, for those who will believe it. With an attorney for the defence such as we have, who is also our passionate judge so desperate to justify us- even they cannot stand 'against us'. Rom. 8:33 states that there is now *nobody* who can accuse us, because none less than God Himself, the judge of all, is our justifier in Christ! And so whatever is said about us, don't let this register with us as if it is God accusing us. Not for us the addiction of internet chat groups, wanting to know what is said about us or feeling defensive under accusation. For all our sins, truly or falsely

accused of, *God* is our justifier, and not ourselves. And thus our consciences can still blossom when under man's false accusation, genuinely aware of our failures for what they are, not being made to feel more guilty than we should, or to take false guilt. This is all a wonderful and awesome outworking of God's plan of salvation by grace.
If *God* is our justifier, where is he that condemns us, or lays any guilt to our charge (Rom. 8:33,34)? And yet in family life, in ecclesial relationships... we are so quick to feel and hurt from the possible insinuations of others against us. We seek to justify ourselves, to correct gossip and misrepresentation, to "take up" an issue to clear our name. We all tend to be far too sensitive about what others may be implying about us. All this reflects a sad lack of appreciation of the wonder of the fact that we are justified *by God,* and in His eyes- which is surely the ultimately important perspective- we are without fault before the throne of grace, covered in the imputed and peerless righteousness of the Lord. Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me [right now] is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ [another first principle] means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us, and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify. When a man is under accusation, his conscience usually dies. He is so bent on self-defence and seeking his own innocence and liberation from accusation. And we see this in so many around us. But for us, we have been delivered from accusation, judged innocent, granted the all powerful and all authoritative heavenly advocate. Rom. 8:33 states that there is now *nobody* who can accuse us, because none less than God Himself, the judge of all, is our justifier in Christ! And so whatever is said about us, don't let this register with us as if it is God accusing us. Not for us the addiction of internet chat groups, wanting to know what is said about us or feeling defensive under accusation. For all our sins, truly or falsely accused of, God is our justifier, and not ourselves. And thus our consciences can still blossom when under man's false accusation, genuinely aware of our failures for what they are, not being made to feel more guilty than we should, or to take false guilt. This is all a wonderful and awesome outworking of God's plan of salvation by grace.

Of God's chosen ones? It is God that justifies- The reason why there are no accusers against us, not even our own sins, is because we are "God's elect". The supreme chosen one of God was of course the Lord Jesus, "mine elect, in whom my soul delights" (Is. 42:1). And yet later on in the servant songs of Isaiah, "mine elect" clearly refers to the people of Israel (Is. 45:4; 65:9,22). The true Israel of God are therefore those counted as somehow "in" the elect one, the singular servant of God, Messiah Jesus. Those baptized into Him are therefore His elect. And how do we know we are "God's elect"? If we are baptized into Christ, "mine elect", then for sure we are. And further, we have heard the call of the Gospel, we have been called- so, we are God's elect, His chosen ones. Of course the objection can be raised that the whole idea of calling or election may appear unfair. Indeed, the Greek word for "elect" can carry the idea of 'the favoured / favourite one'. There is no ultimate injustice here. The chosen One is the Lord Jesus, beloved for the sake of His righteousness, His spirit of life. Those who respond to the call to be "in Him" are counted likewise. And

all this is the way, the method used, in order for God to be the one who counts us as right in the ultimate judgment- for "It is God that justifies".

8:34 *Who is he that condemns?*- There are many links between Romans and John's Gospel; when Paul asks where is anyone to condemn us (Rom. 8:34), we are surely intended to make the connection to Jn. 8:10, where the Lord asks the condemned woman the very same question. It's as if she, there, alone with the Lord, face down, is the dead ringer of every one of us. The legal allusion is definitely to the judge, the one who will pass sentence. The question is "Who is?" rather than "Where is?". It's not that God, the judge of all, abdicates His judgment throne and ceases to tell right from wrong. There is an integrity in His judgment. The answer of course is that it is *God* who is the One who passes sentence. The rest of the verse goes on to speak of the Lord Jesus as our intercessor at His right hand. The point is, that God the righteous judge is going to take notice of the pleadings of His Son, whom He gave to die for our forgiveness and redemption. The idea of condemning must be seen in the context of Rom. 8:3, where we have just read that it is sin which is condemned by God, and He has already condemned it, in the crucified flesh of the Lord Jesus. "Sin" is condemned; we are not condemned. The point clearly is that it is our status "in Christ" and our disassociation from "sin", as strongly as Paul disassociated himself from "sin" in Rom. 7:15-23, which is the means by which we are saved, and not only saved but declared right.

It is Christ Jesus that died, yes rather, that was raised from the dead- This is said in the context of the comment that it is God who judges. It's not that the death and resurrection of a person of itself can change the mind of God or lead Him to not condemn us, in some mystical way. We are saved by the Lord's death and resurrection in that we can identify with it by baptism into His death and resurrection, and be counted as Christ, the Son of God. It is this which affects how God judges us. There seems to be a link made between the Lord's death and the judgment in Rom. 8:34: "Who is he that judgeth / condemneth? It is Christ that died…", as if *He* and His death are the ultimate judgment. The Old Testament idea of judgment was that in it, the Lord speaks, roars and cries, and there is an earthquake and eclipse of the sun (Joel 3:16; Am. 1:2; Jer. 25:30; Ps. 46:7; Rev. 10:3). Yet all these things are associated with the Lord's death.

Who is [moreover] at the right hand of God- Note the double use of the idea of "moreover". Paul is building up his logic towards the final crescendo- that we are in fact saved from condemnation in Christ. This is classic Paul. The death of God's Son for us would be enough to persuade God the Judge of all. But further, He rose again; and we who are in Him are counted likewise to have died and risen again, as Paul has laboured in Romans 6. So, for sure we are saved. But yet further, God's risen Son is now at His right hand, pleading for us! I suggest that the sequence here of "Died, rose again, alive at God's right hand interceding for us" is somehow repeated in Rom. 14:9: "Christ both died and rose and revived". In this case the "revived" would be a reference to the fact that He not only resurrected but is alive and active for us in mediation. In this sense, perhaps, "we are saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). Being at the right hand was the position of favour, of honour. The point in this context is that if God so deeply respects His Son- and the theme of the Father's genuine respect of His Son is a beautiful theme in Scripture- then surely He will be very open to the Son's work for us. The suggestion has been made that the Greek for "right hand" is from the

root word “to receive”, and in this verse the idea that Christ stands to receive is balanced with the comment that from that position He makes intercession or request for us His people. He is in the supreme place to receive- and He asks from there for us to be counted as in Him.

Who also makes intercession for us- See on Rom. 8:27. We should not think that whenever we sin, we have an intercessor in Heaven who can gain forgiveness for us and set us back right with God. The whole argument in Romans is that we are “in Christ” by status and are counted as Him; all that is true of Him becomes true for us. It is not that we are in Christ one moment and then out of Him the next, to be brought back into our “in Christ” status by His intercession. For if this were the case, the implication would be that we were perfect when we were ‘being good’; and if one happened to die at a point of weakness, then we would be eternally damned. God’s way is more profound. We are counted permanently as “in Christ” by status, and in this sense we have already been redeemed, and are simply awaiting the physical articulation of that redemption at the Lord’s return. The imagery of the Lord Jesus as a priest offering Heavenly sacrifices is metaphor, and as such is limited. The position between Him today, His work for us, and the work of the Mosaic priests is not completely analogous. We do not need a Levitical priesthood because the Lord Jesus has replaced that, but this is not to say that He is exactly for us what the Levitical priests were for sinful Israel. For what, then, does the Lord Jesus make intercession? I suggested under Rom. 8:27 that the intercession involves a transference of our mind, our spirit, to that of the Lord Jesus as He sits before God. In this sense the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us personally has an eternal quality to it (Heb. 7:25) in that our spirit, the essence of who we are, continues in the mind of the Lord Jesus even after we die; just as the memory or spirit of those we love lives on within us after their falling asleep. We are eternally positioned before God, thanks to the intercession of the Lord Jesus. However, it cannot be denied that the Greek for “intercession” does indeed carry the idea of obtaining something. It is used here in the very context of stating that the intercession is made at the “right hand” of God, the place of receiving (see commentary above). Paul uses a related word to that translated “intercession” in saying at another judgment seat that he has “obtained help from God” (Acts 26:22). Perhaps he said that fully aware that he in fact had a Heavenly intercessor, a true counsel for the defence. The same word for “obtain” which is part of that translated “intercessor” occurs in the context of our obtaining salvation and resurrection to life (2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 11:35). It is this which has been interceded for and obtained for us by the Lord Jesus, seated as He is at the right hand, the place of receiving, of the Judge of all. In this sense His intercession has that eternal quality to it which we earlier observed (Heb. 7:25). And yet even this idea, that the intercession is for our salvation, still seems to be a too simplistic summary of what Paul really has in mind here. The Lord’s intercession for Stephen in his time of dying was surely not simply for Stephen’s salvation. Rather it seems to involve a representation of our spirit, our deepest essence of thought, feeling, personality and life situation, before the Father; intercession for our salvation; and also for other things which are on the Lord’s agenda for us, and which we in this life may always be ignorant of.

The pregnant phrase *huper hemon* may mean simply “for us”, but *huper* could suggest the idea of over and above, beyond us, more than us. In this case, there would be connection with the thought recently expressed by Paul that although we know not how to pray for as we ought, the Lord Jesus as “the Lord the Spirit” makes

intercession for us, beyond what we can verbalize. And of course the idea would freely connect with Eph. 3:20, where Paul exalts that the Lord Jesus can do "exceeding [Gk. *huper*] abundantly above [Gk. *huper* again- the sense of 'beyond' is very strong here in the Greek] all we ask or think, through the power that works in us". The wonder of it all will literally take us eternity to appreciate. Our innermost desire is for salvation, to serve God, to be as the Lord Jesus, to achieve His glory, both in our own characters and in all of creation. This, yet again, is the significance of Rom. 7:15-23, that despite our failings and weakness, these are indeed our core desires. And it is this spirit of ours which is transferred to the Lord Jesus and understood by the Father and Judge of all. And in response to those desires, even now, there is a power working within us to do and be for us, to work in and for us, things beyond our wildest dreams and spiritual fantasies.

Rom. 8:34,35 suggest that the love of Christ, from which we cannot be separated, is manifested to us through His intercessions for us. He doesn't offer our prayers to God all the time; He is our intercessor in the sense that He is always there as our representative, and on this basis we have acceptability with God, as we are in Him. This is proof enough that intercession is not equal to merely translating our prayers into a language God understands. We offer our prayers ourselves to God, as men have ever done. We are, in this sense, our own priesthood. We offer ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5). He Himself made only one offering of Himself; He does not offer Himself again. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest. It is the fact we are in Him that makes our offerings acceptable. Many passages concerning mediation refer to the Lord's mediation of the new covenant through the atonement God achieved through Him. None of them associate His mediation with the offering of our prayers to God. Indeed, several passages suggest that the actual fact of the exalted Lord now being in heavenly places, and we being in Him, is in fact the intercession necessary to bring about our redemption- rather than His translating, as it were, of our actual words (Rom. 7:25; 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1). The references to intercession likewise never suggest that Christ intercedes in the sense of offering our prayers to God. "Intercession" can be read as another way of describing prayer; this is how the term is invariably used (Jer. 7:16; 27:18; Rom. 11:2; 1 Tim. 2:1). Thus when Jeremiah is told not to intercede for Israel, this meant he was not to pray for them; it does not imply that he was acting as a priest to offer Israel's prayers to God. Nowhere in the Bible is the idea floated that a man can offer another man's prayers to God and thereby make them acceptable. The Greek for "intercession" essentially means to meet a person; prayer / intercession is a meeting with God. There is evidently nothing morally impossible about a man having direct contact with God in prayer without any priest or 'mediator'; the Old Testament abounds with such examples. The fact we are called upon to make intercession for others is surely conclusive proof that "intercession" means prayer, not relaying the words of another to God (1 Tim. 2:1). This meaning of intercession needs to be borne in mind when we consider its occurrences in Rom. 8. There we are taught that we know not what to pray for as we ought; the Lord Jesus makes intercession for us- i.e. He prays for us- not with words, i.e. not transferring our human words into God's language, not shuttling to and from between us and God as it were, but with His own groanings of the spirit. We don't know how to pray, so Christ prays (intercedes, in the language of Rom. 8) for us.

8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*- The "who?" may be a reference to God, because the "who?" of Rom. 8:33,34 was God. But the point there as here was

that seeing God is the only One who can do such things, then we can rest assured that they will not happen. Because God, for the sake of His Son, will not do these things. We are "in Christ" by status, and what happened at baptism is not breakable by anything human. We cannot be separated from Him by all the calamities listed in this verse, an 8:36 goes on to remind us that this cannot happen because we are counted as the slaughtered Lamb, the Lord Jesus. The Greek for "separate" is usually used about divorce (1 Cor. 7:10,11,15; Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9). Only if we chose to as it were divorce from Christ can we be separated from Him. Only we can make that choice- no human situation in our lives is to be interpreted as meaning that Christ has withdrawn His love from us. Reading the list of awful tribulations which follows, we are to understand that the love of Christ does not, therefore, guarantee that we will not suffer in this life. Indeed, as Rom. 8:36 will go on to show, we as "in Christ" must be prepared to be slain with Him all the day long, so as to live with Him. "The love of Christ" frequently refers to His death for us. The fact He died for us should be enough to persuade us that having loved us so much, no human tribulation could possibly be interpreted to mean that He in fact doesn't love us. And yet people stumble from their faith in Christ because of tribulation, as the parable of the sower makes clear. Why this happens is partly because they have failed to be focused daily upon the cross- that He there, then, did that *for me* today. This, then, is our challenge- to view all of life's tragedies, pain and unfairness through the lens of the simple fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me, and I as a man or woman in Him shall therefore live eternally.

Shall tribulation- See on Rom. 5:3; 8:18. The word used in the parable of the sower and also about the tribulations of the last days before Christ returns (Mt. 13:21; 24:9,21). Only through such tribulations shall we enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). Significantly, Paul uses the word earlier in Romans, in speaking of the tribulation which shall come upon the rejected at the last day (Rom. 2:9). It's either tribulation then, or now. In this sense we can glory in tribulation, knowing it is the guarantee that we are really in Christ (Rom. 5:3). Hence in the practical part of Romans we are exhorted to patiently endure tribulation (Rom. 12:12).

Or anguish- Again, the same word used in Rom. 2:9 ["anguish"] about the distress of the rejected in the last day. We must experience it now, or then. Paul uses this word again in 2 Cor. 12:10, along with words similar in meaning to the list here in Rom. 8:35, in saying that we experience distresses "for Christ's sake", for the sake of the fact we are in Him and must have a part in His sufferings.

Or persecution- The same word is used in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:21), to which Paul seems to be making allusion in Rom. 8:35. Many of the words in this list are appropriate to Paul's personal sufferings for the sake of His being "in Christ". He too was persecuted (Acts 13:50; 2 Tim. 3:11), distressed etc. The list of his sufferings in 2 Cor. 12:10 includes this word and others in the list here. Again and again, Paul writes as if talking to himself, and as such sets himself up as the parade example of what he means.

Or famine- Lack of food. Again, this word is in the list of Paul's own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:27. Perhaps Paul has specific reference to the famine which there was in the first century which affected the believers (Acts 11:28). And again, famine is to be one of the latter day tribulations (Mt. 24:7).

Or nakedness- Lack of clothing. Again, this word is in the list of Paul's own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:27.

Or peril- This word is only used elsewhere in the list of Paul's own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:26.

Or sword- Note that Paul envisaged his readership as likely to suffer from the sword. And yet in Rom. 13:4 he speaks of the first century authorities as using the sword to execute God's will against those who do wrong. This would lead us to interpret Rom. 13:4 as having specific and limited reference in time and space, perhaps only to the Rome ecclesia at a certain point in time and in some aspects of justice. Nothing, whatever, can separate us from the love of Christ towards us in His death (Rom. 8:35). His cross is therefore the constant rallying point of our faith, in whatever difficulty we live through. The resolve and strength we so need in our spiritual path can come only through a personal contemplation of the cross.

This list is to be understood in the context of Rom. 8:36, that we are counted as in Christ, the slaughtered lamb, and therefore all His sufferings we expect to be somehow articulated in our own lives, just as His resurrection life also shall be. In the first century context, this list was the kind of 'par for the course' which anyone could expect who had signed up to be counted as "in Christ". Twenty centuries later, the list may be more subtle, but nonetheless as painful. For the cross of Christ is the cross of Christ. The forms in which we share it may vary over history and geography, but the essence shall remain. Shall divorce, betrayal, cancer, false accusation- separate *us* from His love? They should not, but rather be seen as a very real sharing in His death and sufferings, from which we shall just as surely arise into new and eternal life. There are many connections between Romans the visions of Revelation. The whole court scene presented here in Romans 8, whereby the accuser of Christ's brethren is now no longer in court, he and his case 'thrown out of court', is naturally reminiscent of the scene in Revelation 12. There, the accusers of Christ's brethren are likened to the great Satan, the personified power of sin in its political manifestation, and this is also thrown out of 'heaven', out of the Heavenly court / throne room. The fact that *sin* has been conquered by Christ and 'thrown out' is therefore the guarantee that whatever oppressive sinful powers are now in authority, they in their turn will likewise be cast out. It's only a matter of time now- because sin in its essence has been cast out already. This explains the seamless way in which Paul now moves on from speaking of how the power sin has been nullified to talking of how therefore and thereby, all human opposition to God's people is now ultimately powerless.

8:36 *Even as it is written: For your sake we are killed all the day long, we were deemed sheep for the slaughter*– See on Rom. 8:13. The key word in this verse is "deemed / accounted". Because we are counted as Christ, the lamb slain (and the allusion here is definitely to Isaiah 53), then we should not be phased by our experience of His cross in this life. Indeed we should expect it. We cannot look passively at the cross. It must change how we see ourselves. It must radically affect our self-perception and self understanding. For we are in Him. It was us who hung with Him there, and who hang with Him still in the tribulations of life. For we are to account / impute ourselves as the sheep for the slaughter, i.e. the Lord Jesus, for whose sake we are killed all the day long in the sharing of His sufferings (Rom. 8:36); with Paul, we "die daily", because we are in Christ. And if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). To see ourselves as in Christ, to have such a positive view of ourselves, that the essential 'me' is actually the sinless Son of God, is almost asking too much of men and women living with all the dysfunction and low self-worth that seems part of the human condition.

8:37 *No*- Paul seems again to be interpreting his readers' response. 'Surely it can't be right that if we are in Christ, then we will suffer so much? Aren't all these terrible tribulations the sign that we are rejected by God rather than accepted by Him?'. And Paul answers that "No!"- in fact the way that we lose in this life is a sign that we have won, and more than won- we have become "more than conquerors". Truly "I feel like I win when I lose" can become our credo in spiritual life.

In all these things- Every time they happen to us, they are the proof that we have therefore already won, in the very thing wherein it seems we have 'lost'. The sense here is very much what we meet in the sermon on the mount- that we are to rejoice when we are persecuted, attacked and abused, because in that moment our reward is very great in Heaven.

We are more than conquerors- See on Rom. 8:34 "for us". Again the word *huper* is used; there is the idea of being over and above conquerors. There is something superlative about the great salvation which there is in Christ. We don't just scrape in to God's Kingdom and sit there in humble gratitude for eternity thinking how blessed / lucky we were. Not at all. We are in Christ, and all that is true of Him is now and shall eternally be true of us. We are crowned as conquerors- and "more than [*huper*] conquerors". There's something 'hyper' about the nature and quality of our salvation. It is all so hyper abundantly above all we ask or think. And it begins now, and in this sense we have some sense, at least a gasp from a great distance, of the 'hyper' nature of it all. Paul surely has in mind how the Lord had comforted His people that "I have overcome [s.w. 'conquer'] the world" (Jn. 16:33). We are counted not only as overcomers just as Jesus was; but hyper-conquerors, hyper-overcomers. John alludes to this passage in his Gospel record when he comments in his letters that *we* have overcome the world because of our belief into Jesus (1 Jn. 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4,5). Clearly John like Paul perceived the believer into Christ [involving baptism into Him] as having the same status as Christ; if He has overcome, so have we. There is also a legal connotation to the word translated "conquerors". The same word has been used in Rom. 3:4 to describe how God 'overcomes' when He is put in the dock and judged by human disbeliefs in His declared plan of salvation. Paul is now drawing his treatise to a conclusion. He began with us as sinners in the dock, accused by our own sins. He has argued that we have been declared right because we are in Christ; not simply 'let off', but declared right. We have won the case; the whole thing has been turned around. We the condemned are now the justified, we leave the courtroom as conquerors, as having legally overcome when we were judged; all, of course, because we are in Christ. We are right now more than conquerors through Christ (Rom. 8:37); and yet to he who overcomes [s.w. conquers] the Kingdom shall be given (Rev. 3:21). This doesn't mean we can sit back and do nothing. And so Paul goes on to exhort us not to be overcome [s.w. conquered] of evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom. 13:21). "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who (or what) *can* be against us?". Paul caught the gloriously positive spirit of all this, and reflected it in his fondness for words with the *hyper*- prefix (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 7:4; Phil. 2:9; 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:10; 4:6; 5:13; 2 Thess. 1:3). God is not passively waiting for us to act, indifferently offering us the possible futures of salvation or condemnation according to our deeds. He earnestly desires our salvation, He wills and wishes us into the upward spiral of relationship with Him; He has given us spiritual potential and strength.

Through Him that loved us- The love of Christ is often specifically related to His death for us on the cross. We can only become "in Him" because He was so fully our representative, including in death itself. All this wonderful schema of salvation and justification of sinners, counting them as if they are Christ, could only come true because of His death. This was and is the central point of all things; it is not simply so that Christ as a person is the central means by which all was made possible, but more specifically it was His love unto death which was and is that central point.

8:38 *For I am persuaded*- Just as we also need lengthy persuasion as to the ultimate truth that we are saved in Christ, so Paul too had gone through this process of persuasion. The same word is often used to describe how Paul "persuaded" people to continue trusting in God's grace rather than in their own works (Acts 13:43; 18:4; 19:26; 26:28; 28:23; 2 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 1:10)- indeed, persuading people seems to have been a hallmark of Paul's preaching. Yet Paul persuaded others on the basis of how he himself had come to be persuaded; and this will be the characteristic of any truly effective preacher of the Gospel.

That neither death nor life- In Rom. 8:35 Paul has argued that no suffering nor disaster in our lives can separate us from "the love of Christ". Now he starts to talk in more cosmic terms, leading up to the same conclusion- that we cannot be separated or divorced from God's love for us which is "in Christ". For those "in Christ", nothing can stand in the way or change that status; only we can decide to file for divorce / separation. If we die- we shall be raised again. More tellingly, however, we may fear that "life" can separate us from God's love; Paul may refer to 'the tribulations of life', but he may also have in view the way we can mess up in our lives. But not even that can separate us from God's love for those who are "in Christ". In what sense could *life* separate us from God's love? Surely only in the sense of sins committed in human life. Yet even these cannot separate us from the love of God which is so ready and eager to forgive us. This is the extent of grace; that not even sin, which on one hand separate from God, can actually separate us from the love of God in Christ. We are often plagued by a desire to separate out the things for which we are justly suffering, and things in which we are innocent victims. We struggle over whether our cancer or her depression is our fault, or whether we only got into unhealthy behaviours as a result of others' stressing us... etc. This struggle to understand the balance between personal guilt and being a victim of circumstance or other people makes it hard for some people to free themselves from guilt. Seeking to understand is especially acute when we face death, suffering, tragedy, or experience broken relationships. How much was I to blame? In how much was I merely a victim? My determined conclusion is that it is impossible, at least by any intellectual process, to separate out that suffering for which we are personally guilty, and that suffering which we are merely victims of. The cross of Jesus was not only to remove personal guilt through forgiveness; all our human sufferings and sicknesses were laid upon Him there. Our burdens, both of our own guilt and those which are laid upon us by life or other people, are and were carried by Him who is our total saviour.

Nor Angels, nor principalities... powers- I have argued elsewhere that Paul and the New Testament do not support the Jewish ideas of sinful Angels operating in various hierarchies and dimensions. Indeed, I have argued in *The Real Devil* that Paul consciously deconstructs these ideas. But for now Paul is prepared to allude to them,

as if to say 'Whatever you fear, whatever you believe is out there, however you believe it is in the cosmos- the wildest fears of your worst nightmares about the spirit world are not going to get in the way of God's love for those in Christ'.

Nor things present nor things to come, nor powers- Whatever present crises you face, and whatever you may yet face. Knowing we are secured in Christ enables us not to fear the future. For even death itself, and all that may lead up to it, emotionally or physically, are unable to affect our "in Christ" status. "Things to come" may refer to the expected latter day tribulation.

8:39 Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ, as revealed in the cross (Rom. 8:39). The idea of the love of Christ nearly always refers to the cross. And yet the same word occurs in Heb. 7:26, to remind us that the Son of God is "separate from sinners". Here again is the paradox. We are sinners. And yet we cannot be separated from He who is personally separate from sinners. Again, the conviction of guilt is required so that we can know His saving grace. But it's possible to understand this contradiction as just that- a contradiction. The Lord Jesus is separate from sinners; but nothing shall separate *us* from Him, although we are sinners. This can be seen as yet another of the many irreconcilable paradoxes which express the purity of God's grace. We have elsewhere commented upon the way that God angrily speaks of permanently rejecting His people, and yet says in the same breath almost that He has not and will never reject them, because of His tender love for them.

Nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord- "Height" and "depth" may refer to creations supposed to exist beneath the earth or above the heavens. But no created thing can obstruct God's feelings for us in Christ. Because we are human we tend to view life in a materialistic way; what is visible and concrete assumes huge importance for us. But no created thing can get in the way of God's love for us- perhaps, the implication being, because this God who so loves us is Himself the creator of all things. Therefore no created thing, in any dimension, in this world nor any other world or dimension, can affect His feelings for us.

In exalting about the wonderful power of God in human life through Christ, Paul exalts that "neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come: nor height (Gk. *hypsoma* – the highest point a star reaches) nor depth (Gk. *bathos* – the abyss from which a star rises), nor any other creature, are able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:38,39). "The position of the stars was supposed to affect human destinies. 'Whatever the stars may be supposed to do', Paul says, 'they cannot separate us from God's love'" (5). Likewise by referring to "any other creature", Paul seems to be saying that there is no reality, nor even any supposed reality in heaven and earth, that can separate us from God's loving power. It seems to me, given the facts that Paul doesn't teach the existence of a personal Satan / demons and so often deconstructs the common ideas about them, that Paul is effectively saying here: 'Even if you think these things exist, well they are of utterly no power and consequence given the extraordinary and ultimate nature of God's power'. And so the argument is wrapped up. God's love for us who are "in Christ" is part and parcel of His love for Christ Himself, His dearly beloved Son. We will be saved, because we are in Christ. And totally nothing and nobody, not even our own humanity and failure, can separate us from Him and His love.

Notes
(1) F.F. Bruce, *Paul And Jesus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1977) p. 78.
(2) Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) p. 79.
(3) Vincent Branick, "The Sinful Flesh of the Son of God", *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 47 (1985) p. 250.
(4) Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).
(5) A.M. Hunter, *Romans* (London: S.C.M., 1981) p. 87.

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

9:1 As explained in the introduction to this commentary, Romans is very thematic. The first eight chapters outline a theology of grace, intended to bind together the Jewish and Gentile elements within the membership of the church at Rome. Chapters 9-11 present God's dealings with Israel as the parade example of His grace and way of working. Chapters 12-16 then draw on the preceding chapters in appealing for practical behaviour motivated by the theology there outlined.

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit- Paul is about to make a momentous personal statement in :2 and :3, reflecting a level of love which is hard to believe a man could reach- being prepared to offer his eternity for the sake of Israel. He says that his own conscience is corroborated by the Holy Spirit, that this is indeed how he feels. For in 1 Cor. 4:4 he states that whether or not our conscience is clear in a matter is not of ultimate importance; it is the Lord's judgment of our position which is all important, as human awareness of internal conscience can be faulty. I have noted on 2 Cor. 5:11 and elsewhere that Paul felt that the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers ought to influence the conscience. And here he states under Divine inspiration that what he is now writing is indeed true and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

9:2 *That I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart*- This is the spirit of Jeremiah, who likewise suffered at the hands of a Gospel-resistant Israel, but loved them to tears. The rejection of the Gospel by others should not be met by indifference on our part. Any who have a real sense of God's glory and the tragedy of any man's rejection of the cross will feel likewise. Paul uses the same word for "sorrow" in writing of his pain at Corinth's rejection of the Gospel (2 Cor. 2:1,3), and we note that Paul may well have been writing to the Romans from Corinth. Paul had these feelings "in Christ" (:1) because he was manifesting the Lord's emotions towards Israel.

9:3 *For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh*- One of the (many) agonies of Paul's soul was that he felt that his brethren did not appreciate the depth of love which he had for them. Israel certainly didn't; and he loved them to the same extent as Moses did, willing, at least in theory, to give his *eternal salvation* so that they might be saved (Rom. 9:3). The more (Gk. 'the more-and-more-abundantly') he loved Corinth, the less they realized his love, and the more they turned away from him (2 Cor. 2:4; 12:15); and he so earnestly wished (Gk.) that the believers in Colosse and Laodicea appreciated how much he spiritually cared for them (Col. 2:1).
"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" was the spirit of Moses, in being willing to give his own

physical and eternal life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32). Paul is here rising up to imitate Moses at perhaps his finest hour- willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: “I could pray…”, more clearly alluding to Moses’ prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was “well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto, you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us”. He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give ones’ soul, ones salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

Paul was willing in theory to give up his salvation for them, even though he knew that in actual fact this is not the basis on which God works. He emphasizes that he is not using mere words: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not [note the double emphasis], my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1-3). The Holy Spirit confirmed that what he felt in his conscience for them was in fact valid; this really was the level of devotion Paul reached for a nation who systematically worked for his extermination, and even more painfully, for the infiltration and destruction of his lifetime's work. The Jewish infiltrators had indirectly had their effect on Corinth, who mocked and denigrated the Paul who would have laid down his life for them. And yet time and again he calls them his brethren, he sees them as an innocent Eve in Eden, about to be beguiled by the snake of the Jewish infiltrators; he sees them as a chaste virgin. But remember how they denigrated him, in the cruellest ways. Yet his love for them was surpassing. If indeed Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, his experience with the Corinthians prepared him for this momentous statement to the Romans about Israel.

9:4 *Who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises*- We note that Israel were God's "adopted" son; not His only *begotten* Son. This would have been a sideways swipe at Jewish emphasis upon ethnicity as a basis for being God's children. All the glory, covenants etc. were given initially to Israel; which is why the tragedy of their rejection of the Christ who was the focal point of all these things was the more tragic. Paul is writing here not so much as to glorify Israel as to explain why he felt the deep sense of tragedy for them which he did as expressed in :3.

9:5 *Whose are the fathers and of whom is Christ, as concerning the flesh, who is over all. God be praised forever! Amen*- The praise of Christ as being so exceedingly "over all" was a swipe at the Jewish tendency to consider Messiah as inferior to the fathers such as Abraham and David. The Lord tackled the same mistaken view by reminding the Jews that David referred to Messiah as his "Lord" (Mk. 12:37); the "Son of David" was in fact David's Lord and master. "Of whom is Christ" is a clear statement that the Lord Jesus came 'out of' the Jewish fathers as the promised seed of men like Abraham and David. In no way can the idea of a personal pre-existence of Christ be supported Biblically, the evidence is all against it.

9:6 *But it is not as though the word of God has come to nothing. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel*- This is an allusion in terms of ideas, although not lexical items [words], to the grand encouragement of Is. 55:11 that God's word shall not

return void but will accomplish His purpose, even if in different ways than those initially intended. God's word of salvation in Christ same to 'something' through the redefinition of Israel as those who accepted His grace in Christ. "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel" was a quotation from right wing Judaism in condemnation of their weaker brethren; but Paul is effectively saying that it is they who are condemned in these terms.

9:7 *Neither, because they are Abraham's seed are they all children, but: In Isaac shall your seed be called*- Physical descent from Abraham did not make anyone the true "children" of Abraham; because Ishmael also was the seed of Abraham, but was not his "child" in the sense that he did not walk according to the faith of Abraham in his future Messianic seed. That promise was fulfilled through Isaac. So within the statement "In Isaac shall your seed be called" there is the implication that the "seed" of Abraham is to be understood in two senses- referring to the literal children of Abraham, and secondly, specifically referring to the Messiah. Abraham's true seed was therefore one man- the Lord Jesus. Only those "in Him" were the seed to which the promises had reference.

9:8 *That is: it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as the seed*- See on :7. Fleshly descent from Abraham did not make one a member of the seed of promise. That seed was one person- the Lord Jesus. And only identity with Him makes a person part of the promised seed. This connects with all Paul has written in chapters 1-8; that acceptability with God is on the basis of being in Christ and being thereby counted as Christ, who alone is the promised seed. Galatians 3 makes these points again in very clear language.

9:9 *For this is the word of promise: According to this season will I come and Sarah shall have a son*- The 'coming' of God was in the son of Abraham and Sarah; God 'came' in Christ supremely. In no way did the promised seed literally come down from some pre-existent state in Heaven; He too was conceived on this earth, and through Him God 'came' to His people.

9:10 *And not only so, but Rebecca also having conceived by one, by our father Isaac*- "Conceived by one" is hard to make sense of. Perhaps the idea is that Rebecca was Isaac's only wife. But the next verses speak of how out of two children, the choice of which one was to be the seed was made on the basis of predestination. Both Jacob and Esau had the same one father; but one was chosen and the other wasn't. Abraham had children by various women (Hagar, Keturah and Sarah at least); Isaac had children by only one woman. So there was no question about whether Esau and Jacob were in the right line, as it were. But the point was, a choice was made by predestination and calling.

9:11 *For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calls*- As noted on :10, Paul is defining the 'seed' as being not according to fleshly descent [for both Esau and Jacob were from the same father and mother], but according to calling and predestination independent of the works they did. For the Genesis record frames Jacob as being inferior to Esau in his works. This historical interlude about Israel in Romans 9-11 is in exemplification of the theology outlined in chapters 1-8. There we have read that works do not save a person; it is by God's grace. And the obvious exemplification of grace is in the very existence of concepts like predestination and calling (Rom. 8:30). Struggle with these concepts as we may, the simple point is that salvation is not by works nor intellectual ability or good fortune to correctly understand the text of Scripture. This is what predestination implies. One is

called and the other isn't, even when the works of one [Jacob] are not much to boast of, and the one who is not called [Esau] comes over in the record as a far nicer, more forgiving kind of guy than the one who was called.

9:12 *It was said to her: The elder shall serve the younger*- Esau is presented as the stronger of the two; but he was to serve Jacob. The calling was not of works nor of human strength. We note here that Paul apparently brushes by the blessing of Isaac to the intent that one day, Esau would rise above his brother Jacob and cast off the yoke of servanthood which the earlier statement of the Angel had required (Gen. 27:40). Whilst the record of those words is inspired, we have there an example of where a man spoke as he felt was required, and the content of his words was not inspired because it was at variance with God's own word. We can reflect further that Jacob and Rebecca did not believe the Angelic words of blessing, thinking they must make them come true through their own works- which resulted in the fair mess up of much of Jacob's life. The Angelic word was a word of grace that should have just been accepted; no works could bring it to fulfilment. And this too is the exemplification of what Paul has written at such length in chapters 1-8.

9:13 *Even as it is written: Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*- The point has been fairly made that the Hebrew in Mal. 1:2,3 can mean that God loved Esau less, rather than "hated". But that possibility of meaning is not reflected in the quotation here; and Paul is unafraid to tweak Old Testament quotations in order to give the better sense. Perhaps he goes with the term "hated" in order to set us up to indignantly protest that something isn't write here. And he then proceeds to deal with that in the following verses, which teach that we ought to focus on the wonder of the fact that the unworthy Jacob has been loved, and we can share in that love by identification with the seed; and in any case, it is not for us to question God, but rather simply accept His grace. This is the answer to those who experience endless *angst* about the fate of those who have not heard. No answer is given. We are taught by the whole problem to praise God for the grace He does show to some, and learn our humility before Him in accepting those things which seem so deeply unfair. The context of Mal. 1:2,3 is God appealing to Judah to not refuse God's love towards them, seeing it has not been shown to all. And that challenge and appeal comes through to us in all our struggles concerning the morality of God.

9:14- see on Rom. 13:12.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!- As noted on :13, the apparent hatred of God towards Esau is set up to test our response. To protest against it is to say that God is unrighteous, and this is a possibility we are not to even entertain. His predestination of one but not another, loving one and hating another, is in fact His righteousness. And again, Paul has written in chapters 1-8 of God's ultimate rightness in imputing His righteousness to us- when we do not deserve it. This problem is here placed before us from a different angle- God is 'right' and 'righteous' to love Jacob and hate Esau. Even if all within us cries out against such a position as being immoral and unfair- by our human standards. Likewise, His imputation of righteousness to the unrighteous seems immoral and unfair. But the whole glorious situation is set up to test our obedient acceptance of His grace.

9:15 *For He said to Moses: I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*- This quotation from Ex. 33:19 concerns the manifestation of the Yahweh Name. The fact God makes a sovereign choice to save some and not others is actually the most fundamental part of His very being as revealed to us. This whole concept of calling some and not others to salvation is presented in Romans 8 as the parade example of God's grace, and that

such grace is the basis of salvation and not works. 'What happens to the rest?' is of course the question God foresees shall arise, and He carefully says nothing about it. Exactly because He wants us to focus upon His grace and accept that it is indeed beyond understanding and against all that we have known in any other aspect of human life and thinking.

9:16 *So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy*- God's statement that "I will have mercy" means that it is *His* will which saves men, and not the will of man ["him that wills"] and all the works done as an outflow of human will. His mercy is therefore operative on a level above human will / volition and works ['running']. It is God and not man who does the 'running' for our salvation.

9:17- see on Phil. 2:15.

For the scripture says of Pharaoh- When we read His word, we hear His voice. 1 Kings 13:21 speaks of us hearing "the mouth of God". Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord" (2 Chron. 36:12). His word brings Him that near to us, if we will perceive it for what it is. Thus "Scripture" is put for "God" (Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8) and vice versa (Mt. 19;4,5). When we speak and preach God's word, we are relaying God's voice to men, and should make appropriate effort to deport ourselves as the ministers of His word and voice- not to mention diligently ensuring that our expression and exposition of His word is correct and not fanciful. We are to speak / preach "as it were oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11 Gk.). We are His voice to men in our preaching of His word.

For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My Name might be published abroad in all the earth- The question of those that are not called and who are hardened is presented from the perspective of God's purpose to save those whom He has called. The publishing of God's Name throughout all the earth is the Old Testament language of the Kingdom of God on earth (Dt. 28:10; 1 Kings 8:43; Ps. 66:4; 83:18; 102:15; Zech. 14:9) and is repeated in Rom. 15:9. The earlier quotation from Malachi in :13 goes on to explain that the loving of Jacob and hating of Esau will climax in all the Gentiles seeing God's Name in all the earth (Mal. 1:11). Somehow- and the process is as yet hidden from us- the saving of some and not saving of others shall result in God's Name being published throughout all the earth. This in a limited sense happened when Israel were redeemed from Egypt and Pharaoh was destroyed, but the final reality of it will be in the salvation of God's people at the time of the Kingdom of God on the whole earth.

9:18 *So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens who He wishes*- The emphasis is upon the wishing or willing of God. The will of God is for our salvation- that is the repeated theme of the New Testament. There is another side to that will- in that He does not save all. Some He hardens. But the will of God is for *our* salvation, and the death of His Son to that end was the deepest articulation of that will (Heb. 10:7,9). That is the Biblical emphasis and we are out of step with God's will for us if we chafe against that with the pretensions of *our* will. The Bible revealed God's will as being opposed to human will; and our will is to doubt and walk away from the way His will operates. The question of 'What about the unsaved?' is purposefully built into human experience as an exercise for us in this regard.

In the same way as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so natural Israel have done (11:7). Those Jews who refused grace in Christ are therefore as Egypt and are not the true people of God, and will receive Egypt's condemnation. Pharaoh hardened his own heart, but God also hardened his heart. And it is this latter aspect which is

focused upon here, in exemplification of how the Spirit works on human hearts, as explained in chapter 8.

9:19 *Then you will say to me: Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?*- Seeing we are so often exhorted to do God's will, and we have freewill not to, it is apparent that indeed God's will can be withstood. The same word is used of Elymas and others resisting the Gospel (Acts 13:8; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:15) and Paul will go on to use the word in saying that some do indeed withstand God (Rom. 13:2). God does not "find fault" with those whom His will forces to rebel against Him. But in :20 Paul doesn't make that perhaps obvious rejoinder; rather he says that it is not for us to question God.

It seems that Judaism was arguing that the Jews were chosen and therefore must be acceptable to God. But Paul deconstructs this by making several links with Job, whom he appears to read as initially having the same wrong attitudes as did the Jews:

Romans 9	Job
:19 "Thou (the Jews) wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault (with Pharaoh and the Jews)? For who hath resisted His will? The Jews were saying that it was God's pre-ordained purpose that they should be His people, therefore their behaviour was excusable.	"He is… mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself (NIV "resisted") against Him, and hath prospered?". Job's reasoning is similar to that of the Jews- effectively he too is asking why God is finding fault with him (9:4).
:20 “O man, who art thou that disputest (AVmg.) with God"	This is what Job desired to do: "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments... there the righteous might dispute with Him" (23:4-7 cp. 9:3).
:14 "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" . The context is that the Jews were saying that their Calvinistic view of predestination allowed them to sin yet still remain God's people.	By Job saying "It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God" because he is either predestined to salvation or not, Job provoked the comment from Elihu "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity" (34:10). The link between this and Rom.

9:14 shows that Job had the same mentality as the Judaizers, and was thus also shown the blasphemous conclusion to which his reasoning led.

9:20 *No, O man; who are you to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it: Why did you make me thus?*- See on :19. There are plenty of legitimate answers to the complaint that God is forcing people into sin and therefore He is being unreasonable. I suggest that Paul purposefully throws up an obviously illegitimate objection, to which we as readers are already formulating good answers before we reach :20. But our eager expectations that Paul will trounce such objections is purposefully disappointed by what we are to consider the even greater mega argument- that it is not for us to answer back to God. The allusion, as mentioned on :19, is to Job and his friends answering back to God when they should have fallen silent [well before they did]. That is the abiding impression we have at the end of the book of Job- that Job has fallen silent, laying his hand upon his mouth, but he should have done this far earlier. And Paul asks us to do the same.

All that said, the argument here comes perhaps closer than anything in the Bible to teaching absolute, unconditional predestination. The same piece of clay can apparently be randomly used by God; one part of it can be used to make a vessel which God eternally keeps, and part of the same lump can be used to make a vessel which is cast away for ever. Putting all scripture together, we cannot believe in absolute, unconditional predestination. Yet I for one would answer the question "Why does He still find fault?" by saying something like: 'Because some of the clay is softer and more responsive to the potter's hand than others. If we are soft and responsive to His hand, then we will be the vessel made that He eternally keeps'. But Paul doesn't answer that way. He basically responds: 'How dare you make any such response! You are not to even question God's apparently absolute, unconditional predestination. Who are you to do so? You are to just accept it in awed silence. Don't answer back'. Quite possibly I am being disobedient to that by now saying: There is enough Biblical evidence to conclude that there has to be human freewill response. That must be given due weight and factored in to the final, unknowable equation that equals 'salvation' in its final term. But, within that equation, there is indeed an element of absolute, unconditional predestination. And that element is the "grace" factor. For that is the context in which Paul speaks of salvation.

9:21 *Or has not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?*- The obvious Old Testament allusions are to Is. 29:16; 64:8 and Jer. 18. In all these passages, Judah considered that God had been unreasonable. They were not correct- the answer could so easily have been that they were in the situation they were in because of their sins. But as here in Romans 9, the answer instead is that they are but clay in the hands of the potter. It is God who has the "right" to use clay as He wishes. The whole humanist objection to this is that *we* have 'rights'. It is a humbling thing to learn that as God's children, our only 'right' is to an eternal grave; nor do we have any 'right to life'. All is of grace, of gift. In this age of obsession with 'our rights', it's so hard to accept God's perspective- that His will and right is supreme, and our personal focus should be more upon our own wrongs rather than our rights. "The same lump" repeats the teaching of :10, that from one couple came Jacob and Esau, and one was a vessel to honour and another to

dishonour. And in any case, we are only being made into "vessels"- for the Father's use in His house. Paul surely wrote this with his eye on how he himself was a "chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15 s.w.). Yet he had to exercise freewill to be part of that purpose and Divine intention. The same words are used in 1 Thess. 4:4 where Paul urges his converts to deport themselves appropriately for those who are vessels of honour by acting with "sanctification and honour". He uses the same words in appealing to Timothy to act likewise as a vessel of honour (2 Tim. 2:20,21). Divine choice is one thing, but nobody is being forced to be righteous. We are to respond to the grace of His calling. Paul has earlier taught the Romans that they are to seek for honour, and those who 'work good' shall indeed receive it (Rom. 2:7,10). Here in Romans 9 we are asked to understand that in the perspective of God having actually chosen us for that end- and He didn't choose everyone. The fact we were called to this end and others weren't should be accepted in gratitude, and responded to- rather than complaining about the philosophical issues arising from some others not having been called.

9:22 *And so what if God is willing to show His anger and to make His power known, enduring with longsuffering vessels of anger prepared for destruction*- The fact some will be destroyed at the last day can be seen from a positive viewpoint; it means that God is amazingly tolerant of them right now. Perhaps his tolerance is so long because he even seeks their repentance, as it seems He did with Pharaoh. Again, the existence of this class of unsaved, condemned persons is to highlight His grace towards us. It's rather like asking why there are so many uninhabited planets and life forms on earth which shall not be saved. It is to give backdrop to the wonder of the grace which has invited *us* to salvation in God's Kingdom. The showing of God's anger is balanced by His making of His power known. The same word translated 'make known' is found in :23- God will make known the riches of His glory to us who are saved. The showing of God's anger and long endurance of those He shall destroy is therefore in order to highlight and emphasize His power and grace made known to us.

9:23 *And that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy*- The existence of the vessels for destruction is in order to provide context for the glory of the vessels who receive mercy. "Make known" translates a word which means 'make to understand'. Then we shall understand- at the last day, when the riches of glory are realized upon the saved. Then we shall perceive how the whole thing worked out for *His* glory, and in great richness of that glory. In that day, we will learn by the condemnation of the wicked. The very existence of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” is in order to “make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy”. After the experience of Divine judgment, "ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem"; and yet these are exactly the words used to describe how God will be 'comforted' after the judgments (Ez. 5:13; 14:22). We will come to share God's perspective through our experience of the judgment process. It will teach us to be like Him, to see things from His viewpoint. As a result of it, the struggles we have over "why…?" not all are saved will be resolved.

Which He beforehand prepared for glory- Our place in God's Kingdom was "prepared" from the beginning of the world (Mt. 25:34; Heb. 11:16 s.w.), although it was the Lord's death which prepared the place for us (Jn. 14:2,3 s.w.). But it is up to us to accept it; places in that Kingdom were "prepared" for Israel but they declined the invitation (Mt. 22:4 s.w.). This is the tragedy- eternity is prepared for some who refuse it. The depth of the tragedy of itself urges us to do all we can to spread the Gospel and strengthen those who have responded.

9:24- see on 1 Thess. 4:7.

Even us, whom He also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles?- Again we note the connection with the earlier teaching about calling in Rom. 8:30, where the concept of calling is given as an example of how salvation is by grace. That calling pays no regard to ethnicity; for whoever hears the invitation is in that sense called to the Kingdom. Therefore it is not the case that only Jews were called; for the Gospel was being heard by non-Jews as well.

9:25 *As He said also in Hosea: I will call them My people, who were not My people; and she that was not beloved shall be called beloved*- The 'calling' here in Romans means 'calling to hear the Gospel'. The context of Hos. 2:23 is that Israel, like Hosea's faithless wife Gomer, were not God's people but would again be called "My people". But that 'calling' is through the calling of the Gospel in Christ. In fact Hos. 2:23 is alluding to the fact that Gomer had become pregnant with a child [indeed, children] by another man whilst married to Hosea, and Hosea had named the child Lo-Ammi, 'Not my people'. But as Hosea dreamed of adopting the child as fully his and accepting Gomer again, so God did for Israel. But as things were never really resolved between Hosea and Gomer, neither were they between God and Israel on a national sense. But Paul perceives that the desire to call a 'not My people' as 'My people' would be fulfilled through the calling of individuals of all ethnicities to be God's people. Hosea's plans for Gomer and Lo-Ammi were rooted in pure grace, stemming from deepest love. Likewise God will impute righteousness to those whom He calls, so that the not loved wife becomes the beloved wife, and the illegitimate children are counted as "My people". Here again we see connection to the preceding theological arguments about imputed righteousness in Romans 1-8. Israel shall again be counted as the beloved wife, and the illegitimate children counted as legitimate- for all who respond to the call.

9:26 *And it shall be, that in the place where it was said to them: You are not My people, there shall they be called children of the living God*- The illegitimate child of Gomer, Lo-Ammi ["not my people"] would be adopted by Hosea, through his imputing righteousness to his wayward family. It is tempting to interpret "the place" as Jerusalem. But there is no particular reason for thinking that there is some geographical reference in view. The quotation from Hos. 1:10 uses the Hebrew *maqom*, which often refers to the holy place, the temple. It is in the temple of God, which now refers to the church, that the new children of God are adopted and accepted.

9:27 *And Isaiah cried out concerning Israel*- Paul perceived through the Spirit that Isaiah *cried aloud* with passion the idea that although there were many people theoretically "of Israel" in that they were the seed of Abraham, only a remnant of them would be saved. And Paul implies that this holds true in our dispensation too (Is. 10:22 cp. Rom. 9:27). One can sense how much Paul felt the passion of God's word. It wasn't just black print on white paper to him. Thus he speaks of how "Esaias is very bold, and saith... Esaias also *crieth* concerning Israel..." (Rom. 9:27; 10:20). Paul had meditated deeply upon Isaiah's words, even to the point of considering the tone of voice in which he first spoke them. See on Acts 13:27.

Even if the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is only the remnant that shall be saved- Again we have the idea of two seeds of Abraham. Those who are indeed "as the sand of the sea", fulfilling the promise about the multiplication

of Abraham's seed, are not thereby saved. Salvation is for the remnant; see on :6. Truly not all Israel are of Israel.

There may also be particular reference to the saving of Israel in the last days. The Isaiah quotation is from Is. 10:20-23, which says that in the context of the Assyrian invasion, “the remnant of Israel”, those who survive it, will trust in the Lord alone and “in truth”, i.e. in covenant relationship with Him. It seems that all others of natural Israel will perish in the latter day holocaust upon Israel. (as in Is. 4:2-4). This language of the remnant ‘returning’ unto the Lord is quoted here about the repentance of the Jewish people and their turning to Christ. Israel were intended to repent because of Sennacherib’s invasion (Is. 37:31,32), and then “the consumption” of God’s plan could have happened. But the prophecy has been reinterpreted with reference to Israel in the last days, repenting finally as the result of the latter day Assyrian invasion. Isaiah 10 speaks of how Israel’s affliction by Assyria leads them to repentance; a “remnant shall return… unto the mighty God” (Is. 10:21)- and the “mighty God” has just been defined in Is. 9:6 as a title for the Lord Jesus. This will be a result of God using the Assyrian invader to “make a consumption… in the midst of all the land” of Israel (Is. 10:23). The “yoke” of Assyria “shall be destroyed because of the anointing” (Is. 10:27)- i.e. the coming of Christ, the anointed one, in response to the remnant returning unto Him.

9:28 *For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short*- This seems to mean that God's word of salvation shall be fulfilled by the actual salvation of God's people at the last day. But the intended time period will be shortened- as a display of God's grace. This becomes apparent by comparing Rom. 9:28,29 with Matthew 24:

Matthew 24	Romans 9
v. 22 "For the elect's sake	The seed preserved by the Lord of hosts / Angels (:29)
Those days shall be shortened	v. 28 "He will finish the account (of Israel's sin), and cut it short in righteousness: because a short(ened) work will the Lord make upon all the earth (land)"
...[or else] there should no flesh be saved"	v. 29 "as Sodom"

Romans 9 is quoting from Is. 28:22 , which is about "a consumption, even determined upon the whole land... from the Lord God of hosts (Angels)". Thus the Angels planned to destroy Israel even more terribly than they did in AD70, but the "determined" "days" of "consumption" were "shortened" because the Angels- other ones apart from the destroying Angels?- had preserved a faithful seed or remnant, which is the theme of the section of Romans where the quotation from Is. 28 occurs. And there must be marked similarities in the last days too. “The remnant” of Israel will be saved, those who believe in Jesus, “For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short… as Isaiah hath said before, Except the Lord of sabaoth had left us a seed [i.e. the remnant] we had become as Sodom” (Rom. 9:28,29 RV). This associates the shortening of the last days with the salvation of the Jewish remnant. Paul is surely expanding the Lord’s own words, that the days will be shortened “for the elect’s sake”. And that “elect”, according to Paul’s inspired exposition, are the Jews who repent and accept Jesus in the last days. Quite simply,

the quicker we get the remnant of Israel to repent, the quicker the Lord will be back. The bigger message, in the context, is that the shortening of intended time periods is another example of the operation of grace in bringing about final salvation.

9:29 *And, as Isaiah has said before: Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom and had been made like Gomorrah*- Paul makes the point that for the sake of the tiny group of Jews who did still hold and practice the truth, Israel would not suffer the judgments of Sodom in totality (Rom. 9:29 cp. Is. 1:9). This would indicate that there will also be a latter day Jewish remnant which will stop the faithless Israel of today receiving the judgment of permanent destruction. But in the context of Romans, the point is that the remnant themselves are "left" as such; it is God's grace which preserves them faithful and acceptable. Not human works. God "left" a remnant of faithful believers in apostate Israel. Whilst their faithfulness was obviously a result of their own spiritual effort, God 'leaving' them from apostasy suggests that He was also active in preserving them from it too. The record does not speak of them saving themselves from it. Is. 1::10 goes on to state that in fact, Judah *are* as Sodom and Gomorrah: "Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!". But by grace, the remnant are "left" by Him so that they are *not* treated as Sodom and Gomorrah. This is again a great example of how righteousness is imputed to people by grace, and how the grace / gift of the Spirit works to keep the saved abiding faithful. This is why Rom. 8 speaks so much of the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers; this is why the remnant are "left", maintained in faith, so that although they are as Sodom (Is. 1:10), they are not seen as Sodom (Is. 1:9).

9:30 *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith*- The whole situation with Jews and Gentiles is being presented here as an exemplification of how salvation is by grace. Verse 31 speaks of following after "a law of righteousness", so here we need to read that in too- the Gentiles "followed not after [a law of] righteousness". Gentiles who were ignorant or disinterested in the Law of Moses which was holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:12 s.w.) end up righteous- because that righteousness is imputed to them by faith in Christ whereby they are counted as Him.

9:31 *But Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law*- In contrast to the Gentiles who believed in Christ, Israel did not obtain righteousness before God through the law of Moses. They did not arrive at the righteousness of faith, because the Mosaic law offered no righteousness on the basis of it being imputed by faith. Instead, there had to obedience. And we are too weak to attain total obedience to it.

9:32 *Therefore because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works, they stumbled at the stone of stumbling*- Attaining righteousness by attempted obedience to a set of laws requires no faith. And if the game is simply obedience to rules, then there is no real need for the Lord Jesus and the wonderful offer of being counted as Him, if we believe into Him. And thus He becomes a stone of stumbling.

9:33 *Even as it is written: Look, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*- This uses the same Greek words as found in Rom. 14:13, where we are exhorted not to lay [s.w.] a stumblingstone [s.w.] nor rock of offence [AV "occasion to fall"] in our brother's path. What God does isn't necessarily a pattern for us; we are not, e.g., to use war or murder people in the way He has done at some times. Christ is

the stumblingstone to all those who seek justification by works- their trust in works means that they don't perceive the need for Him, and so the whole idea of salvation by grace through being in Him becomes a stumblingstone for them. What this means for us is that we aren't to demand salvation by works from our brethren [e.g. from demanding dietary obedience from our brethren, which is the context of 14:13].

And he that believes in him shall not be put to shame- The emphasis is upon 'believing'. It is faith which makes us unashamed- in that the "faith" is faith that really, God does impute righteousness to us because we are "in Christ".

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

10:1- see on Jude 20.

Brothers, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for Israel, that they may be saved- "Desire" is a word used only elsewhere about the desire or will of God. Paul was therefore sharing God's desire or passion for Israel. He was praying with his will aligned with that of God, who passionately wishes Israel's salvation, and has millennia of track record in seeking it. As noted on 9:1-3, that desire of Paul's was to the point of being theoretically willing to sacrifice his own salvation for theirs. This will / desire of God and Paul will finally come to reality, in that all Israel shall indeed be saved (11:26); but through a redefinition of who is Israel. For "all Israel" being saved must be integrated into the idea that most of Israel shall not be saved, but "a remnant shall be saved" (9:27). That remnant become "all Israel" in God's eyes.

The language of Israel being saved is used in the Old Testament concerning their Red Sea deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 14:30; Dt. 33:29). Paul thereby again identifies himself with Moses. But their salvation from Egypt was not their personal salvation; and the term is used again of Judah's salvation from Babylon, which again they did not make full use of. This perhaps is why Is. 45:17 says that "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an *everlasting* salvation". By being in the Lord Jesus by baptism, in the name of salvation, they could find a salvation which was eternal- a clear reference to eternal life. Only through the ministry of "the Lord our righteousness", whereby God's righteousness is imputed to us through His Son, can Israel finally be saved (Jer. 23:6). Again, this is all the outworking of the theology of Romans 1-8 in the case of Israel.

10:2 *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*- Bearing witness is legal language, of which Paul has made frequent usage in Romans 1-8. In the court of Divine judgment, it could be said in mitigation, as it were, that Israel had a zeal for God. But it was not according to knowledge, and the only knowledge worth anything is in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. The idea of *kata* knowledge is to be found again in Col. 3:10, where we read that through the activity of the Spirit, we are renewed in knowledge *kata* the mental image of the Lord Jesus. The tension is therefore between attempted legal obedience, and permitting the work of the Spirit. This is the tension which has been explored in chapter 8; accepting imputed righteousness and our inability to be justified by works means accepting the work of the Spirit to transform us in reality to that which we are now by status in Christ. Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, where he had repeatedly argued the same; the Judaist influence in Corinth was not producing spirituality, because they were not making use of the gift of the Spirit in their hearts to transform them (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

10:3 *For being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God*- Their ignorance was not in that they were unaware of the alternative. They were, to translate the Greek

literally, 'agnostic' to it, not committed to it, ignorant in the sense that they ignored it. As noted on :2, there is a tension between accepting the work of the Spirit, and on the other hand seeking justification by acts of legal obedience. 'Seeking to establish' continues the courtroom language of :2. They tried to make a case before God in the basis of their own righteousness in terms of obedience to laws. But they failed to make a case; in the terms of Romans 1-8, they stood before God condemned by their sin, with their defence in ruins. The only alternative was to subject themselves beneath God's grace and accept imputed righteousness. The same word is used of our submission to Christ, who is the righteousness of God (Eph. 5:24). He has been given the power to subdue all things unto Himself [s.w.], but we must ourselves choose to make that submission. It is pride in our own puny obedience to a few laws which stops that totality of submission to Him which is required for us to be counted fully righteous.

10:4 *For Christ is the end of the law regarding righteousness to everyone that believes*- This could be simply saying that for the believer in imputed righteousness, the law is finished as a source of righteousness. We have been given all righteousness in Him, and so the Law is over as a source of righteousness; and this is why Christ ended the Law in His death. But *telos*, "end", suggests that Christ was the end point of the Law, and the believer in imputed righteousness believes this. If the Law were perfectly obeyed, it would lead to a man who died on the cross with a perfect character- the Lord Jesus. In this sense the Law was not simply a series of types pointing forward to Him; if it were fully obeyed, it would lead to who Jesus was in character and action.

The idea that the Lord Jesus ended the Law of Moses on the cross needs some reflection. That statement only pushes the question back one stage further- how exactly did He 'end' the Law there? How did a man dying on a cross actually end the Law? The Lord Jesus, supremely in His death, was "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). But the Greek *telos* ["end"] is elsewhere translated "the goal" (1 Tim. 1:5 NIV). The character and person of the Lord Jesus at the end was the goal of the Mosaic law; those 613 commandments, if perfectly obeyed, were intended to give rise to a personality like that of the Lord Jesus. When He reached the climax of His personal development and spirituality, in the moment of His death, the Law was "fulfilled". He taught that He "came" in order to die; and yet He also "came" in order to "fulfil" the Law (Mt. 5:17).

10:5 *For Moses writes, that the man that does the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby*- The quotation from Lev. 18:5 could mean that actually perfect obedience would lead to life eternal; but more likely it is simply a statement that the man who obeys all the laws would live "in it" [NEV "thereby"], referring to the righteousness of the law. He would have blessing in this life, and live this life in the righteousness of the law- and that was it, without any hope of ultimate salvation.

10:6 *But the righteousness which is of faith says thus: Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down)*- The quotation from Dt. 30:11-14 is somewhat doctored by Paul. The words in their original context don't seem to be saying what Paul interprets them as meaning; as elsewhere, Old Testament words and phrases are picked up and read in a totally different, Christ-centred light in the New Testament. Paul appears to be teaching that the descent of Christ from Heaven is fundamentally in terms of the action of His Spirit in the heart, which is the sanctification which arises from believing in imputed righteousness [as outlined in chapter 8]

10:7 *Or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)*- The Lord's resurrection enabled the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of the believers, which according to Romans 8 is all part of the wonderful process which follows believing completely in imputed righteousness.

10:8 *But what did it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is, the word of faith, which we preach*- The word of the simple Gospel- that if you believe in Christ you shall be saved- was enabled by the Lord's resurrection and shall come to full term in His descent from Heaven at the last day (:6,7).

"The word of faith" can simply mean that the basic content of God's word is an appeal for faith in His Son. But it is thereby also true that the word of the Gospel leads to faith. The Lord foresaw in Jn. 17:20 that there would be those who would believe on Him "through their word" (i.e. the word taught by the disciples). Our word of preaching can bring others to faith. Our preaching leads to faith being created in the hearers. "The word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8) is the word (Gospel) that leads to faith; and a man cannot believe without hearing the Gospel, and he will not hear it unless it is preached by a preacher. Paul summarises by saying that faith comes by hearing [the Gospel] and hearing by [the preaching of] the word of God (Rom. 10:8,14,17). Paul's point is that whoever believes will be saved (Rom. 9:33)- and therefore, we must preach to all, so that they might take advantage of this blessed opportunity. In his repetitious manner, Paul builds up the argument in this letter:

- Even under the law, Israel could believe God's word as preached by Moses and have righteousness imputed to them (10:5-8)
- We preach, in essence, the very same word (10:9,10)
- Isaiah said the same: that belief of his preaching would result in justification (10:11)
- We preach the same. Whoever believes in the Lord's saving Name by baptism will be saved (10:12,13)
- Therefore preach the word, for without your doing this, people can never believe it and therefore be saved (10:14,15)
- Israel had heard the word of the cross preached in the past, so just hearing the preacher will not automatically result in faith (10:16-21). Both preacher and hearer must be aware of this. Therefore there was a need for the preachers to turn to another wider audience, i.e. the Gentiles.

Note that this passage in Romans 10 reasons that men will only hear the Gospel if there is a preacher, and yet it also states that all men have heard the Gospel, in fulfilment of the prophesy of Psalm 19 that the message would go into all the earth. But later in the same epistle, Paul says that he preached because he wanted to take the Gospel to those "who have not heard" (15:21). There must be a connection within his thought with what he wrote in chapter 10, about all men hearing the Gospel through preaching. Surely he understood that the fulfilment of the prophecy that all men will hear the Gospel is purely dependent upon our freewill effort to preach to all men. This understanding inspired Paul to press ahead with his plans to expand Gospel work into Spain; and it should motivate us likewise.

Paul comments that truly Israel have already heard the essence of the Gospel we preach, in that "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). He quotes here from Dt. 30:12: "For this command [to be obedient- or, as Paul interprets it, the word of the Gospel]... is it not far from thee [cp. how God is "not far" from anybody, Acts 17:27]. It is not in heaven above, that thou shouldest say, Who will ascend for us into heaven, and bring it to us, that we may *hear and do it*?" (Dt. 30:12 LXX). As Moses spoke these words

on the last day of his life, he was at the foot of Nebo, which he ascended for his final meeting with God. He is surely alluding to the way in which he had 'ascended to heaven' before in ascending to God on Sinai, fulfilling Israel's wish that he should bring God's word to them rather than God Himself speak with them. He had returned bringing God's word to them, to which they had agreed they would "hear and do". Earlier, in Dt. 5:27, Moses had reminded the people how they had said: "Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will *hear it, and do* it". Now he is telling them that actually the word he had brought to them needn't have been brought to them as in essence it was within their hearts. It is for exactly this reason that Paul could reason elsewhere in Romans that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the Law, although they don't know the letter of the Law. And the same principle is found in 1 Thess. 4:9: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves [i.e. from within yourselves?] are taught of God to love one another". This is rather like how the Gentiles were not 'written unto' and yet they knew from their conscience the essential spirit of the Mosaic Law.

10:9 *Because if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved*- Being saved is as simple as that. It is belief and not legal obedience which is required.

Confessing Christ before men applies to baptism, not just bucking up the courage to give someone a tract at work (Mt. 10:32 = Rom. 10:9,10). Rom. 10;9,10 stresses that belief *and* confession are necessary for salvation. This may be one of the many links between Romans and John's gospel, in that Jn. 12:42 speaks of those who believed but wouldn't confess. Confession, a public showing forth of our belief, is vital if we are to be saved. It's perhaps worth noting that baptisms tend often to be attended largely by believers, and be performed indoors, e.g. in a bath at someone's home, or a church hall. It's quite possible to learn the Gospel, be baptized- and nobody out in this world ever know. It's down to us to ensure this isn't true in our case.

I have wondered, and it's no more than me wondering, whether it could be that Rom. 10:9,13; Acts 22:16 and the other references to calling on the name of the Lord at baptism imply that the candidate for baptism made the statement "Jesus is Lord!" after their confession of faith or just before their immersion, and then they shouted the word "Abba! Father!" as they came out of the water, indicating their adoption as a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

10:10 *For with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation*- With the heart (mind / brain) man believes unto salvation and not by legal obedience. It is faith which leads to [imputed] righteousness; but if we really have believed this wondrous truth, then we will confess it with our mouths. We cannot be passive to it. It's not that witnessing to others is a work to be done for salvation; it is rather the inevitable outcome of having believed within the heart that really, I am counted right before God and in Christ I shall live for ever. The early believers clung to the Lord in whom they had believed "with purpose of *heart*" (Acts 11:23). They that had not heard of the cross of Christ were made to see, understand and therefore believe by Paul's preaching (Rom. 15:21). Our appeals likewise must be to the understanding. See on Acts 11:14; Heb. 11:19.

10:11 *For the scripture says: Whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame*- The "whoever" in Is. 28:16 is taken to mean that ethnicity is not important. It is faith and not obedience to any legal code which leads us to not be shamed at the last day, nor today. For Rom. 5:5 uses the same word to say that the sure hope we have of

salvation, due to righteousness being imputed to us, means that we are not ashamed even now- "Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". Those seeking to be unashamed on the basis of their legal obedience have not therefore known the activity of the Spirit within their hearts.

10:12- see on Rom. 3:30.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for the same one who is Lord of all is rich to all that call upon him- The "whoever" of Is. 28:16 means just that, no distinction is made between ethnic groups. The riches given by the Lord Jesus to those who believe are those of the gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 1:5; 2 Cor. 9:11). The early preachers concluded that there was no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile exactly because they saw the gift of the same Spirit to both Jewish and Gentile believers, and the Spirit gift purified the hearts of them all (Acts 15:9). This was surely why the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit was given to the Gentiles whom Peter was to baptize with Cornelius- to make this same point.

10:13 *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*- Salvation was for "whoever", regardless of ethnicity. And salvation was by calling upon oneself the Lord's Name, having His Name / characteristics counted to them- and not by legalistic obedience. This is another way of saying that righteousness is imputed by faith in the Lord Jesus, and demonstrating this by baptism into His Name. The pouring out of the Spirit gifts described in Joel 2 was primarily fulfilled in Acts 2, whilst looking forward to "the great and the terrible day of the Lord". Thus Joel 2:32 "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" was fulfilled primarily in the first century too; it is quoted here in Rom. 10:13 in this connection.

10:14 *How then shall they call on him in whom they do not have belief? And how shall they believe in him about whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*- Paul now demonstrates that believing these things demands in practice that we preach them. People cannot believe these things if they have not heard them. If we grasp the wonder of imputed righteousness in Christ, we should therefore take Him to people, and to Israel in particular. This is where true theology cannot but have a transforming influence in practice. For one cannot be passive to these great truths.

Here Paul clearly states that (as a general rule) it is impossible to believe in Christ without a preacher. The Ethiopian eunuch was the classic case of this. Bible in hand, his exasperation boiled over: “How can I (understand), *except* some man shall guide me?" (Acts 8:31). It is perfectly possible that Rom. 10:4 alludes to this, implying that this man's case was typical [and notice the connections between Acts 8:37 and Rom. 10:9]. Likewise the Lord Jesus spoke of "them also which shall believe on me through *their* (the preachers') word" (Jn. 17:20)- not through their unguided Bible reading. If all we had been given was a Bible, most of us would simply not be where we are today, spiritually. If I had started reading from Genesis, I don't think I'd have got much beyond Leviticus before giving up on the Bible. Yet there are some who have made it through, from Genesis to Revelation. And their testimony is even more emphatic: "Without doubt I needed someone to guide me, I was just crying out for all the pieces to be put into place", in the words of one such recent convert.

10:15 *And how shall they preach, unless they are sent? Even as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!*- An apostle is a sent one. But the implication is that we are all apostles- grasping the wonder of the salvation possible is of itself the call to preach it. And human need is of itself the call.

The prophecy of the Lord Jesus preaching: “How beautiful are the feet of *him* that preaches the Gospel” (Nah. 1:15) is quoted here with a subtle change of pronoun: “How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach”. We are the Lord Jesus to this world, because we are brethren in Him. Any who are in Him, having His righteousness imputed to the, counted as Him, must act as Him- and He is the light of the world. So must we be. This alone is a powerful imperative as to who we are, how we speak, the men and women we show ourselves to be. Paul is quoting this Old Testament prophecy about Jesus to prove that we are all “sent” to preach the Gospel. The validity of our commission to preach is quite simply that Jesus Himself preached; in this way we are all personally “sent” to preach, simply because He was sent to preach. As the Father sent Him, so He sends us.

10:16 *But they did not all obey the glad tidings. For Isaiah said: Lord, who has believed our report?*- This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ. What is true of the Lord Jesus must be true of us, if we are "in Him" and counted by God as Him. In Judaism, the prophets were seen as a saintly group to whom no ordinary person could pretend. But both the Messiah and Isaiah are here being cited as patterns for all who are "in Christ". The identity between Christian preachers and Isaiah also demonstrates that the essence of the Gospel ["glad tidings"] was preached in the Old Testament. Isaiah's lament here is of Judah refusing the good news of Messiah in his day, and that is just what happened in the first century. Isaiah's lament is that despite the amazing achievement of Messiah and God's offer of grace in Him, Jewry generally had not believed it.

The theme of Romans is the Gospel, and in this context Paul makes the point that because both Jew and Gentile are saved by the Gospel, *therefore* we should preach to both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:9-18). In this context, Paul quotes from Is. 52:7 and Nah. 1:15, both concerning preaching to Israel: "How shall they hear without a preacher? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* (cp. 'he' in the originals- our preaching is a manifestation of the Lord) that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings". The Nahum passage is in the context of preaching to Israel the good news of their ultimate freedom from the Assyrian invasion which was then imminent. We are in a strikingly parallel situation in these last days. Rom. 10:16 then goes on to quote Is. 53:1, which again refers to the preaching of the Gospel to Israel, and applies it to our preaching.

10:17 *So belief comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of God*- "Hearing" is the same Greek word translated "report" in :16. It refers more to our preaching than to their hearing. We can play a part in the faith of others; our preaching is their hearing, and without it, they cannot believe. God has delegated His purpose and the progress of His work to us. The responsibility is huge. Faith comes by hearing God’s word. But we can hear (or in our generation, read) God’s word without faith (2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 4:2). Bible reading, like every other spiritual exercise, can become a mere formality. "The word of God" here as often in the New Testament refers to the message of God in Christ, the Gospel, rather than every verse in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, including the Chronicles genealogies. Our reporting / preaching [NEV "hearing"] is *dia* the word of God. This is not quite the same as saying that we preach the word of God; that would be phrased differently in Greek. Our preaching is on account of the word; it is motivated by the wonder of the word we have ourselves heard.

10:18 *But I say: Did they not hear? Yes, truly, their sound went out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world*- Paul is doubtless alluding to the great commission here. But he says that it is fulfilled by the preachers spoken of in Ps. 19:1-4, which he quotes. This speaks of the "heavens" declaring God's gospel world-wide. In the same way as the sun 'goes forth' all over the world, so will the "heavens" go forth to declare the Gospel. The 'heavens' do not just refer to the twelve in the first century; the New Testament says that all in Christ are the "heavenlies"; we are all part of the "sun of righteousness". The arising of Christ as the sun at His second coming (Mal. 4:2) will be heralded by the church witnessing the Gospel of His coming beforehand. The enthusiast will note a number of other preaching allusions in Ps. 19: "The firmament *sheweth* his handiwork" (v.1) uses a word (in the Septuagint) which occurs in Lk. 9:60 concerning the publishing of the Gospel. "Their *line* is gone out through all the earth" (v.4) is picked up by Paul in describing his preaching (2 Cor. 10:13-16 AVmg.). The idea of 'going out' throughout the earth was clearly at the root of Christ's great commission (Mk. 16:15). Yet, as we have said, the “heavens" to which this refers in Ps. 19 are interpreted by the New Testament as referring to *all* believers in Christ. We have to ask whether David really had this interpretation in mind when he wrote Psalm 19. Probably not, but New Testament quotation of the Old is clearly at liberty in taking words out of context and applying them to Christian themes. We are not permitted to wrest Scripture from its context as we are not inspired; but the Spirit within both Paul and David was the same and can rework the words as needed. And yet on a human level, David was one of Paul's heroes; to the point that David's words are quoted by him with the preface: "*I* say...". But it was the same Spirit working through both men. See on :20.

Israel 'heard' the word, and yet they did not "hearken" to it (Rom. 10:16,18)- we can hear but not hear. Yet if we *really* believed that Scripture is inspired, we wouldn't be like this. It is awesome to reflect how those Hebrew letters, those Greek ciphers written on parchment 1950 years ago, were actually the very words of God Almighty. But this is the real import of our understanding of inspiration. Israel literally 'heard' the words of Ezekiel, knowing that a prophet had been among them- but they weren't obedient. We too can pay such lip service to the doctrine of inspiration- and yet not be truly obedient to the word we know to be inspired.

10:19- see on Dt. 7:4.

But I say: Did Israel not know? First Moses said: I will provoke you to jealousy with those who are no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you- Paul sees the Jewish anger at Gentile conversion to Christ as a reflection of their jealousy. If Gentiles became followers of some idol cult, the Jews would have been indifferent. But their jealousy was provoked by Israel accepting Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son and Saviour. This jealousy was and is surely a reflection of a bad conscience, just as subconsciously Joseph's brothers knew that Joseph was not dead but alive, and standing before them. It was Israel's 'knowledge' of the Gospel they had heard which is related by Paul to their anger and jealousy. And we see the same today in many who exhibit anger and jealousy over the faith of others. This is a function of their 'knowledge' which they are in denial of.

10:20 *And Isaiah is very bold, and said: I was found by those that did not seek Me; I showed myself to those who were not asking for Me*- Paul, having the same Divine Spirit as Isaiah, sensed that Isaiah spoke those inspired words in a "very bold" manner, daring manner (s.w. 5:7). See on :18. The fact Gentiles found God in Christ

when they were not seeking Him is an exemplification of the ideas of predestination and calling which have been introduced in chapter 8 as the supreme example of God's grace. The element of calling, of finding God when we were not looking for Him, is an example of that higher hand in our lives which is of grace alone. "Seek and you shall find" is here as it were subverted. It's not that God is hiding behind a set of cards or has set up the Bible as a riddle between Him and men, which few figure out. He shows Himself to those who aren't even seeking. This is grace indeed.

10:21 *But to Israel He said: All the day long did I spread out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people*- The implication of "all the day long" is that Israel's day of opportunity was over. The spreading out of hands towards someone is a picture of a father teaching a child to walk, urging them to take their first faltering steps towards his opening arms. And this was just the figure used of God to Israel in Hos. 11:3.

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

11:1 *I say then, has God cast off His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*- As we will see on :2, God has cast off Israel but has not cast off His people in that a minority of them, like Paul, have accepted the Lord Jesus. Thereby His people, His Israel, have been redefined. The casting away of natural Israel led to the reconciling of the Gentile world (:15). So clearly they were cast away. "You are not My people" (Hos. 1:9,10) is clear enough; they can only again become God's people if they are reconciled in the last days (Hos. 1:10). God broke His covenant relationship with His former people just as a stick is broken in two (Zech. 11:10,11). God and Israel are, in another analogy, in a state of divorce, and He has remarried. Paul sees his own conversion as the evidence that God still has a people, and he urges other Jews to emulate his example (:14). The same word for 'cast off' is used of how Israel cast off Moses (Acts 7:27,39) just as they did Messiah; and Paul uses the word in saying how the Jews had 'cast off' God's word in Christ (Acts 13:46). So the situation arose because Israel themselves had cast off God.

It's possible to read this another way, whereby Israel are not 'cast off' because the faithfulness of a minority of them is counted to the rest. Therefore in some sense, God has cast off His people (2 Kings 21:14 RV; Zech. 10:6); and yet, because a minority of them will always accept Christ, it is not true that God has cast off His people in a total sense, in that 'Israel' has been redefined; now Jews as well as Gentiles must be baptized into Christ if they wish to be the seed of Abraham. It was only because of this faithful remnant even in Old Testament times that Israel had not become like Sodom (Rom. 9:29)- even though Old Testament passages such as Ezekiel 16 clearly liken Jerusalem to Sodom. Yet they are not as Sodom ultimately, for the sake of the remnant who will believe. Perfectly in this context, Paul draws out the lesson from Elijah's mistake (Rom. 11:2); Elijah had thought that God had totally cast Israel off, but he didn't appreciate that there was a remnant of faithful within Israel. And the existence of that remnant may likewise have been concealed from the Christian church, Paul is perhaps implying. Only *part* of Israel are blind to Messiah; a majority, but not all of them (Rom. 11:5,7,25). I don't think that Paul is merely speaking of the situation in the first century, where clearly some Jews did believe. I say this because Jer. 31:37 states that Israel will never be "cast off"; yet, according to Romans 11, Israel are only not cast off because some of them do believe in Christ. The fact Israel are not now totally "cast off" therefore indicates that there always will be a remnant

of faithful Jews- faithful to God's Son and trusting in grace rather than law (Rom. 11:6). Therefore we should be hopeful that at least a remnant will respond to our preaching to them. The Jews who do not believe were "cast off" at the very time the world was reconciled to God, i.e. when they crucified Jesus (Rom. 11:15 cp. 5:10,11). It was through their "trespass" in crucifying Him that salvation came (Rom. 11:11 RVmg.). And the resurrection and second coming which actualizes that salvation will only come once they repent (Rom. 11:15). So, Israel as a whole are not "cast off" because of the remnant of Jews who will always believe in the grace of Christ; but those individuals who crucified the Lord and uphold that position have cast themselves off from God. The practical upshot of all this is that we should preach to Israel, with faith that some will repent!

11:2- see on Num. 26:9.

God did not cast off His people, whom He foreknew- As noted on :1, God did cast off His people; the axe was laid at the root of the tree and it was cut down, or in another image, it was dried up from the roots even from the time of the Lord's ministry. But God's purpose with Israel continued in that Israel and 'God's people' were redefined. So I suggest we need to read the statement here as meaning 'His people-whom-He-foreknew'. The foreknown ones were not cast off; the rest were. And earlier in Romans, Paul has laboured the point that it is the believers in Christ who are the foreknown (Rom. 8:29 s.w.). For the Lord Jesus Christ was the ultimately 'foreknown' One (1 Pet. 1:20 s.w.), and those in Him are likewise foreknown. Paul goes on to equate the foreknown ones with the remnant at Elijah's time. The "His people" doesn't therefore refer to Israel generically, but the faithful remnant. That remnant of course have not been cast off; but as demonstrated in chapters 9 and 10, mere physical descent from Abraham doesn't make anyone 'God's people'; for Ishmael and many others were descended from Abraham too.

Or do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah? How he pleads with God against Israel- "I, even I *only* am left" was Elijah's cry to God as he realized the depth of Israel's apostasy (1 Kings 19:10). But this was interpreted by God as a prayer for God to condemn Israel (Rom. 11:2,3). God read what was in Elijah's heart, and counted this as his prayer. Elijah prayed to God against Israel when he told Him that he alone was left faithful- i.e. he was asking God to destroy the nation now. Our essential feelings are read by the Father as prayers.

11:3 *Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have destroyed Your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life- There* is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn't. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was "left alone" faithful in Israel- even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew in 1 Kings is hard to translate. It could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah's brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn't want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11).

11:4 *But what was the answer of God to him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knee to Baal*- "Left for myself" is the key phrase. These had been preserved by grace. God had worked in their lives to keep them faithful. And yet they were not openly associated with Elijah; their faith was weak, we can conclude; they included the likes of Obadiah who although counted faithful, still presumably went along with the appearance of Baal worship. These 7000 were therefore counted righteous, preserved by grace- and that is the exact context of Romans.

It may be that Paul's equation of the Jewish believers of the first century with the seven thousand who refused to worship Baal has a literal application (Rom.11:4) in that there were about 7,000 Jewish believers. By the time of Acts 4:4 "the number of the men (that believed) had come to be (Greek- not as AV) about five thousand". The only verse that seems to contradict this impression is Acts 21:20: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe". However, the Greek word translated "many" is nowhere else translated like this. The sense really is 'You know what thousands believe'- i.e. 'you know the number of Jewish believers, it's in the thousands'. See on Acts 2:46.

Reflect on how God's mercy is far greater than the mercy of man- even if we are talking about very loving and spiritual people. Elijah told God that only he was faithful, and the rest of the ecclesia of Israel had turned away. God said that in *His* eyes, there were another 7,000 faithful. Paul uses this as an example of how all of us are like that 7,000- those saved by God's grace (Rom. 11:4,5). So Elijah was a spiritual man; but by His grace, God thought much higher of Elijah's brethren than Elijah did.

11:5- see on Rom. 11:1.

Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the calling of grace- As noted on :4, the remnant in Elijah's time were counted as righteous. But this was by grace. Chapter 8 has powerfully made the point that the whole concept of calling requires grace; the fact some are called and others aren't is one of the most obvious examples of grace. The "remnant" were now God's people.

11:6 – see on Jn. 4:36.

But if it is by grace, it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace- The concept of grace has no meaning if works are required. The AV and other MSS add to the effect that "work is no more work". We must add in an ellipsis: "[Justification by] work". We cannot be justified by work, the concept loses meaning, if calling is by grace.

11:7 *What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The chosen obtained it, but the rest were hardened*- 10:20 has said that the Gentiles were not seeking salvation but were given it; Israel was seeking but didn't obtain, because their searching was not in faith. The chosen / elected by grace obtained it when not looking for it; this is grace itself. "The rest", i.e. Israel, were hardened just as Pharaoh was hardened. They were treated as the Gentile world because that is where they were in their hearts. And yet even Pharaoh had a chance of salvation; and his hardening was a confirmation of his hardening of his own heart.

11:8 *According as it is written: God gave them a spirit of stupour, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day*- This explains in more detail what it means to have a hardened heart (:7). There is a psychological operation performed on the spirit or the mind- by the Spirit. This is in contrast to how God's Spirit works to call by grace; for *charis*, "grace", essentially means a gift, and often refers to the gift of God's Spirit. The faithful were 'left' by grace. This is why chapter 8 goes on from talking about election and grace to speak of the Spirit gift in the heart.

The repentance of Israel will be associated with an opening of their eyes to God's word. "The Lord hath poured out upon (Israel) the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes (quoted in Rom. 11:8 concerning Israel's blindness to Christ)... the vision of all (God's word) is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed... (but) in that day (of the Kingdom) shall the deaf hear the words of the book" (Is.

29:10,11,17,18). This will be when the book is *un*sealed at "the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry.

11:9- see on Acts 1:20.

And David said: Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumblingblock and a recompense unto them- Whilst "their table" can refer to a materialistic enjoyment of the things of this life, we will later suggest that the Jew in view who have stumbled are those who had initially accepted Christ in the first century, and were now stumbling from the way. This is the theme of Hebrews, the letters of Peter and other New Testament material. Their table therefore would more likely refer to their attitude to a closed table, at which they forbad Gentile believers or any others whom they feared would lead them to guilt by association. It was [and is] this exclusive, superior attitude which causes legalists to stumble in a spiritual sense. it is their "recompense", their reward in this life only. But their exclusivity becomes a snare and trap to them spiritually. This is the concern of Paul so often; that refusing to accept other believers will cause spiritual stumbling to the supposedly elite.

11:10 *Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bend their back forever*- This darkening of Jewish hearts / eyes has been spoken of in 1:21 (s.w.), and I have argued on chapter 1 that 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' refer specifically to the Jewish and Gentile Christian converts within the church at Rome- rather than to Jews and Gentiles in some generic, global sense. As noted on :10, what is in view here is the stumbling of Jewish Christian believers out of the way, leading to their being cut off from the Christ-olive tree. '"Bend the back" uses the same word as just used in 11:4 for those who bowed the knee to Baal. They would be confirmed in their idolatry. And perhaps the reference is to how the Christian Jews who fell away from faith would eternally bow down at the last judgment (Rev. 3:9).

11:11- see on Rom. 11:1.

I say then, did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid! But by their fall, salvation came to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy- God did not just make them fall for the sake of it. Paul's vision was of the Jews being provoked by seeing the Gentiles rejoicing in the grace of Abrahamic salvation; and responding by also accepting it. Whether however this was God's intention or simply Paul's fantasy is not clear; he will write in :14 that he aims at provoking his Jewish brethren to emulate him in turning to salvation by grace in Christ. Whether he really achieved that aim is questionable; and in any case he was sent to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. I have noted throughout commentary on Acts that Paul became obsessed with preaching to the Jews and this at times led him to exaggerate positions in relation to his hopes for them. The language of stumbling and falling encourages us to assume that "the Jews" in view are not Israelites generally, but Jews who had initially accepted Christ but had now stumbled from Him and fallen; for stumbling is relevant to believers rather than those who have never professed a faith in Christ. The fall of Israel enabled the salvation of the Gentiles because there appear to be a specific number of saved persons; and if the Jews didn't want their places, then [as in the parable of the feast], the places had to be filled by others. This will now be stated explicitly in :12.

11:12 *Now if their fall is the riches of the world*- The whole failure of Israel became "riches for the world", the "riches" which by predestination are poured out upon the vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23). Nothing is ultimately wasted or lost. Nothing can be done against the Truth (2 Cor. 13:8). Meditate on your own life and identify

the countless failures through which, especially as you look back over time, the "invisible" hand of God is discernible. The 'enriching' was not just in that Gentiles could have hope of eternity in the future, at the Lord's return. The same word is used in Eph. 3:16 of the current enrichment of believers by "his Spirit in the inner man". This enrichment by the gift of the Spirit is so much a part of believing; indeed Israel refused so much spiritually.

And their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?- "Loss" is literally 'their diminishing' (as AV); the idea is to their diminished numbers compared to the intention that the seed be as the sand of the seashore for multitude. But their resignation as it were opened up their places for the Gentiles, which is the idea of :25 speaking of how the full number of the Gentiles must come in. The places at the marriage supper must be filled up; the diminished number of Jews taking the places meant that the Gentiles had to be compelled to come in, even though [according to the parable] such an invitation was not at all what they were seeking for (see on :7). If Jewish rejection of the Gospel was associated with such rich blessing being shared- how much more shall their final acceptance of the Gospel, thus making up the "fulness" or full number of redeemed, be associated with blessing to the world in the form of God's Kingdom on earth.

11:13 *But I speak to you who are Gentiles- inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry*- The believers in Rome were split between Jews and Gentiles. My reconstruction is that some of the Jewish Christians were returning to Judaism and the synagogue system, as indeed was happening throughout the empire and not least in the Jerusalem church. By speaking of the immense spiritual wealth coming to the Gentile believers, Paul says he was seeking to provoke the Jews to accepting grace. But Paul's letter to the Romans was not going to provoke the Jews generally; but it could provoke the Jewish Christians in Rome who would hear or read it. I will later suggest that it is these lapsed Jewish Christians who are the branches which had been broken off the olive tree. Paul was sent to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews, but I have suggested throughout commentary on Acts that Paul never completely accepted this as he might have done. He decided to interpret the ministry to the Gentiles as a way of provoking Jewish conversion. Acts records how consistently he arrived in a town and sought to provoke the Jews immediately- and suffered hugely because of it. For it was Jewish opposition which led to his various tribulations, which he could have been spared if he had been content to let Peter witness to the Jews.

11:14 *If by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them*- As noted above, Paul did indeed provoke the Jews to jealousy but there is no record of this policy actually being successful in eliciting Jewish conversion.

In Paul’s case, being all things to all men meant that at times He sacrificed highest principle in order to get through to men; He didn’t just baldly state doctrinal truth and leave his hearers with the problem of whether to accept it. He really sought to persuade men. He magnified his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, he emphasized the possibility of Gentile salvation, “If by any means I may provoke to emulation [‘incite to rivalry’] them which are my flesh [the Jews], and might save some of them” (Rom. 11:13,14). This hardly seems a very appropriate method, under the spotlight of highest principle. But it was a method Paul used. Likewise he badgers the Corinthians into giving money for the poor saints in Jerusalem on the basis that he has boasted to others of how much they would give (2 Cor. 9:2), and these boasts had provoked others to be generous; so now, they had better live up to their promise and

give the cash. If somebody promised to give money to charity and then didn't do so, we wouldn't pressurize them to give. And we wouldn't really encourage one ecclesia to give money on the basis of telling them that another ecclesia had promised to be very generous, so they ought to be too. Yet these apparently human methods were used by Paul. He spoke "in human terms" to the Romans, "because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); he so wanted to make his point understood. And when he told husbands to love their wives, he uses another rather human reason: that because your wife is "one flesh" with you, by loving her you are loving yourself. 'And', he reasons, 'you wouldn't hate yourself, would you, so – love your wife!'. The cynic could reasonably say that this is pure selfishness (Eph. 5:29); and Paul seems to recognize that the higher level of understanding is that a husband should love his wife purely because he is manifesting the love of Christ to an often indifferent and unappreciative ecclesia (5:32,33). And yet Paul plainly uses the lower level argument too.

11:15- see on Rom. 11:1.

For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?- Israel were indeed cast away- see on :1 and :2. The opportunity for the reconciling of the Gentile world arose, as Paul sees it, from Israel's rejection of the Gospel. But he foresaw that finally, they would accept the Gospel in the last days, and this would be associated with the resurrection of the dead. Paul as all true Christians acted as if the last day was imminent, and therefore sought earnestly for Israel's repentance- just as we should. He saw this as the great precursor to the resurrection of the last day. He argues the same in :26- the Messianic deliverer comes to Zion to bring Jacob back to God. The parable of fruit on the fig tree taught the same- that generation would see all thing fulfilled. We likewise ought to seek Jewish repentance in order to hasten the day of the Lord's return.

11:16 *And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches*- The "firstfruit" is the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:20,23), and the lump always elsewhere refers to the mass of believers (Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 5:6,7; Gal. 5:9). The holiness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to all in Him. This leads us to likewise connect "the root" with the Lord Jesus and the "branches" with all in Him. Rom. 15:12 (along with Rev. 5:5; 22:16) will define "the root" as the Lord Jesus. The parable of the vine in John 15 is so similar- the Lord Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and those who do not bear fruit are cut off from Him. The similarity with this allusion to the olive tree is exact. Perhaps the olive is chosen because Paul's theme is the ministry of the Spirit, and the oil of the olive tree is more appropriate for that symbolism. The branches are made holy by their association with the root- this connects with the entire theme of imputed righteousness which Romans has so far developed. Yet we are to read that branches from this olive tree were cut off for unfruitfulness. Those branches had at one time been connected to Christ. I therefore suggest that Paul writing from prison in Caesarea to Rome, at a point well in to Christian history, is talking about Jews who had been baptized into Christ but had now left Him [we note that Romans was written from prison, Rom. 16:7, although before Paul visited Rome. So the 2 years imprisonment in Caesarea would seem to be when Paul wrote this letter]. The Jewish Christians left the Lord Jesus in order to return to Judaism, but the point is that in fact by doing so, they had come out from the true olive tree, the true Israel of God.

Paul makes an association between Job and Israel in Romans 11:16,17,30:

Romans 11	Job
:35 "Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again?". This is countering the Jewish reasoning that they were self-righteous and were giving their righteousness as a gift to God, for which they were blessed.	Elihu similarly rebukes the self-righteous Job: "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth He of thine hand?" (35:7). Without this key from Job it would be hard to understand what 'gift' Rom. 11:35 was speaking about.
:16,17 use the figure of roots and branches to describe the Broken branches refer to the apostate Jews.	Bildad speaks of the wicked (i.e. Job- 18:4,7 cp.14:18 clearly Jews. refer to him) "his roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off" (18:16)

11:17 *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and did become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree*- The breaking off of the branches is because they bear no fruit, according to the parable of the vine in Jn. 15. The wild olive likewise is characterized by bearing no fruit. The Gentiles were therefore grafted in by grace- they had the same deficit of fruit as did the Jews. They were grafted in not because they were more fruitful. Fruit refers to the fruit of the Spirit; this is of the essence. The grafted branches must partake of the fatness, the oily-ness [Gk.], of the root. They must partake of the spirit of Christ and thereby bear fruit- otherwise they too would be cut off. The figure of the olive rather than the fig is perhaps used in order to highlight this aspect of the oil / Spirit. The same word for "partaker" is used of our partaking of grace [the "gift" of the Spirit of Christ] and the Lord Jesus (Phil. 1:7). The word *sug-koinos* suggests co-fellowship; and fellowship is with a person, the root, the Lord Jesus, "the root" of David (Rev. 5:5; 22:16; Is. 11:10), the root out a dry land (Is. 53:2). Even within Romans, the Lord is called "the root of [from] Jesse" (Rom. 15:12). The broken off branches had therefore once been in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus and partakers of His Spirit / fatness. The figure requires that the broken off branches were one time Jewish Christian believers, and not Israel in a generic sense. The vine parable of Jn. 15 likewise requires the branches to refer to those in Christ who were later broken off from the Christ-vine. They were broken off because they did not abide in Christ; and John later comments that we know we abide in Him because of the Spirit we have been given.

The observation has often been made that there is apparently a horticultural error here- because a cultivated shoot is grafted into a wild olive tree stem. And not the other way around, as here, where a wild shoot is grafted into the stem of a cultivated tree. But the error was so obvious as to have been obvious and intentional. This is

grace, and the 'error' is the same kind of thing seen in the Lord's parables, where, e.g., the mustard seed becomes a huge tree. God works "Contrary to nature" (:24). The cultivated olive tree doesn't turn wild, and the wild olive shoot is transformed [at least, that was the idea] by the power of the Spirit. But that shoot had to be cut off from the wild olive tree, which I suggest may refer to Judaism. And the allusion is to the olive trees in Zechariah's vision (Zech. 4:11-13), which provide the oil of the Spirit. I suggest this is why Paul speaks of the olive tree rather than the vine, as we might rather imagine he would givenn the Lord's vine parable in Jn. 15. The cultivated branches [Israel] were broken off because they refused the Spirit of God. It has also been observed that "broken off" is inappropriate language also, seeing that fruitless branches are removed with great care and sensitivity. The simple idea perhaps is that both in grace and judgment, God's way of working with His people is so different to all human wisdom and device. The "goodness and severity of God" is the context here (Rom. 11:22 "Towards those that fell, severity; but toward you, God's goodness"). That severity would explain the otherwise out of place language of 'breaking off' the branches. And His goodness in grafting the bad shoots into the Spirit filled stem. But unless the new shoots accepted the Spirit, they too would be broken off. Mere association and physical connection to the tree was not going to save, because the Spirit is critical. This is the exemplification in Israel of the earlier principle that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His". The "fatness" of the cultivated tree clearly refers to the Spirit. It comes from the root, which is where nutritents are brought into the tree; and the root is the Lord Jesus. The mention of "the root" singular rather than plural "roots" appears likewise to be a technical mistake; for olive trees have a root system rather than one specific root. But the singular is used because clearly the reference is to the Lord Jesus. So specifically, the fatness of the root refers to the "spirit of Christ". It is receiving this which is so critical; and the fatness of this tree is so strong that it can 'go against nature' in empowering the wild shoots and transforming them. That is the point- the wild shoots are transformed into cultivated branches. And yet cultivated branches can still be broken off unless they abide in the tree and receiving the Spirit / "fatness".

11:18 *Do not boast over the broken branches, for you are but branches too. For if you boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root supports you*- "Supports" is literally 'to carry' and is later used in Romans of the Lord Jesus bearing our sins on the cross (Rom. 15:1,2). Awareness that He carries our sins will remove all boasting against those who have fallen away or respond less to Him. The idea is that 'you don't support the root—the root supports you' [as GNB]. Awareness of how much we owe to the root, the Lord Jesus, means that we will not be focused upon proving superiority over other branches. If we have His spirit, then we will not be caught up with boasting against or conflicting with other branches. Hence Paul warns the Corinthians that the presence of strife and boasting between brethren is evidence that they do not have the Spirit.

11:19 *You will say then: Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in*- Often the Bible addresses the reader in the second person, as if he is actually present in the mind of the writer (e.g. Rom. 11:19; 14:15; 1 Cor. 7:16; 15:35). Such personalizing of Scripture is essentially how to study the Bible. Paul agrees that in a sense, yes, the Jewish branches were broken off so that the Gentiles could be grafted in. But :24 says that the ingrafted branches had been cut off from their own wild olive tree. They were therefore 'dead' branches. This is an apparent horticultural blunder. A dead, rejected branch can't get life by being tied on to a living tree. But in the miracle of redemption by the grace of the Spirit, this is how it will be. The oil / fatness / Spirit

of the olive tree is such that even a dead branch can be revived by it. It is being almost spouted out towards the dead, and can enliven them. Verse 24 recognizes the intentional blunder by saying that Gentiles have been grafted "contrary to nature". Just as the dead, broken branches which are usually burned can [according to this unusual farmer] be grafted in again. Dead and worthy of destruction by burning, they can be made alive again.

It may be that by the time Paul was writing Romans, he has realized that the thousands of Jews who had been baptized at Pentecost had now for the most part left the 'tree' of Christ. They had returned to Jerusalem-dominated Judaism as lamented in the NT epistles, and had withered because they ceased to receive the Spirit from the Lord Jesus, the root. And so they had been broken off. But they are pictured here as not yet burnt and destroyed, but with the possibility of being grafted back in to the tree. Whilst there was life, there was hope. And yet the Gentiles were increasingly being grafted into the tree as Paul was writing to the Romans. Paul appears to argue in :11,14 that although the Jewish Christian branches had largely been broken off, he was seeking to provoke them to jealousy through his preaching to the Gentiles- so that they might return to the tree.

11:20 *Well. Because of their unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by your faith. Be not highminded, but fear*- The "unbelief" in view is not in that these Christian Jews had never believed. The "unbelief" appears to be that of Heb. 3:12, where the same word is used of how the Hebrew Christians were prone to a heart of unbelief by departing from their faith in Christ and returning to the Law.

11:21 *For if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare you*- The key issue is whether there was the bearing of fruit. The connection with earlier reasoning in Romans is perhaps in the same word being used of how God did not spare His own Son (8:32). This means that He will not spare in judgment those who refuse to accept Him. The language of 'not sparing' is that of judgment; Paul reasons as if judgment had already come, in essence, for those who rejected His Son.

11:22- see on Mt. 3:7.

Behold then the goodness and severity of God: Towards those that fell, severity; but toward you, God's goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also shall be cut off- "Goodness" is the word used in 2:4 for how the Jewish Christians had despised God's goodness and refused to repent. The severe language of judgment used in chapters 1 and 2 appears to refer specifically to judgment upon those Jews in the Roman church who had turned away from Christ. The letter has opened with the description of their judgment, the cutting off of the Jewish branches, and warns the Gentile converts that they must not behave likewise but rather continue in His goodness. The Greek for "severity" means literally sharpness or an abrupt cut. It connects with the idea of the branches being cut off. But it is "those that fell" who are cut off; and so the 'cutting off' is again only a confirmation of their own falling off from the tree.

11:23 *And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, shall be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again*- If they could be grafted in "again" then they had at one time enjoyed the status of the wild olive branches who were grafted in by baptism into Christ. It follows that the cut off branches had likewise at one stage been in Christ. Jew and Gentile are being used here as they are [for the most part] in the early chapters of Romans- referring not to Jew and Gentile as generic, global terms; but rather specifically to Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome. God's ability ["is able", *dunamos,* His power] to graft them in again reveals that nobody is forced to

condemnation by God' will. Those who are called can always reconnect with the tree. We notice though that it is not simply a case of a cut off branch drifting back into the olive tree. That might be true on the level of social club interaction; but the re-joining of the olive tree is a specific operation by God, connecting a person back in to the flow of the spirit of Christ, the oil of the olive.

11:24- see on 2 Cor. 4:4.

For if you were cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more appropriately shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?- The "contrary to nature" is a reference to how dead branches are not grafted onto living trees and thereby somehow brought to life. The whole analogy here is to demonstrate the power of the spirit of Christ, the oil of the olive, and of God's grace, in bringing spiritual life to the dead. We note that the Gentiles were cut off from the wild olive and were warned that they could also be cut off from the good olive, if they followed Israel's example. This is true of so many- they cut off from the world, and then if they fall away from Christ, they are cut off from the community in Him. And they are of all men most miserable. "Contrary to nature" explains the whole apparent contradiction of the grafting. Here implicit is the message that through the Spirit, we can overcome human nature. Again, the connection is to a point earlier in Romans, in this case to Rom. 2:14. There we find that the Gentile Christians who have responded to the Spirit are obedient "by nature" to the spirit of the Law, which is the spirit of Christ. That is contrary to their natural inclination. So in this sense of the usage of the word 'nature', they have been given a new 'nature'. And that is through the work of the Spirit, which transforms man far beyond what he can do himself. Although we continue to commit sins, our nature is towards the things of the Spirit. In what we like to watch or listen to, we are 'naturally' inclined to the spiritual rather than the carnal.

The "times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24) appears to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25.

The Gospel is fulfilled by preaching it. And the Gospel is essentially the promises to Abraham, about all nations being blessed. This promise is fulfilled in our preaching of it- which is why the Acts references to the disciples being " multiplied" consciously refers to the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed. “The fullness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25) also refers to this idea of the final number of converted Gentiles being a fullness or fulfilment- of the promises to Abraham. But that fulfilment, as with that of many prophecies, is dependent upon and according to our preaching of the Gospel. See on Lk. 14:23.

11:25 *Brothers, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part has befallen Israel*- The partial hardening doesn't mean that their hearts were a bit soft and partly hard; for :8-10 is clear that they were indeed hardened and blinded. The "in part" refers to Israel as a whole; part of God's "Israel", the full number of the saved, had been hardened. The numbers of ethnic Jews in the final number of "Israel" had been diminished (see on :12) and so the Gentiles were being brought in to make up the numbers. This was no reason for Gentile boasting; the repeated warnings against this could suggest that there was friction in the Roman church over this matter. The Gentiles were as the street people dragged in to make up the numbers at the wedding feast, being invited to something they had not been searching for.

"A hardening... has befallen" suggests that the hardening was given by God. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart has already been cited by Paul as an example of how God's Spirit operates in confirming men in their softness or hardness. And of course

the point is that unbelieving Israel were actually being treated as Pharaoh of Egypt. This idea is continued in :32, where "God has made all people prisoners of disobedience" (GNB). They are "made" disobedient in that they are confirmed in their disobedience.

Until the full number of the Gentiles is made up- Although Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, I understand Rom. 11:25,26 to mean that he preached to the Gentiles motivated by the knowledge that when the full number of the Gentiles had "come in", then "all Israel" would be saved by the Jews then turning to Christ. Paul understands "Israel" as the full number of those who shall be finally saved. Once the allotted number of Gentiles had come in, Paul seems to see the final number of "Israel" being made up by the latter day conversion of some ethnic Israelites. This alone indicates how we should preach to Israel in the last days. Paul thought he was in the last days and so he did so.

11:26 *And so all Israel shall be saved. Even as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*- "All Israel" refers to the full number of "Israel"; I suggested on :25 that Paul understands "Israel" as the specific number of the redeemed. This number, "Israel" in full number (:25), will be made up by the conversion of ethnic Israelites at the Lord's coming. Or as discussed above, we can understand "all Israel" to refer to the completed, redefined Israel, which is now comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers, now "all" together saved. However, it may be that just as "the full number of the Gentiles" in the preceding verse doesn't mean 'every Gentile who has ever lived', so here "all Israel" refers to all ethnic Israel who are to be saved. But *their* 'full number' will be made up after the last Gentiles have been saved, i.e. around the time of the Lord's return. In Rom. 9:6, Paul has shown that he sees 'Israel' in two ways. There, he is effectively saying 'Not all who are from(ethnic) Israel are [the new] Israel [of God]'. He means there that "all Israel" are the Israelites who believe in the Lord Jesus.

The Lord will come to those who have turned from ungodliness in Jacob, the latter day remnant who repent (Is. 59:20); although Paul's citation of this is deliberately altered to teach the truth that the *majority* of Israel will not turn before He comes. To them He will come and turn ungodliness away from them (Rom. 11:26).

In the final conflict between Israel and her enemies, God's confirmation of men will be clearly seen. The Gentile nations will be gathered to make the final invasion by the Lord's evil spirits confirming their evil spirit, whilst the repentant remnant of Israel will be confirmed in their regrets by having "the spirit of grace and supplications" poured on them (Zech. 12:10), i.e. a desire and ability to powerfully supplicate the Father for forgiveness. If men wish to turn from their sins, God will turn them. Thus "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob" (Is. 59:20) is changed by the Spirit into: "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). Those who turn from sin are turned from sin by the Lord. The blessing promised to Abraham was not only forgiveness of sins, but that the Lord Jesus would *turn away* Abraham's seed from their iniquities (Acts 3:26). Yet we only become Abraham's seed by repentance and baptism. Our repentance and desire not to sin is therefore confirmed after our baptism.

Be aware that many NT passages mix a number of OT passages in one 'quotation'; e.g. "The deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom. 11:26) is a conflated quotation of Ps. 14:7; 53:6 and Is. 59:20. See on Heb. 13:5.

11:27 *And this is My covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins*- Jer. 31 and Ezekiel 34-36 are clear that the covenant which the latter day Jews shall enter into is the new covenant, which Christians now are part of. That new covenant, according to Romans, was that contained in the promises to Abraham. Both ethnic Jews and Gentiles alike need to be baptized into Christ for that covenant to be made with them. The point of this statement seems to be that the sins of the ethnic Jews will be taken away by their baptism into Christ and acceptance of the new covenant in Him. And this will happen in the last days.

11:28 *As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as touching their calling, they are beloved for the fathers' sake*- The unbelieving Jews are alienated from God, and in God's master plan, their failure was made use of in that it enabled the empty places in "Israel", at the marriage supper, to be filled up by Gentiles. Their alienation from God was therefore positively seen as for the sake of Gentile salvation. Yet those of them who are called to the Gospel in the last days will be called specifically because of their ethnic identity- for their fathers' sake. That may appear to contradict the earlier statements that ethnicity and descent from Abraham are worthless; but Paul is building up to the climax of grace in the events of the last days, where grace will be seen to transcend every law and principle, no matter how noble of itself.

11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*- The gifts [*charisma*- the many givings of grace] and calling are separate. As developed in chapter 8, the sovereign calling of God is a parade example of grace, and it is effected by the Spirit being given to influence men and women towards salvation. Such a gift was given to the Corinthians who had been baptized, although they made no use of it and were thus "not spiritual". It seems that Paul hoped and assumed he was living in the last days, and that therefore the Jewish Christians who had fallen away should reflect that their calling and Spirit gift received was not revocable. And it was God's earnest wish that they should re-join the olive tree.

11:30 *For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience*- As noted on :28, their disobedience meant that Gentiles could be saved. Even human failure is used by God in His wider purpose. The Gentiles "have now obtained mercy (i.e. the merciful opportunity to hear the Gospel) through their (Israel's) unbelief. Even so have these (Israel) also now not believed, that through your mercy they may obtain mercy" (Rom. 11:30,31). "Mercy" here cannot be read on a surface level; it cannot be that by showing mercy, another race may obtain mercy. "Mercy" is surely being used as a figure for the preaching of the Gospel. Through our mercy to them in this way they can obtain mercy.

11:31 *Even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you, they may also now obtain mercy*- The mercy shown to us by God in allowing the Gospel to come to us (:32), the mercy and grace of calling and predestination, is to be reflected by our taking of the Gospel to others, especially to Israel. This is the practical outcome of all talk about calling and grace. We are to be so humbled by our receipt of it that we go out and share the calling with others, especially Israel. Could this not mean that Israel's reconciliation to God is partly dependent on our "mercy" in preaching the Gospel to them? And now consider Peter's words to Israel: "Repent... and be converted, that (firstly) your sins may be blotted out... and (secondly) he shall send Jesus Christ" at the second coming (Acts 3:19,20). Does this not suggest that Christ's eager desire for the second coming is limited by our preaching to Israel?

11:32- see on Rom. 5:20.

For God has shut up all to disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all- The "all" appears to be that of :26 "All Israel" (see note there). All those within the number of the redeemed from Israel, known as "Israel" (Rom. 9:6), have at some point been disobedient; and that disobedience was within God's purpose, in the same way as God "concluded [s.w.] all under sin" (Gal. 3:22). Human sin and blindness is therefore used by God in the development of His final wonderful purpose of saving all His Israel.

Thus God works out His plan of salvation actually through man's *dis*obedience rather than his obedience. As Paul puts it, we are concluded in unbelief, that God may have mercy (Rom. 11:32). It was and is the spirit of Joseph, when he comforted his brothers: "Now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here [i.e. 'because you sinned']; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). And again, speaking about the sin of Israel in rejecting Christ: "Their trespass means riches for the [Gentile] world" (Rom. 11:12). The righteousness of God becomes available to us exactly because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23,24). If we lie, then through our lie the truth and glory of God is revealed (Rom. 3:7). God is not defeated by sin, nor does He turn away from it in disgust, but works through human failure to achieve His glory yet moreso. Or yet again, think of how Abraham's lie about Sarah and unfaithfulness to his marriage covenant with her became a source of God's blessing and the curing of Abimelech's wife from infertility (Gen. 20:17- I read her infertility as a state that existed prior to the incident with Abraham). The light comes into the world- the light of hope of salvation, forgiveness, of God in Christ- but this light reveals to us our verdict of 'guilty' (Jn. 3:18,36).

The references to "all" being saved seem to be limited by the context- and "all" rarely means 'every single one', e.g. "all" Jerusalem went out to hear John the Baptist and were "all" baptized by him. I don't suppose the city was left deserted. The only passage which appears to have some bearing is Rom 11:32: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all". But the context speaks of how both Jews and Gentiles will be saved- not every Jew and Gentile that's lived, but those who accept the Gospel. And how does God have mercy? The preceding verse clarifies: "even so have these also now been disobedient, that by your mercy they also may now obtain mercy" (Rom 11:31). Surely the mercy we show to the Jews is preaching the Gospel of God's mercy to them. Their obtaining mercy depends upon our mercy. Because God chooses to work through us as His witnesses. The Jews must obtain salvation in the same pattern as the Gentiles do: "For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience..." (Rom. 11:30). As Gentiles crossed over from disobedience to obedience to the Gospel, so must the Jews. And in the last days, this will happen: "...and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). This turning away of ungodliness from Israel is required before "all"- i.e. the redeemed from both Jews and Gentiles- can be saved. But the turning away of ungodliness surely implies a repentance of some Jewish people; God won't just save them regardless, they must turn away from ungodliness.

11:33 *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!*- This manner of working through human failure (see on :32) in order to save us is indeed beyond human commentary and definition. The knowledge of God here surely refers to His

foreknowledge. His ways and judgments refer specifically here to His calling and the time and manner of that calling, by grace. Any attempt to analyse His paths will fail, so we can even less start judging their morality or correctness.

11:34- see on Job 21:22.

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor?- The parallel in :35 says that God is outgiving in His gifts / *charis* / grace, and not in any way returning to anyone what they gave Him. And this is true of His entire purpose; such pure grace originated within His mind and was not input there by anyone else in any form. The purity of His grace and salvation is pure and awesome. The allusions to Job noted on :16 all indicate that Job was brought to the same conclusion which Paul had come to- that we each lay our hand upon our mouth and recognize that it is not by works but grace alone.

11:35 *Or who has given a gift to Him, that he might be repaid?*- See on :16 and :34 for the significance of the quote from Job 41:3. The gift of grace is unprovoked; God gives it, without in any sense repaying or compensating for work done. For grace would then not be grace. The origination of all things in God is in fact yet another evidence for salvation by grace and not works. For no matter what works we do, the originator of all was God, by grace alone, before we had even existed or done any works. We are to reflect this by doing things for others which they too can never repay (Lk. 14:14 s.w.).

11:36 *For of Him and through Him and to Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen*- As noted on :34 and :35, the way that all things originate in God and are of Him means that all is of grace; for there were no works done which God could have responded to. Of [*ek*], through [*dia*] and to [*eis*] all things [*pas*] is exactly the language used in 1 Cor. 8:6 about God's work in the Lord Jesus. God's whole plan centres in, through and to Him. The "all things" specifically has in view "all Israel" who are to be saved and who are "all things" to God; the "all things" of the new creation, the new Israel of God, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

12:1 *Therefore I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your logical service*- See on 1 Thess. 5:3. As explained in the introduction, the practical section of Romans from 12:1 to the end is full of allusion to the earlier theological sections, demonstrating how true understanding is to be lived out in practice. The "mercies" in view are those just discussed in the context of God's grace in calling us, not according to our works. God will have compassion / mercy [s.w. "mercies"] on whom He will (Rom 9:15)- and He has chosen to have compassion upon us. Our response should be complete surrender to Him. The "mercies" could also be a technical term for the promises- "the sure mercies of David" of Is. 55:3.

The description of the believer as a “living sacrifice” alludes to the scapegoat, the only living sacrifice, which was a type of the risen Lord (Lev. 16:10 LXX = Acts 1:3). As the Lord ran free in His resurrection, bearing away the sins of men, so we who are in Him and preach that salvation can do the same. As Christ bore away our iniquities (Is. 53:11), so “we then that are strong ought to bear the iniquities of the weak” (Rom. 15:1).

Having spoken of the surpassing love of God in Christ, Paul urges that it is “your logical service” to totally dedicate ourselves to Him in response. Our reasoned response is to sacrifice all for His sake. It is not reason nor logic that we are any longer in this world to enjoy ourselves. We are here to give and not to receive.

Christ is the supreme priest; but because we are “in Him", we too have some part in the priesthood. Note how the priests are described in language relevant to the Lord: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:6). Thus we must "present (our) bodies a living sacrifice" to God (Rom. 12:1); making the believer "the offering and the priest", as Christ was (and is). We are our own priests. This must have been a radical idea to those early Jewish Christians. Yet this is what Paul and Peter were driving at when they said things like: "You *also* are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (Gk. *logikos*) service (*service* is priestly language)" (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1). They were saying: '*You're your own priest now!'.* And the early believers found it hard to cope with. Have you considered that the most common form of apostasy (i.e. leaving the true Faith) in the early church was going back to the Jewish Law, with its system of priests? Natural Israel likewise totally failed to live up to God's desire that they should be a *Kingdom* of priests. They left it all to their priests. They *didn't* teach every man his neighbour and his brother, saying, Know the Lord (Heb. 8:11; even though when He re-accepts them, God will count them as if they did). Although it was God's original intention that each family leader sanctified themselves and slew the Passover lamb personally, they came to delegate this to their priests (so 2 Chron. 30:17 implies). See on Mt. 5:29.

We must be living sacrifices, devoted to the Lord (Rom. 12:1); but if we flunk out of this: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). We're a sacrifice either way, tied up without the freedom of movement as we would wish. There's therefore and thereby an element of sorrow, either way in life: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of (i.e. that gift you will really, eternally enjoy): but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

12:2 *And do not conform to the mould of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may experience what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God*- "Be transformed" is asking us to allow the work of transformation and renewing which He wishes to perform within us. This is different to reading this as a command to somehow use brute psychological force to enforce a new psychology upon ourselves; we aren't strong enough to do so, neither is that a realistic possibility. The same word for "transformed" is used of how the Spirit transforms our minds into the mental image of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). This is an internal transformation and not a reference to any miraculous gifts. Likewise the only other time the Greek word translated "renewing" is used is in Tit. 3:5, speaking of the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Allowing the work of the Spirit will mean we experience the will of God; and this connects with the theology of chapter 8, where the will of God in choosing us and calling us is shown to outwork in practice through the function of the Holy Spirit in our lives and hearts. The perfecting of that will, its coming to full completion, will be in the salvation of the last day.

Psychotherapists have powerfully pointed out the difference between the real, essential person- and the personas, or personages, whom we live out in the eyes of others. We humans tend to pretend to be the person others expect of us, we act out the person we feel our society or upbringing demands of us, rather than 'being ourselves'; and so transformation of our real character is something which is left largely unaddressed in many lives. Truly did Shakespeare write [from a worldly perspective] that all the world's a stage, and we are merely the players / actors. And as Napoleon said, "One becomes the man of one's uniform"; the persona, the act we live, comes to influence the real self, the real person, like the clown who can't stop clowning around offstage. In Biblical terms, we allow the world to push us into its mould, psychologically and sociologically, rather than allowing ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds by the things of God's word and His Son (Rom. 12:2). We so easily allow the world to squeeze us into its mould, rather than being personally transformed by our relationship with the Lord (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips).

12:3 *For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, accordingly as God has dealt to each man a measure of faith*- This continues the reference to God's will in :2. Faith is given, in the same way as we are called, predestined and moved towards salvation by the work and gift of the Spirit. This should humble us; in the same way as in the preceding chapter, Paul has urged Gentile believers to be humbled by the process of predestination, and not think highly of themselves because it is all of grace. And it was even of grace that Paul was reminding them of this. The awesome depth of this grace leads us to "think soberly", a word play in Greek: *phroneo sophroneo*. It elicits from us deep thinking- that God should give us faith, as Jacob was loved and Esau hated, quite apart from our works.

The next verses go on to speak of the manifestation of the gifts in a practical form, which in the first century included miraculous works. There was exhortation to "seek the best gifts"; and yet they were distributed "according as God hath dealt to every man [according to] the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3 and context). He gave to each of them in the early church gifts which reflected the measure of faith shown by the individual believer. How much they could achieve for their Lord was limited by their faith.

12:4 *For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same office*- Paul was writing this from Corinth, where he had had to make the same points (1 Cor. 12). It seems the Romans, just as the Corinthians and many today, had failed to distinguish between unity and uniformity. Each baptized member of Christ has some function- and this is important to remember especially when great emphasis is placed upon pastoral teams and the like. This doesn't mean that every member of Christ has no function; each must indeed be empowered to function. "Office" is *praxis*, and we shall be judged according to our *praxis* (Mt. 16:27), according to how we have used the Lord's potentials which we have been dealt. We need to seek and enquire what are His hopes for us, and to devote our lives to serving as intended.

12:5 *So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and although different, still members one of another*- We are to live according to our status; if we are baptized into the body of Christ and counted as Him, according to the theology of imputed righteousness explained earlier in Romans, then we are to act as part of the body. The Greek here could bear a retranslation, hinging around *kata heis*, AV "every one", to the effect that we are "one body in Christ, and on account of [*kata*] the one [Christ], members one of another". He is the unique bond between persons in Him. In another

figure, He is the yoke who binds others together so that the burden is lighter. Human relationships are almost impossible to maintain on any intimate level- without the binding influence of the Lord Jesus. This is why He could reason in John 17 that Christian unity would be the supreme witness to Him.

12:6 *And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of our faith*- "Grace", *charis*, is so often associated with the gift of the Spirit. That gift is the Lord Jesus in our hearts transforming us into His image, and such a promise is for all time. But in the first century, this gift had miraculous manifestations which are not now available. The *charis*, "grace", was given then and still is now; but the *charisma*, the gifts according to that grace, vary in form over time just as they did in form between persons in the first century. Those given prophecy were to use that gift according as they had been given it. This may seem obvious, but clearly there was a tendency to want to serve the Lord in ways other than His ideal intention. Paul's obsession with ministry to the Jews, when this was Peter's intended work, is a case in point.

12:7 *Or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry. Or he that teaches, to his teaching*- See on Acts 20:24 *The ministry that I received*. The gifts Paul mentions in :6-8 are all gifts relevant to leaders rather than the mass of church membership. Perhaps Paul was writing with his eye on himself; or maybe he was particularly addressing the leadership of the church.

12:8- see on 2 Cor. 1:12.

Or he that exhorts, to his exhorting; he that gives, let him do it with generosity. He that rules, with diligence. He that shows mercy, with cheerfulness- The words used here are repeated in Paul's appeals for the Corinthians to give to the Jerusalem Poor Fund with cheerful giving (2 Cor. 9:7) and to support that ministry generously. Paul will mention this later in Romans. It was a major preoccupation with him and he may well be hinting here at Roman support of it.

12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good*- The appeal here for unfeigned love (also in 2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Pet. 2:22) highlights the fact that there can so easily be the appearance of love without true love. And this warning must be given its true weight by us all as we seek to make true love the defining feature of our living and being. The Greek for "cling to" is used nine other times in the NT and always with the sense of clinging to persons. The Lord's teaching in Mt. 7:17-20 is that we can in fact quite easily tell the good from the evil persons by looking at their fruits. Perhaps Paul has that in view here. We are to cling or cleave to those in Christ who have good fruits and keep away from those with evil fruits. If we don't do this, then our love is going to become hypocritical and feigned.

12:10 *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour to others*- "Love" is claimed by everyone; :9 has challenged us to love unfeigned, unpretended and genuine. That love or *agape* is the love of Christ, loving as He loved us- for in that is the 'newness' of the command to love one another "as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). That *agape* love will issue in a brotherly love for each other and respect / honour to others on account of their place in the body of Christ. If we seek to love our Christian brethren on the basis of their behaviour, we will find it impossible to love many or that deeply. We have to respect them for their status in Christ; and writing Romans from Corinth, Paul had gone very far in doing that. For he loved the Corinthians, so weak in understanding and behaviour, with the love of Christ- in that he respected their status as in Him. Paul uses the same Greek word for "honour" in reflecting that the Corinthians, and all believers, had been bought with a

"price"- the blood of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 7:23). All who have been bought with that are to be honoured- for they are of great price.

12:11 *Be diligent, not lazy, fervent in spirit in your serving the Lord*- This is another of Paul's allusions to the Lord's parables, this time warning the Romans not to be like the lazy servant in the parable (Mt. 25:26 = Rom. 12:11). "Fervent in spirit" in the Lord's service is a phrase elsewhere used only about Apollos (Acts 18:25) who was also at Corinth (Acts 19:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4; 4:6) from where Paul was writing Romans. This kind of internal congruence deepens our faith in the veracity of the records; Paul was writing with the example of Apollos before him, and he urged the Romans to be like him. Paul is not simply appealing for zeal as opposed to laziness. He asks them to allow the Spirit to work in them, to be open to being used- and this would make them anything but lazy. There was a common association between slavery and laziness; for the slaves were often in such a dead end situation that there was no motivation for zeal and initiative. But slavery to the Lord Jesus, energized by His Spirit, was not at all like that, but the very opposite.

12:12 *Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing earnestly in prayer*- "Hope" in the New Testament refers to a confident expectation, not a vague hope-for-the-best. It is only by having such a certain expectation of a place in the Kingdom of God, an eternity assured at this moment, that a person can rejoice. One cannot have joy at a prospect which is vague or uncertain. And it is this sure hope, arising as it does from our status in Christ, which alone can make us endure tribulation and keep on in prayer, rather than praying on the cusp of emotion or desperate need. All this is the practical outworking of our status in Christ, and the guarantee of eternity by God's grace, giving us the hope which will make us endure all things (Rom. 5:2,3). "Tribulation" is literally *the* tribulation; Paul expected the Lord's return in his generation, and so envisaged that the tribulation of the Olivet prophecy would be experienced by his readers.

12:13 *Responding to the necessities of the saints by sharing, accustomed to showing hospitality*- The same word for "responding" [AV "distributing"] is to be used in 15:27 in the context of donating towards the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and surely Paul had this in mind here. We note the repeated commandments to show hospitality, literally a love of foreigners (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9). The mentality of the first century was very parochial; people loved their own, identifying themselves according to their ethnicity or birth place- and disliked others. The love of foreigners was achievable only by perceiving that we are all foreigners to God, who have been accepted by grace into a new identity.

The amount of travel by the early brethren was extraordinary, and could only have been impressive to the world around them. The same could be said of us today, regularly travelling for days across Russia and North America to attend gatherings, flying and hitch hiking around Africa to meet each other… driving hours to meeting. The NT letters feature passages which served as letters of recommendation (Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:10-12 cp. Phil. 2:25-30; Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21; Philemon 22; Rom. 15:24). Thus hospitality became a required Christian virtue (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Even ordinary Christians could count on this hospitality. Yet “security and hospitality when travelling had traditionally been the privilege of the powerful, who had relied upon a network of patronage and friendship, created by wealth. The letters of recommendation disclose the fact that these domestic advantages were now extended to the whole household of faith, who are accepted on trust, though complete strangers”. This was the practical outcome of the doctrines

believed; a member of the *ekklesia* of God would be welcomed as a brother or sister in Laodicea, Ephesus, Corinth or Rome. And so it should be amongst us today.

12:14 *Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not*- We must bless / forgive those who persecute us (blessing and forgiveness are closely linked in Scripture). This is clearly to be done without waiting for the persecutor to stop or repent. Forgiveness without repentance has to be offered. Paul would have recalled how he had persecuted the Christians, and the likes of Stephen had blessed him rather than wished curses upon him; and those blessings had lead to his forgiveness and redemption, to God's glory. The Roman church was perhaps under specific persecution of some kind, or Paul maybe foresaw the persecution which would come under Nero.

12:15 *Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep*- Such a fellow feeling for others is only possible if we are connected to them within the same body; and so this ability to connect with the emotions of others is an outcome of our being united in the body of Christ. For 1 Cor. 12:26 clarifies that it is on account of our joint membership in His body that the members have such connection with each other.

12:16- see on Mt. 25:15.

Be of the same mind one toward another- This is not an appeal for uniformity of thinking or interpretation. The one mind which we should each have is that of the Lord Jesus, as stated explicitly in Phil. 2. Another way of expressing His mind would be His Spirit; we are to view each other with the eyes, spirit or mind of the Lord Jesus. And the earlier chapters in Romans have explained how He looks upon us as perfect, with righteousness imputed to us. Paul's attitude to the Corinthians, from where he was writing Romans, is surely the parade example of practicing this in church life.

Do not be arrogant, but condescend to those who are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits- We would rather expect: 'Do not be proud, but be lowly'. Instead we are asked to condescend to, or accept, the humble. Our humility is shown in our attitude to the humble. Our attitudes to others is therefore read as a significant reflection of our pride or humility. Not being wise "in your own conceits" carries the idea as GNB of "Do not think of yourselves as wise". It is recognizing our unwisdom which helps our humility; and the idea that we are ourselves wise is arrogance. That is exactly the teaching of 1 Corinthians 1. The acceptance of God's wisdom, as extolled at the end of Romans 11, means recognizing that we of ourselves are not wise; and this is humbling.

12:17 *Render to no one evil for evil. Take thought to do things honourably in the sight of all men*- The spirit of grace received from God is that we received good for our evil; to render evil for evil, when we received good for evil, is therefore a denial of the grace we received. 1 Thess. 5:15 also teaches us not to render evil for evil, but on the basis that we should be consumed with always following after what is good. And it is with this thought that this section concludes in :21- we should overcome evil with good, and not with more evil. For this, in the bigger picture, is God's way of triumphing over evil through His grace in Christ. "Honourably" is literally 'good'; the idea is not that Paul inserts here a random injunction to give no bad appearances to people. Instead of rewarding evil with evil, we instead should plan to do *good* ['do things honourably', NEV] before men. For this is the summary conclusion of :21, that evil is to be overcome by good.

12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*- The "all" in view may refer to those within the church, and that may be the purview of :17 also.

The majority of the pressures in Paul's life came from within the ecclesia. His life was based amongst the ecclesias; thus to him "all men" were the believers, not the world as a whole (Mk. 9:50 = Rom. 12:18).

Conflict in the ecclesia shouldn't actually surprise us. We should expect it. For it was the ecclesia of Christ's day who were the ones who rejected Him. "As far as it depends on you" surely suggests that Paul saw conflict with others as arising due to others' attitudes over which we have no control. Paul's inspired wording tacitly accepts that we often cannot live in peace with others because it's not possible given their failures; but we can change *our* attitudes, and that is the point. Paul's own example was of not being at peace with the majority of the brotherhood- all in Asia turned against him. Division and interpersonal tensions are inevitable- but we must ensure they are never our fault, for they betray a serious failure in the principles of living in the body of Christ, and living under grace.

12:19 *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord*- The desire for vengeance may well refer to conflicts within the church. For "the wrath of God" would be the punishment of those who had done wrong, and this wrath will be poured out at the last day upon those who are responsible to the Lord. The comfort that the Lord's wrath would be upon those who have wronged us is therefore only appropriate to those who are responsible to judgment- largely those within the church.

We must remember that "Vengeance is *mine* [not ours, not the state's], and requital" (Dt. 32:35). That taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross. There the Lord Jesus was clothed with the 'garments of vengeance' (Is. 59:17); the day of the crucifixion was "the day of vengeance" (Is. 63:4). This is one reason why God doesn't operate a tit-for-tat requital of our sins upon our heads- because He dealt with sin and His vengeance for it in the cross, not by any other way. Hence David calls Yahweh the "God of revenge", the one *alone* to whom vengeance belongs (Ps. 94:1,3). Our response to all this is to believe that truly vengeance is God and therefore we will *not* avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). I take this to apply to all the micro-level 'takings of vengeance' which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others. The cross alone enables us to break the cycle.

12:20 - see on Ps. 140:9,10.

But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head- The fire of condemnation at the judgment has already been kindled by men's attitudes now (Lk. 12:49), and hence by doing good to such men when they abuse us we (now) "heap coals of fire upon his head". "Your enemy" here must therefore refer to someone who is responsible to the last judgment, i.e. in the ecclesia (cp. 2 Thess.3:15, which implies 'an enemy' was first century vocabulary for a shunned and rejected false teacher). See on Jude 23. By showing grace to your enemy within the church who refuses to repent, you are actually making his final punishment worse.

But I don't understand this as meaning that our motivation for such kindness should be the gleeful thought that we will thereby earn for them greater and more painful condemnation at the last day. Such motives would surely be foreign to all we have seen and known in the Father and Son. Rather am I attracted to the suggestion that there is a reference here to the practice, originating in Egypt, of putting a pan of hot coals over the head of a person who has openly repented. In which case, we would be being taught to show grace to our enemies, in order that we might bring them to

repentance. This would chime in with the teaching elsewhere in Romans that God's goodness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And this is how we should be, especially with our brethren. The idea of excluding our brethren seems to me the very opposite of the spirit of grace which we have received.

Paul quotes the words of Prov. 25:21,22 here. But he omits to apply the last part of Prov. 25:22 to us: "And the Lord shall reward you". Paul's point is that we should not resist evil, leave God to glorify His Name- and enable this to happen, without seeking for a personal reward for our righteousness. Thus Prov. 25:21,22: “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat... for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee” is quoted here, but with the pointed omission of the last clause: "The Lord shall reward thee". It's as if Paul is saying: 'The condemnation of the wicked, when *God,* not you, pours out His vengeance, will glorify Him. So do your part to bring this about, don't worry about the reward you're promised so much as the bringing about of His glory'.

12:21 *Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*- It will not do to glumly conclude that evil shall only be overcome at the Lord's return. We are to right now overcome evil, not by fighting it in the world nor by seeking to brutally repress it within our own minds; but to proactively focus on the good and thereby overcome it. God likewise overcomes evil through the overcoming of His Son on the cross (s.w. Rom. 3:4; Jn. 16:33). And that is to be our pattern too.

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

13:1 The question has been asked as to how the words of Romans 13 can stand true, with their implication that Government ministers are God’s representatives, punishing sinners and upholding righteousness, and therefore should be obeyed. Many believers are pressured by such ministers to join armies and in other ways too, to break the law of Christ. How, for example, could those words have been true in Hitler’s Germany or Taliban-controlled Afghanistan?

First it must be remembered that there are other passages which do command our submission to human authorities: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Pet. 1:13-17). Whilst these words stand true, Peter himself also disobeyed human authority, with the comment that we must obey God rather than men. When there is a conflict in allegiance created, we must obey God and disobey anyone or any institution that commands us to disobey Him. And Paul likewise- the man who was jailed repeatedly for breaking the law: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men” (Tit. 3:1,2).

But the Romans 13 passage goes much further, saying that these “ministers” are ordained by God on His behalf, and therefore must be obeyed. Logically, therefore, one would have to obey whatever they said. Otherwise we would always be having to decide whether or not a Government minister was really ordained in God’s behalf, or

not. And Romans 13 seems to imply that all ministers are "ministers of God". And so for this passage I wish to suggest that it specifically refers to submission to the elders and apostles of the first century ecclesia, empowered as they were with the miraculous Spirit gifts and direct revelations of wisdom and judgment.

There is great stress in Rom. 13 that these "powers" punish evil / sinfulness. This is just not true of human Governments. Yet it is appropriate if the "powers" spoken of here are within the ecclesia. So we will consider the passage phrase by phrase- and we find that almost every Greek noun or verb in it is used elsewhere in a specifically ecclesial context.

"Let every one of you be in subjection to the governing authorities" (:1).

The Greek for "Higher" means 'to excel, to be superior, better than, to surpass". The same word occurs in Phil. 2:3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other *better than themselves*". We may respect human ministers but we can scarcely esteem them better than ourselves in a spiritual sense. Yet authority held by ecclesial elders is earnt and not demanded- based on our respect of them as brethren more mature in Christ than we are.

"*For there is no power but by God: the powers that be have been ordained…*"

"Powers" is s.w. [same word] 2 Cor. 10:8 "our [apostolic] a*uthority*"; "*the power* which the Lord hath given me" (Paul; 2 Cor. 13:10). "Not because we [the apostles] have not *power*" (2 Thess. 3:9). Those powers are "ordained"- s.w. Acts 15:2 , where Paul and Barnabas were "determined", s.w. "ordained", to go to Jerusalem as representative elders; the family of Stephanas "addicted themselves", literally 'ordained themselves', to the work of ministry in the ecclesia. Note how here as in Rom. 13, the ideas or being *ordained* to be a *minister* also occur together.

[Ordained] by God

In the sense of 1 Cor. 12:28: "*And God* hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues".

"*Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists…*" (:2)

Alexander "hath greatly *withstood* [s.w. resisteth] our words" (2 Tim. 4:15)- the words of elders like Paul. This doesn't mean that elders are beyond any criticism- for the same Greek word is used of how Paul "withstood" Peter when he gave in to legalism and rejected grace (Gal. 2:11).

"*What God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror…*" (:2,3)

"Terror" translates the Greek word used for how "fear" came upon the ecclesia when the elders exercised their powers of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:43; 5:5,11). Initially, Corinth showed such "fear" towards Paul (2 Cor. 7:11,15). Elders should rebuke publicly those who sin, that others in the ecclesia might "fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). The situation in the first century as far as the authorities of the world are concerned was actually the very opposite of what we read here in Romans. The same word occurs in 1 Pet. 3:14, telling the believers to endure persecution from the authorities, not to cave in to their demands, and "be not afraid of their *fear*". Note that the Greek word for "afraid" occurs in Rom. 13:3- we should be "afraid" of the powers God has placed in the ecclesia. The fact the two words occur together in both Romans and Peter leads us to the conclusion: 'Respect and "fear" those who are elders truly; but don't fear / respect those who are elders in name only and are in reality far from grace".

"*[not a terror] to good works, but to the evil. If you wish to live without fear of the authorities?* (:3)

The Greek word for "fear" is the same word in Gal. 2:12, which criticizes Peter for

being “afraid” of the Jerusalem elders who were teaching legalism. Paul doesn’t mean we should fear an elder merely because they have the office of an elder; but we fear / respect those who are indeed spiritually “higher” than us.

“*Do that which is good! And you shall have praise from the same*”

This certainly isn’t true of worldly authorities and rulers. They don’t praise righteousness, and they certainly didn’t in the first century. Yet the same word is used in 2 Cor. 8:18 of how Timothy was “praised” in the ecclesias. Good elders and healthy ecclesias will give praise / encouragement to those who deserve it.

“*For he is a minister of God*” (:4)

Gk. *Diakonos*, sometimes translated “deacon”. The word is used 31 times in the N.T., nearly always about ecclesial elders / ministers / servants. Paul speaks of himself and Timothy with the very same words: a “minister of God” (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Thess. 3:2), who therefore ought to be listened to.

…to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain

This seems to be a reference to the ability which some elders had in the first century to execute physical affliction upon those who were disobedient. Peter smote Ananias and Sapphira dead. Paul seems to warn the Corinthians that he could “not spare” them if he convicted them of apostasy on his next visit. It even seems that the sicknesses spoken of in James 5 are a direct result of sinful behaviour, and the gift of healing could be exercised by the elders in the case of repentance. Jesus Himself threatened immediate physical judgment, presumably through the hands of His representatives, upon some in the ecclesias of Rev. 2,3. Respect for elders is something taught throughout the N.T. letters- “remember them that have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7). Here the writer clearly refers to elders in the ecclesia, for he bids his readers consider the end of those men’s faithful way of life and to follow their example. And yet they are described as ‘rulers’. It’s as if the point is that the real rulers of a first century believer were not the Roman administrators, but the ministers of God within their ecclesia. In illiterate ecclesias or those without access to the written scrolls containing God’s word, the elders would have played a more critical role in their relationship with God than in our age.

“… For he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil- be afraid! For he carries not the sword in vain. For he is a minister of God, an avenger of God’s anger to him that does evil. Therefore you must be in subjection, not only because of God’s anger against sin, but also for the sake of your conscience. For this cause you pay tribute also” *(:4-6)*

This could be referring to the Lord’s well known example of paying tribute, and simply saying that the principle of submission to authority should extend out of the ecclesia, to all those who have power over us- so long as this does not contradict our conscience toward Christ. But it could also be a reference to some form of tithing or regular support of elders. There is historical evidence that this went on early in the Christian church.

“Be subject” uses a Greek word elsewhere used about submission to elders (1 Cor. 16:16). Note how the word occurs in 1 Cor. 14:34- the sisters were commanded “to be under obedience” to their men [Gk.]. I take this to refer to the need for those sisters to be submissive to their appointed elder. When we meet the word again in the command “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22,24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1,5), I take this as meaning that they should treat him as

they would an elder- in that Paul assumes he will teach and inspire her as the elders ought to have been doing.

"*For they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing*" (:6)

The question arises, *what* thing? If the reference is to their reflecting of God's judgment against those who sin, this is simply not true of human Governments. The first century authorities were persecuting the Christians, fabricating untruth against them, killing them, and insisting that those who refused to accept Caesar as Lord be punished. The words can only be true of the ministers of God of whom we read elsewhere in the N.T.- i.e., the ecclesial elders.

The Greek phrase for "attending continually" is a catchphrase usually employed to describe the zealous pastoral care of the early apostles: "These all *continued* with one accord in prayer…*continuing daily* with one accord…and breaking bread…we will *give ourselves continually* to prayer, and to the ministry [another Romans 13 idea!] of the word" (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4). By using the phrase, Paul is undoubtedly pointing us back to the example of the early apostles / elders.

"Render to all their dues" (:7)

The Greek for "dues" is found in Rom. 15:27 about the due which the Gentile believers owe to materially support their Jewish brethren. We have no 'due' to this world (Rom. 13:8 Gk., s.w.), but our due is to love each other in the brotherhood. But admittedly Paul does seem in the next verses to extend the principle of submission further than just within the ecclesia. In the same way as elders should only be respected if they had earnt that respect, and were leading brethren in the way of Christ, so too the authorities of the world should only be followed insofar as they did not lead believers into disobedience to Christ: "…tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (:8-10 AV).

We must remember that the Romans 13:1 passage about submission to human authority was written before Nero's persecution of Christians. It seems to be written on the assumption that justice is being done by officialdom. Romans seems to have been written around AD60. The background situation in Rome, to which Paul was speaking, needs to be understood if we are to understand Paul in his context. In AD58 there were major revolts in Rome against the taxation system (as recorded in Tacitus, *Annals* 13.50,51). Jews were exempt from paying some taxes (they were allowed to pay them to the temple in Jerusalem); and Roman citizens also were exempt. There was therefore a huge amount of resentment from the Gentile, non-Roman citizen population who had to pay heavy taxes (1). It could well be that some of the Roman Christians were tempted to share in this unrest; and Paul is instead urging them to obey those who had the rule over them, in the sense of paying their taxes, rendering tribute to whom tribute was due. Ben Witherington, one of academic scholarship's most well-known and learned students of Paul, significantly doesn't see in the Romans 13 passage any suggestion that Christians should therefore bear arms, as this would contradict Paul's teaching about *non*-violent response to evil in the same section of Romans; rather does he understand the teaching about submission to authorities as being specifically in this taxation context (2).

(1) Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.5.1, Josephus, *Antiquities Of The Jews* 16.45,160-161; references in Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* (Leicester: I.V.P., 1998) p. 180.
(2) Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* (Leicester: I.V.P., 1998) pp. 178-184. He comments that "most ancient persons [took] it for granted that governing authorities have their authority from God" (p. 181). When Paul writes this to the Romans, he could well be quoting a well-known maxim- and thus using it in order to persuade the Roman Christians to pay their taxes.

13:1 *Let every one of you be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no power but by God, and the powers that be have been ordained by God*- I have suggested the possibility of this section referring to elders within the church. But it is also possible to understand the section as referring to civil powers, seeing that this was written before Nero's persecution of the Christians. We would then have a classic example of where Paul's letters address specific issues within a very specific time limited context. What he writes here about the nature of 'the powers that be' was true for the Rome ecclesia at that point in time; but it was not true for them some years later under Nero's persecution, nor was it true for believers under Hitler etc.

13:2 *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment*- Judgment from the powers that be, rather than condemnation from God. The implication is that there were individuals within the church at Rome who were seriously misbehaving and would face criminal justice as a result. The letter of 1 Peter seems to address the same problem in the Jewish congregations of southern Turkey. Put this together with the shameful behaviour of the church at Corinth, and the similar very bad issues addressed in the other NT epistles. Titus is warned to strengthen the eldership, whilst there were many very bad behaviours amongst the congregation on Crete; and we find the same approach taken in advising Timothy about the mess at Ephesus. The overall picture is rather poor; the impression is of churches composed of many who seriously misbehaved, living alongside some wonderfully spiritual examples. The Lord's letters in Revelation give the same impression. Yet churches of our age face the problem of supposedly stronger members quitting because of the perceived unspirituality of the majority. And we see that there was no way that Paul was advising disfellowship of immoral members of the congregation apart from in nuanced and extreme situations such as 1 Corinthians 5.

13:3 *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If you wish to live without fear of the authorities- then do that which is good! And you shall have praise from the same*- As noted on :2, this implies there was serious criminal misbehaviour amongst some in the church at Rome. And yet Paul writes in such warm terms about the church in chapter 1. This is the great challenge of Christianity; to accept the weakness of others, not turn away from it nor justify it, within the larger framework of knowing that they too are partakers of grace and salvation.

13:4 *For he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil- be afraid! For he carries not the sword in vain*- The mention of the sword implies the death penalty, which means that the church contained members guilty of serious criminal misbehaviour.

For he is a minister of God, an avenger of God's anger to him that does evil- The connection is with how the same word is used in 12:19: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord". It would be possible to conclude that some within the church were behaving in a criminal way towards others in the church, doing things to

them which warranted the death penalty. And yet Paul has so much to say to them about grace and the certainty of salvation by faith. These considerations enable us to review chapters 1 and 2, which seem to speak as if murder and some of the worst forms of sexual perversion and abuse were being practiced within the church, just as they were by Israel in the desert.

13:5- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

Therefore you must be in subjection, not only because of God's anger against sin, but also for the sake of your conscience- God's judgment would be manifest through the local authorities. But subjection to the authorities was not just in order to avoid judgment against sin, but because of a sense of conscience. Those authorities represented Him, and therefore quiet obedience to them was part of conscience towards God.

13:6 *For this cause you pay tribute also*- In the opening commentary on Romans 13:1 I gave evidence that in Rome there was widespread objection to paying taxes. Paul assumes their obedience- "you pay tribute". This is a great feature of Paul- he had such a positive spirit about brethren whom he knew to be far less than himself spiritually.

For they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing- This kind of religious language led me to suggest in the opening commentary that the authorities in view may in fact be within the church. But if not, then we can say that the language of the sanctuary is being consciously used about the ministers of the state. Just as believing slaves were to see their masters as representing Christ, so the Roman believers were to see tax collectors as requiring obedience *as if* they were part of the Divine system of things. And this is one of the arts of spiritual life- to see all our human interactions in this world as being performed as unto the Lord we have in Heaven and within the context of His system.

13:7 *Render to all their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*- This could mean 'to all magistrates', and surely Paul has his mind on the Lord's command to render unto Caesar what is his due (Mt. 22:21) rather than get involved in any form of anti-Caesar movement on the basis of refusing to pay taxes. The Christian movement indeed rejected Caesar as Lord, but there was no need to articulate this through not paying taxes to him. But the next verse shows that Paul develops a wider context here. Not simply should taxes be paid, but a general spirit of respect towards others, including "honour".

13:8- see on Rom. 1:14.

Owe no one anything, apart from to love one another- The 'owing' would be in the context of accumulating tax debts in the hope they would never be demanded or enforced. Or perhaps Paul does literally feel that material debt to others is to be avoided at all costs. He has spoken of honouring and respecting persons in :6 and :7, and he sees keeping out of debt as a way of ensuring that we can respect persons for who they are and without the background factor of appearing to respect those to whom we are in debt. In low income situations, petty debt is a way of life; perhaps Paul is urging avoiding this. The debt we have is to love others, for we have been so loved by the Lord, and we are to realize that our need to pay that back must be articulated in terms of loving our neighbour- not that we can ever repay our debt to the Lord. Paul's conception of love to the world around him was clearly rooted in the need to preach to them, rather than provide material help. He felt he had a debt to love

others (Rom. 13:8); yet also a debt to preach (Rom. 1:14). His debt was to love in the form of preaching. Paul has opened Romans by speaking of our unpayable debt to the Lord Jesus: "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also" (Rom. 1:14,15). Our debt is to the Lord Jesus who paid such a huge price for our redemption. But that debt has been transmuted. We have an unpayable debt to share Him with others. And that is one form of "love" for our neighbour. Any humanitarian kindness to others must therefore be meshed together with presenting the Gospel to them. Otherwise we are not even attempting to repay the debt. This is the debt burden we should feel, as we see men rushing around their lives headlong towards an eternal grave.

For he that loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law- The law was fulfilled by the Lord's death on the cross. The death of the cross is the ultimate love of neighbour as self, the final honour, respect, submission etc. which forms the context here. The Lord's work and death can therefore really be participated in by us- in the small daily things of life such as kindness and respect to others.

13:9 *For this, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet- and if there be any other commandment*- Paul's references to the Gospels suggests that he had carefully meditated upon the passages to which he consciously alludes. The fact and way in which he *alludes* rather than quotes verbatim reflects the fact he had thought through and absorbed the teaching of the passages rather than learning them parrot fashion. For example, in Mt. 19:18,19 the Lord Jesus combines two quotations from the Law: Ex. 20:12-16 followed by Lev. 19:18. Paul, in a different context, to prove a different point, combines those same two passages, although separating them by a brief comment (Rom. 13:9). This surely indicates that he had meditated upon how his Lord was using the Law, and mastered it so that he could use it himself.

It is summed up in this word, namely: You shall love your neighbour as yourself- The intention of all the various laws was "love". Likewise the fruit of the Spirit is in the singular- "love". Love is the point of maturity to which we are all travelling (1 Cor. 13). The cross was the fulfilling of all law in that there love was articulated to its ultimate term.

13:10 *Love works no evil to his neighbour. Love therefore is the fulfilment of the law*- This looks at love from a negative aspect- love is the summation of all commandments, it is positively a loving of neighbour; but also working no evil is likewise another way of putting it. Yet the two sides are in parallel- positively, proactively doing good to neighbour is the same as working no evil to neighbour. This addresses the idea that 'I do no evil to others; I just keep myself to myself and have my own personal beliefs about Jesus, sit behind my screen and press the right buttons at times, no need for church, I just believe in my heart'. Such an attitude is increasingly popular in our disconnected and dysfunctional world, where people seem unable to cope with personal relationships. But to work no evil is part of doing proactive good. And remember that love is the fulfilment of the law, as epitomized in the Lord's death upon the cross. One could go further, and argue that by not doing the proactive love to neighbour, we are actually working evil to neighbour- for sins of omission are every bit as real [before God] as sins of commission. Perhaps Paul has in mind the LXX of Prov. 3:27-29, where withholding good from our neighbour is paralleled with devising evil against him or her.

The law of God was not a leash, a chain. For man is not a dog. Rather was it a springboard towards love. Total fulfilment of the Mosaic law would lead to a man called "love". The Lord Jesus fulfilled the law in His death on the cross, which was

love to its ultimate term (Jn. 13:1). There, all things were fulfilled which were written in the law (Lk. 24:44). He came to fulfil the law, and He did so in His death on the cross. We are called to love as He did- to love as I have loved you, the new commandment. Rom. 8:3,4 has explained that we too can fulfil the righteousness of the law, because we are living in the Spirit as a result of the cross. His death there inspires us to live in His spirit, which is ultimately love. And thereby we fulfil the law, because His spirit is in us: "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for a sin offering, condemned sin, in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit".

13:11 *And consider this too: Knowing the time, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep*- God actually saw us as saved right from the beginning of the world; He purposed, and effectively it was done. Perhaps this is the hardest thing our faith has to grapple with. "Knowing the time, that for us, the hour already is to be aroused out of sleep" and be resurrected (Rom. 13:11 YLT) may mean (contrary to the implication of the AV) that for us who are with God now, the time of resurrection and salvation is now with us, and therefore we should live lives which answer to this fact. The day of salvation is in that sense *today* (2 Cor. 6:2 Gk.). So sure is God's word that it is as if the concept of a delay between its utterance and the fulfilment is something not to be considered. Thus "the vision" is an ellipsis for 'the fulfilment of the vision' in Hab. 2:3. Although our day by day spirituality fluctuates, God is beyond time. He sees us either as an essentially good tree bringing forth good fruit, or as essentially bad (Mt. 7:23). And yet my sense is that here we have yet another example of where the early believers fully expected the Lord's return in their lifetimes. This was not simply because they were mistaken, or because the Lord's scheduled return in the first century was delayed because the church wasn't ready for it. This expectation of the Lord's soon return is, it could be argued, actually part of the Christian faith. We are to live in expectation of His imminent return, whether or not we consider current events to align with the relevant prophecies.

For now is our salvation nearer to us than when we first believed- The "salvation" is "the day" of the Lord's return (:12). We are chronologically nearer to that final salvation than when we first believed. This suggests a specific start point for 'first belief'; confirming that there is a specific point when a person becomes a believer, rather than belief being something drifted into as a result of upbringing or exposure to Christian preaching. And that specific point in time is surely baptism. "Nearer" uses the same word used by the Lord in saying that we know His coming is 'near' because of the fulfilment of the signs in the Olivet prophecy (Mt. 24:32,33). Those signs were indeed fulfilled- His coming was indeed scheduled for the first century. But it was delayed, because the required preconditions of Israel's repentance, the spreading of the Gospel and the required spiritual fruit in the church were just not met. And so it has been delayed until our days. And we face the same urgent challenges in those same areas which the early church failed in.

13:12 *The night is far spent, and the day is at hand*- See on :11. Whilst Paul clearly expected the Lord's return in his time, the statement and spirit of it is not wrong. For we are to live *as if* the day of His coming is imminent. And of course we can die at any moment- and that for us will effectively be His return. The entire Gospel message begins with the usage of the same Greek word: The Kingdom *is at hand* (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7 etc.). We are therefore to live in expectation of the imminent breaking forth of God's Kingdom. And in a spiritual sense, the Kingdom has 'come near' [s.w. "is at hand"] in that our experience of life in Christ is our experience of the eternal life of God's Kingdom (Lk. 10:9 "The Kingdom of God is

come near / is at hand to you"). And yet in the literal sense, we see the day approaching [s.w. "at hand", "near"]; and we are to draw near to God in response (Heb. 7:19; 10:25). James 4:8; 5:8 are very clear. We draw near to God and He draws near to us, in that the Lord's coming draws near.

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light- It's been pointed out and exemplified beyond cavil that Paul uses much Essene terminology. I suggest he does this in order to deconstruct it. When he urges the Roman Jews to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light", calling his converts "the children of the light and children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5), Paul is alluding to the Essene ideas. But he's saying that the children of light are to wage spiritual warfare against themselves, their own hearts, quit the things and habits of the flesh etc. – rather than charge off into literal battle with physical armour against the Romans. Likewise when Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14–18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

13:13 *Let us behave decently*- Gk. 'honestly'. The context has spoken of paying taxes and not behaving as criminals.

As in the day- The "day" spoken of in the context is that of the Lord's coming and His Kingdom. We are to live the kind of life we shall eternally live in God's Kingdom. In this sense we have the eternal life.

Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy- We will not spend eternity doing these things, so we should not be doing them now. Again we sense that all these things were going on in the church at Rome, and yet Paul still speaks so lovingly and positively of them all. The very same set of issues were clearly evident in the church at Corinth. Again [see on :2] the picture of the early converts is not very pleasant. All the more commendable therefore are those faithful ones who lived out their spiritual lives within such churches; and the Lord's letters in Revelation make just that point. But we note they were never exhorted to quit fellowship or association with the weak mass of Christian believers.

13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ*- We must even after baptism "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:14; Col. 3:12,14; 1 Thess. 5:8), even though *at baptism* we put on the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:10) and in prospect the flesh was co-crucified with Christ's flesh (Rom. 6:6,18). By putting off the things of the flesh and putting on the things of the Lord in our lives, we live out the baptism principle again; and thereby we are "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22-24). See on Col. 2:6. Baptism in this sense is an ongoing experience of death and resurrection with the Lord.

And make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires- This is the simple key to overcoming temptation. "Provision" is related to the word for 'providence'. God's overall providence in calling, planning and predestinating us to salvation has been mentioned earlier by Paul in this letter. Our response is to likewise seek to structure our own lives so that we do not provide opportunities for the flesh, but rather for the Spirit.

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

14:1 *As for the one who is weak in faith*- Remember that this practical section of Romans from chapters 12 to 16 is based upon the pure theology of Romans 1-8. Abraham, the spiritual father of us all, was *not* "weak in faith" (Rom. 4:19). The same words are used; and the point is that even those in the church who do not have the faith of Abraham should still be accepted. And the later context of Romans 14 explains more. The 'weak in faith' were those who tried to obey Jewish food laws (:2); and some had been made weak in faith by the insensitive attitudes of others in the church (:21). But for whatever reason, the weak were to be received- in contrast to the attitudes of those who assume that 'fellowship' must be based upon being able to jump certain doctrinal or practical bars. Abraham was weak- but he was strong in that he believed in the work of the Spirit in fulfilment of God's promises to him. This is the point- that the strong are not of themselves strong, they too are weak, but they believe in God's strength. And we are thereby "strong" (Rom. 15:1). His bearing of our weakness on the cross is to be reflected in how we treat the weak; and how we treat them is therefore of critical importance. And that is why our lives are full of interactions with the weak, so that we can reflect to them how the Lord carried us. We note that again in 1 Cor. 8:11, the weak are those who are legalistic- and yet they are the very ones who consider themselves strong by their legalism.

Welcome him- The reason is because both God and the Lord Jesus have received or welcomed him (14:3; 15:7). The 'receiving' in view was presumably towards some who wanted to be in the church but who had been denied. The argument is similar to what had to be used with Peter- God had received the Gentiles, so Peter was to likewise. So perhaps it was the Jewish element who were unwilling to accept Gentiles in Rome. And this must be a principle for us too. We are not to be out of step with the Lord's acceptance of folks. It simply cannot be right to reason that 'They may well be good brethren in Christ, but we can't accept them because... '.

But not so as to just quarrel with him over opinions- Of course, the Jewish legalists would have argued back as many do today: 'These are not matters of opinion, they are fundamental issues, God is a holy God... etc.'. The church was not to be a place of quarrelling. People were to be accepted with the positions they held without seeking to endlessly argue with them- that is surely the idea. And this is how Paul treats the 'weak'. He has more to say about the strong tolerating the weak, than he does about the weak actually changing position. That is notable throughout Romans 14 and 15. The idea is that the church should not be a place of debate but of upbuilding and acceptance of each other where we are.

14:2 *One man has faith to eat all things*- The faith was surely faith in Christ's cleansing work by which He had ended the Mosaic law and all conception of clean and unclean food.

But he that is weak eats herbs- Vegetarianism was associated with hyper legalistic Judaism, whereby every kind of meat was feared to be not completely bloodless or *kosher*. But those who had this position were "weak". Yet they were not to be argued with but accepted. This is not to say that Paul has no argument about this issue, for he clearly does elsewhere, as did the Lord Himself. But the point was that endless argument of a casuistic nature was not the way to resolve the issue. And again we

have a valuable principle there. Presumably Paul does not engage with the Judaistic argument in the same way as he did in Galatians because he has already argued that justification is by grace and not the works of the law, and perhaps that point was accepted in general terms- whereas in Galatia it was not.

The 'weakness' is defined in :1 as being weak "in faith". Those who still kept the Mosaic food laws were weak in faith in the work of the Lord Jesus, indeed they did not fully understand its nature and dimensions. But they are still described as being in the faith and worthy of acceptance by us because "God has accepted him" (:3). Deficits in faith and understanding do not therefore of themselves preclude God's acceptance of a man. We are also hereby given a window onto understanding what Paul means in Rom. 15:1 "we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves". Our 'strength' is, paradoxically, our faith in the work of the Lord Jesus. So many have given in to the temptation "to please ourselves" by cutting off those who have deficits in their faith and understanding of the Lord's work. This is not at all 'defence of the faith' nor 'love for the truth'; but rather basic selfishness and a refusal to bear the infirmities of those "weak" in understanding. We were weak, and the Lord carried our infirmities and weakness on the cross. Our response is to bear with those who are "weak" compared to our "strength" in understanding. And yet tolerance of the intolerant, patience towards the impatient... is a profound test of our 'strength', and many fail it.

The whole matter is given another nuance when we consider the implications of Rom. 14:23 in this context: "But he that doubts is condemned if he eats, because he eats not from faith. And whatever is not of faith is sin". Yet we read in :1-3 that those who are weak in faith should be accepted and are accepted by God. But the person of :23 is "condemned" because he "doubts". I suggest the idea is that if a person 'has faith' although based on misunderstanding, that is acceptable with God; but the person who has no faith, and acts on the basis of secular thinking, is to be condemned. Clearly God sees degrees of faith, and is prepared to accept even misguided faith. But He condemns those who are "not of faith". Another take is to see the word play in the Greek behind "he that doubts [*dia-krin*o] is damned [*kata-krino*] if he eat". The *krino* suffix is the word for judgment / condemnation, almost suggesting [and perhaps we could paraphrase as] 'he who damns is damned'. The idea may be that he who condemns another for their position will be condemned. Acceptance of the weak [in our opinion] is therefore critical; because we must reflect to others the Lord's tolerance of us and His bearing of our weakness on the cross. The "weak" are weak in that they are vulnerable. They are weak in their faith in the Lord's work, because they think that works are still necessary. But if you fail to fully accept the total work of the Lord Jesus for you, then you are liable to condemn others. And so you are vulnerable to condemnation. This is why in :3 he warns the weak "who abstains [from eating]" not to "pass judgment on the one who eats". God accepts the weak as they are (:3); they are not told specifically to change, but warned that they must not judge those who do not share their positions, and to accept they broke the Jewish food laws as service 'as to the Lord' (:6). But the focus in this passage is largely upon the strong tolerating the weak, and understanding their vulnerabilities. Strength is shown in bearing with the weak (Rom. 15:1); strength is in tolerance of others and seeking to help them towards the Kingdom. Intolerance, therefore, is not strength but weakness. The strength of the Lord Jesus on the cross was in that He bore our weaknesses, our 'not getting it'. He was crucified in or because of weakness, our weakness, and we also are weak "in Him". Our weakness is dealt with by His strength.

The weak refused to come out of their cultural enclave [of following Jewish food laws and Sabbath keeping] because they failed to realize the dimensions of the Lord's work. But they were to be accepted, as God accepted them. We have a window here into the breadth of God's acceptance of men. Here for all time we see that 'conservative' and 'traditional' are not therefore always by default somehow closer to God. Those positions can often mean being further from Him and His Son. So many who present themselves as 'strong brethren' zealous for 'defending the faith' are not strong at all; they are the weak. The essence is to live the Kingdom life now, and then we will not be eating and drinking (:17).

14:3 *Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has accepted him*- Those with a more Biblically correct position are tempted to "despise" those who 'don't get it'. But all such spiritual elitism is wrong. Paul uses the same word used about how the Pharisee despised the publican (Lk. 18:9)- to demonstrate that such spiritual superiority was in fact a form of the very Pharisaism which they were despising. The legalists were likewise inclined to judge their brothers who ate anything- using the weight of the Mosaic law to condemn. Paul alludes to both groups in :10, where he uses the same Greek words in appealing for brethren not to "judge" and "set at nothing" (s.w. "despise") their brethren- because they all stood before the Lord's judgment seat as sinners.

14:4 *Who are you to judge the servant of another?*- In :3, a distinction is made between the liberals who "despise" others, and the legalists who "judge" others. The reference here in :4 to not judging may therefore refer specifically to the legalists; or Paul's point may be that effectively, the liberals too were judging their brethren. The idea is that even if we consider the Biblical evidence judges another individual negatively, *we* are not to pass that judgment. That is not for us to do. This is a subtle but important difference. The Bible may indeed condemn a particular behaviour, but it is not for us to condemn the individual who does it.

To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be made to stand up. For the Lord has power to make him stand- We are all slaves; not the Master. Likewise we are all guests at the Lord's table who should by rights never be there; it is not for us to tell others to leave that table of grace. The 'falling' in view in Romans is stumbling over the rock of Christ and 'falling' into condemnation (Rom. 11:11,22). But Paul believes that God is able to make those who fall stand up, through imputing righteousness to them. For this has been his earlier argument in Romans. It is not for us, therefore, to judge those who fall. For God is seeking to make them stand up, and as the merciful Master, He may well count them as having stood up anyway, despite their fallen state. It is not therefore for us to judge those who fall. It may be that Paul's implication is that God is more likely to uphold His failing servant than we would be; therefore, let's not condemn our brother, because God is more generous-spirited than we are in His judgment.

The first century society was built around the concept of *oikonomia*, household fellowship. The head of the house was the leader, and all the extended family and slaves had to follow his religion and be obedient to him. For slaves, this was on pain of death. However, the call of Christ was to *individuals*; in conscious allusion to the *oikonomia* concept, Paul speaks of how we are the “household-servants” of Christ- not a human master (Rom. 14:4 RVmg.). Individual conversion to a religion was

unheard of at the time. Indeed, religion was something for the wealthy to play with, as a hobby.

14:5 *One man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike*- "Esteems" is the same word used in :1 about not having quarrels over opinions, or how one esteems / judges things. The matter was to be left within the mind of each person and not endlessly quarrelled over. Yet Paul is quite clear in Colossians 2 and elsewhere that the position that all days are the same is the right one. The Sabbath and all holy days have been ended by the Lord's work. But clearly he is willing for believers to remain of a different mind; the important thing being not to argue and have discord.

Let each man be fully assured in his own mind- Paul has argued using the same word that Abraham was "fully assured" of salvation by faith through grace, and not by works (Rom. 4:21). This is only one of several allusions to Abraham in this section. But even if a believer cannot get to Abraham's level and still seriously misunderstands- they are to be accepted. This has serious challenges for those who demand a certain level of faith, understanding and practice before extending Christian fellowship.

14:6- see on Acts 18:18.

He that regards the day, regards it to the Lord- "Regards" really means to regard highly. Paul didn't agree that some days were to be more highly regarded than others. But he advises that we respect those who have this wrong view, and consider that they are performing their mistaken service as "to the Lord". This is just how he has reasoned in chapter 13 about respecting local magistrates- service and obedience was to be performed to them 'as unto the Lord', just as slaves were to serve their earthly masters 'as unto the Lord'.

There is no lack of evidence in the NT that the Lord's sacrifice precluded the need to do these things. And yet Paul and the Council of Jerusalem made concessions to the Jewish brethren who couldn't bring themselves to accept the Truth in these areas, in the hope that continued practice of these things within the context of the Christian community would make them see for themselves that they were inappropriate. Paul says that Sabbath keeping is a matter of personal conscience (Rom. 14:1-10), even though elsewhere he argues so forcibly that to do this is to return to the weak and beggarly elements. Here, as with the demons issue, there was a clear concession to some degree of human non-acceptance of Divine truth and the implications arising from it. It seems that although the Law was done away by the cross, by the time of 2 Cor. 3:7,11 it could still be spoken of as "that which is being done away" (RVmg.). There was a changeover period allowed, rather than a bald insistence that acceptance of Christ and the meaning of His death must mean that the old Jewish ways were dropped instantly.

And he that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks- Paul assumes that believers of whatever persuasion will thank God before meals; and this should remain one of our good traditions.

14:7 *For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself*- Note that it is not living for *others* which is the immediate point; but living and dying to *Jesus* (:8). "None of us" is a very generous statement by Paul; he assumes that each of his readership are living and dying not to themselves but to Christ (:8). His positivity is

expressed whilst at the very same time facing their immaturity and misunderstandings head on.

14:8 *For whether we live, we live to the Lord. Or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's*- This is exactly the language of Romans 6 concerning baptism. The death of self and living now unto the Lord Jesus is the exact terminology used. Again Paul is positively assuming that the status taken on at baptism is being lived out in practice. He speaks of this level of total dedication to the Lord as a reason why we should not therefore be involved in judging our brethren, or getting involved in endless doctrinal disputes with them.

14:9- see on Acts 17:31.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living- There are some passages which appear to teach [misread] that we go on living after death. It has been observed that Rom. 14:8,9 implies that Jesus is our Lord after death as well as in life: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living". We are the Lord's after death, in the same way as Abraham lives unto Him (Lk. 20:38). We are still with Him. He doesn't forget us when we die, just as I will remember my mother till the day of my death, regardless of when she dies. But if the Lord doesn't come, I will die, and my memory, my love, my fondness, will perish (for a small moment). But God doesn't die, His memory doesn't fade and distort as ours does; images of us don't come in and out of His mind with greater intensity and insistence at some times than at others; He remembers us constantly and will remember us after our death, right up until when the Lord comes. Because of this, He is the God of Abraham; Abraham is alive in the mind of God, He remembers his faith and his offering of Isaac, just as much as He was aware of it in Abraham's lifetime. The works of the dead follow them, in the sense that once they finish their labours their works are still in the memory of the Father (Rev. 14:13); for what father would not remember his dead child's ways and deeds? This is why Rom. 14:8,9 says that Jesus is our Lord after death just as much as He was and is during our lifetimes. Why? Because we are "the Lord's", because we were "added to the Lord" through baptism (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 11:24), because we are true brothers-in-Christ. From God's perspective, the dead believers are cheering us on as we run the race to the end; He remembers them as they were, and knows how they would behave if they were alive today, looking down upon us as we run the race (Heb. 12:1). Or in another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given "white robes" and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11).

The fact Jesus is Lord has vital practical import for us. In Rom. 14:7-9, Paul speaks of the need not to live unto ourselves, but to rather live in a way which is sensitive to the conscience and needs of others. Why? "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living". Because He is our Lord we therefore don't live for ourselves, but for Christ our Lord and all those in Him. When Paul in 1 Tim. 6 exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn't just some literary flourish. It is

embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare.

14:10- see on 2 Cor. 11:2.

But you, why do you judge your brother?- The "you" refers to those legalists who judged the liberals. Those who despised or 'set at nothing' others are surely the liberals despising the conservatives. Hence "You again..." refers to a different group.

Or you again, why do you set at nothing your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God- We read in Jer. 42:2 of a supplication being "accepted", or 'to fall down before' (RVmg.). To fall down before the Lord Jesus is to be accepted of Him. Paul speaks of us all *standing* before the judgment seat of Christ after first of all casting ourselves down; and this in the context of saying that God is able to make the weak brother *stand* in His sight (Rom. 14:4 cp. 10,11). We will all be in the position of the weak brother. Don't "set at nought" your brother- because the judgment seat of Christ is coming for you too (Rom. 14:10). We will *all* be "set at nought" then; that's the implication. We will all have to be made stand by God's grace. We will *all* be made to stand, i.e. be accepted (Eph. 6:11-13; Col. 4:12)- or at least, Paul is saying, that's how you should look at your brethren, as if they too will be accepted. For if we have no right to condemn our brethren; we must surely assume they will be accepted. In passing, note how Paul warns in this context that we can cause our brother to fall down or stumble (Rom. 14:13). Some at the last day will not be 'stood up', they will remain prostrate and then slink away. And why? Because they will have been made to fall by their brethren. Our faith and our community of believers is fragile, more fragile than we may think. In all the pressures of these last days it is so terribly easy to cause each other to stumble, to fall, with the ultimate consequence that they will not be stood up at the judgment. This is the evil of causing offence, stumbling, making another to fall down.

14:11 *As it is written*- Is. 45:23 "Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess" is quoted by Paul in Rom. 14:11,12 as being specifically concerning our position at the judgment seat. It is therefore fitting to read Is. 45:24,25 as being concerning our thoughts then: "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord (Jesus) have I righteousness and strength... and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed (cp. our earlier reconstruction of the rejected initially arguing with the Lord in anger, and then slinking away in shame). In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory". In God's presence (judgment language: Acts 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10) no flesh will glory, but will glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29). The RV makes all this even more personal: "Only in the Lord, shall one say unto me, have I righteousness and strength" (Is. 45:24 RV). The words of grateful realization will be directed specifically by us to the Lord Himself.

As I live, says the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God- To God (in Christ). This is parallel to "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11,12). "Account" is the Greek '*logos*'- we will '*logos*' ourselves in the sense that we will verbally confess ("every tongue") the innermost essence of our spiritual lives. "Confess", *exomo-logeo* is related to *logos,* "account". This will lead us to confess with our tongue that Christ is really our Lord (Phil. 2:11). Confessing our sinfulness will lead us to show our appreciation of His Lordship. That which has been spoken or thought in darkness will then be heard in the

light- in that day "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (Lk. 12:2,3). He will confess our righteous acts, and we will confess our sins (Is. 45:23-25 cp. Phil. 2:10; Rom. 14:11). For the wicked, it will be the opposite. They confess their righteous acts, He tells them their sins. And in this way the good and bad deeds of all the responsible will come to the light.

14:12 *So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God*- The connection between Rom. 14:12 and Mt. 12:36 ["every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment"] suggests that Paul recognized that we all speak idle words which we will have to give account of at judgment. Therefore, because of our rampant tongue, we will stand in deep need of grace. So therefore, Paul says, you'd better be soft on your brother now, in this life.

"Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one *of us* shall give account" (Rom. 14:11,12) is an example of where 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of us the responsible'. "The dead" will be judged (Rev. 11:18)- not everyone who ever died, but the dead who, God counts responsible. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men" (Tit. 2:11)- certainly not to every human being that has ever lived; but to the "all men" of the new creation. The Lord tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9)- for every one who has a representative part in His sacrifice through baptism.

14:13- see on Mt. 13:22.

Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide- There is to be one thing we judge or decide- that we never cause another to stumble.

Never to put a stumbling block- The "stumblingblock" was used earlier in Romans with regard to the Lord Jesus and His grace being a stone of stumbling for the Jews (9:32,33; 1 Pet. 2:8). He could be made a stumblingblock by Gentile believers insisting that Jewish believers disobey the Mosaic law by eating thinks like pork; if the Jews did so with a bad conscience, they might end up turning away from Him completely The word "stumblingblock" is used in exactly this context in :20,21 and 1 Cor. 8:9. So sensitivity is required in order to not make another stumble. It is not enough to insist that we are right from God's word, and therefore what we demand must be accepted by others. Their weakness of understanding and therefore of conscience must still be taken into account. Pure Biblicism has no place for this kind of thinking, and results in the utter belligerence and insensitivity which has led so many to stumble from the pathway to God's Kingdom.

Or hindrance in the way of a brother- "Hindrance" is *skandalon* and strictly refers to the twig on a trap, which once triggered opens up the trap into which the animal falls. The Lord is crystal clear in His teaching that those who create such triggers for others shall be cast out at the last day (Mt. 13:41; 18:7; Lk. 17:1). Hence Paul urges that we must soberly decide / judge *never* to do this to another believer. This needs to be taken far more seriously by those who insist on rejecting others from their communities because of positions on divorce or fellowship. Paul concludes by soberly warning avoidance of those who cause such *skandalon* (16:17). Walking in the light, loving our brother, means that we have no reason of causing *skandalon* (1 Jn. 2:10). Love is not causing another to stumble.

14:14 *I know, and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus*- Paul really did meditate on every word of his Lord. Thus he says he was *persuaded* by the Lord Jesus that all

foods were clean- this is how he took the Lord's teaching in Mk. 7:19. Those words *lived* to Paul, they were as the personal persuasion of his Lord, as if Christ was talking to him personally through the Gospel records.

That nothing is unclean of itself- This is another window onto the fact that essentially, sin is committed within the mind. It is the mental attitudes which go along with eating or not eating which are the key issues before God. Because there is nothing unclean of itself.

Save that to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean- Paul's approach could have been: 'The truth is that "nothing is unclean". So those who still think in terms of clean and unclean are wrong. It's their problem- they should accept the truth about this matter and get over it. By believing some things are still unclean they are denying the power of the Lord's sacrifice, how awful...'. But he doesn't. He asks us to accept that these believers really think some things are unclean and so for them, if they eat them, they would be sinning in their conscience. The bald black and white, truth / error scenario doesn't help here; the sensitive Christian must go beyond this in sensitivity to those who are still immature, rather than hitting them with a choice as to whether to submit to Divine truth or not. We can be sure that the Father likewise practices this policy with us all over many areas where we also misunderstand and are genuinely miseducated. It is by our response to others like that as we encounter them in life that we work out our own final standing before Him.

14:15 *For if your brother is grieved by what you eat*- The grief or distress would be in their conscience, being encouraged to do something which they believe is sinful. Paul only uses the same word in Romans to describe his distress for Israel and those still under the Law (Rom. 9:2). This is the grief we should have. We the mature should therefore feel grief for the legalists; and not cause them grief in their conscience.

You walk no longer in love- Blind, bald insistence upon true principle in this case can lead others to stumble; and this nets our condemnation, not our commendation for understanding the theoretical truth about something. The way of love involves sensitivity to others. Recall that Paul has said that there should not be argument about these matters, not receiving these weaker ones to endless disputations (:1). Rather their weaker position must be accepted and lived with in sensitivity. This is a far ranging principle which so many Protestant groups obsessed with 'truth' have seriously failed to grasp.

By what you eat, do not destroy- The emphasis is upon "you". Our example is more powerful than we can imagine. The 'destruction' refers to condemnation at the last day; the Greek word is used in this way elsewhere (Mt. 5:29,30; 9:17 with reference to the new covenant destroying the old bottles of the legalists; 10:28,39; Rom. 2:12). So will God condemn a person for eating pork when they see you eat it, just because it is sinful in their conscience? Even when God sees that there is nothing unclean of itself? Maybe. Perhaps this is the degree to which God is sensitive to human conscience. But we must give due weight to the fact that whether our conscience commends or condemns us, it is not by our conscience that we shall be justified at the last day (1 Cor. 4:4). I would rather think that if a person e.g. eats pork when they feel it is a sin, they will thereby be emboldened to consciously sin in other areas too, and their spiritual lives will fast tumble downhill until they lose faith completely.

The one for whom Christ died- The tragedy of making another stumble is that Christ died for their salvation; you have made His death in vain for them. This is the message of the new wine, Christ's blood, being put into old wineskins; they are

destroyed, and the new wine is poured out on the ground wasted. To make Christ's death to be in vain is serious, and can be the basis of our condemnation.

4:16 *So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil*- 'Spoken of as evil' is literally 'blasphemed'. The Greek word can be used of bad speaking against a person and not only against God. Paul uses the same word in this very context in 1 Cor. 10:30: "If I eat my food with thankfulness, why is evil spoken of me, for that for which I give thanks?". By allowing continual argument about the food issue, persons and things such as pork meat started to be spoken evil of. This is exactly why Paul wisely commands that those who have these 'weak' positions should be accepted but not argued with (:1).

14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not about what we eat and drink*- This verse doesn't speak only of the fact that in the future Kingdom of God on earth, we shall not be debating what we eat- and so we shouldn't be now. 15:13 uses the same Greek words to explain that God through the Holy Spirit fills us with "joy and peace". These are internal mental attributes; and we are given them by God through the Spirit / mind which is given to us, as explained in chapter 8. Gal. 5:22 likewise says that the Spirit within us brings forth the fruit of joy and peace. "The Kingdom of God" was the core message of the Lord Jesus, and His teachings and parables about it refer mainly to life lived under the Kingship of God right now. Within that spirit of thinking and living, we do not argue about issues like food. There is a clear connection with the theological section of Romans- the life of the Spirit is all about righteousness (8:10)- the same terms used in this verse. The practical import of that is that we are not going to be mentally bogged down in endless disputes about legal issues. We are therefore not to keep arguing about them (:1), but just accept the weak and immature as they are, by grace.

But about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit- All the law, every possible type of legislation, is comprehended in the one simple law of loving our neighbour (Rom. 13:9). We aren't free to do, dress or speak just as we like; the law of love binds heavy upon us. The things of God's Kingdom don't revolve so much around laws (e.g. about what we should eat and drink) but around "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). It is attitudes which are important rather than specific acts of obedience.

In Ex. 33:8 Moses asks to see God's glory, and in reply he is told God will proclaim His Name before him, which is done in Ex. 34:5-7 by the declaration of God's righteous attributes. Solomon building a temple "For the name of the Lord, and an house for His Kingdom" (2 Chron. 2:1) suggests that God's Kingdom is another manifestation of His Name, because it will be filled with His attributes. This helps us understand Rom. 14:17: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink... but righteousness... joy", i.e. the characteristics of God's Name.

14:18 *For he that herein serves Christ is wellpleasing to God*- The language is that of sacrifice, which is how God was 'served'; and "wellpleasing" is the word for 'acceptable', used about the acceptability of sacrifice. By patiently accepting the weakness and immaturity of others, and living the Spirit life of joy and peace which is not bogged down in endless arguments over interpretation, we are in fact serving the Lord Jesus; and that service is a sacrifice acceptable to God.

And approved of by men- Taking the higher path of not conflicting over these matters was in any case the way to acceptability with men. Not that this is of itself what we

should be seeking; but Paul is addressing the unspoken issue of everyone wanting to be seen by men to be doing the right thing.

14:19 *So then let us follow after things which make for peace*- The endless disputations about law do not make for peace, neither with God [which is how Paul often uses the idea of peace] nor with men. Again we note that Paul came down on one side of the argument- for he writes that there is nothing unclean in itself. But this point was not to be pushed and made the source of endless argument. For peace between believers is the fruit and intention of the Spirit. And again there is a connection back to the more theoretical section of Romans, where Paul uses the same word in saying that Israel who 'followed after' legalistic righteousness did not attain it (9:30,31).

Lk. 14:32 records the parable of the man with a small army going to meet the General with a far larger army- and then wisely desiring "conditions (lit. 'things') of peace". The man is clearly us, and the General coming with His hosts is evidently the Lord Jesus; we are to come to peace with Him before the final meeting of God and man in judgment. But this Greek phrase 'things of peace' recurs in Rom. 14:19, where Paul speaks of making every effort to live at peace *with our brethren*, e.g. being sensitive to their scruples about food. Paul clearly understood that our peace with God cannot be unrelated to our peace with our brethren. To make peace with God and His Son as required in Lk. 14:32 must have some practical issue- and practically, it means living at peace with the rest of God's children.

And things whereby we may edify one another- Paul repeats this in 15:2: "Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to encourage him". "Encourage" is s.w. "edify" or 'build up'. We take our place within the congregation thinking how we can build up the one next to us. And that requires wisdom; we have to choose our issues, losing a few battles to win a war. And arguing over the food issues was not going to build anyone up. Let that one go, just as the Lord let go the issue of folks believing in demons; focus instead on something positive which will really improve or build up our neighbour within the church. This approach of course is at variance with the mindset which insists that because truth has been perceived over one issue, we must keep on and on about that issue, until we either drive our brother out of the church or we split the community.

14:20 *Do not overthrow the work of God for the mere sake of food*- Paul has shown in :15 that we can destroy a brother by insisting on our particular point, no matter how correct we may be [see note there]. The "work of God" refers to His work to save that individual whom we can cause to stumble. Our own stubbornness and belligerence regarding our own correctness of understanding can actually be working against God's work. And because He allows us freewill, He permits us the power to both stumble and build up our brother. Much depends on us. "The work of God" is specifically faith in the Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:29). We can destroy another's faith in Jesus because of an argument about food. This is how fragile and delicate is the faith of others. And yet we can too easily ride roughshod over the faith of others by our insistence on our correct interpretations. Paul earlier in Romans has argued that God saves without works of men (4:2,6; 9:11). Salvation is His work... and yet we can disallow His work for others by making them stumble. We must take seriously our potential to do this. In no way can we therefore go along with any policy or position which leads to the stumbling of others. And this may have radical implications for us in our social life

within the believing community, just as it did for the likes of Paul and Peter in the first century church. Our relationship with the Lord God is personal. Each of us is "the work of God", and we should therefore respect each other's spiritual individuality, even if it is based on misunderstandings such as misinterpretation of Old Testament passages about food.

All things indeed are clean- Again Paul clearly comes down on one side of the food argument- no food is unclean of itself. And yet his view is that the weak should be admitted to the church but there is to be no disputing about their wrong understandings (:1).

However it is evil for that man who makes another stumble by what he eats- Paul here redefines clean and unclean food in a new covenant context. Eating unclean food is made equal to doing something which makes your legalistic brother stumble. This is what defiles and places us outside God's realm of holiness.

14:21- see on Acts 18:18.

It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble- The 'good' thing here is that spoken of in :16: "So do not let what you regard as good...". What is good or clean meat is to not do anything that causes your brother to stumble. "Or do anything..." takes this whole argument far beyond the immediate context of whether we can eat pork or only *kosher* chicken. The principles reach to our day. The legalists were convinced that the Bible taught a difference between clean and unclean food- for "the Bible tells me so". But the more mature could see that the Lord's words, and the implications of the Lord's sacrifice, meant that these laws should no longer be kept. Because 'the Bible told them so'. And they were in fact right, as Paul labours by twice stating that there is nothing unclean in itself. But they only won on points. The far wider issue was not causing another to stumble by keeping on about the fact, and accepting weaker brethren to only have "doubtful disputations" with them (:1). The principles are so clearly relevant to all the struggles over interpretation and practice which have riddled all the various denominations of Christendom.

14:22 *The faith which you have*- Eating previously unclean food was possible by faith in the Lord Jesus and His work. It would seem from how he writes that Paul is especially addressing the more mature element in the church; for in :1 he tells them to accept the weak into the church.

Keep between yourself and God- Our faith and understanding is in a sense very intimate, "before God" (Gk.), in His presence. By endlessly engaging others in the "doubtful disputations" of :1, that faith was no longer private, but was being forced upon others. The idea seems to be that one may eat privately what they wish, but should not eat or drink before a weaker believer in a way which makes him stumble (:21).

Happy is he that has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves- This is the blessedness of a good conscience.

14:23- see on Col. 2:18.

But he that doubts- Romans 14 and 15 have many allusions back to the earlier, 'doctrinal' part of Romans. Between them, those allusions teach that we *are* to be as Abraham; and yet we will be accepted if we can't rise up to his standard. Rom. 14:1 exhorts us to "receive the *weak in faith"*- when we have been told that Abraham was *not* weak in faith (Rom. 4:19) and we should seek to be like him. But we are to

receive those who are in his seed by baptism, but don't make it to his level of personal faith. Rom. 14:5 bids us be *fully persuaded*- as Abraham was "fully persuaded" (Rom. 4:21). Yet, Rom. 14:23 he who *doubts* is damned- and Abraham didn't *stagger* [s.w. Rom. 4:20). Thus ultimately, he must be our example, even if some in the ecclesia will take time to rise up to his standard, and unlike him are "weak in faith".

Is condemned if he eats, because he eats not from faith- This is the opposite case of those who can happily eat whatever on the basis of their faith in the Lord's work; which is how "faith" is used in Romans.

Yet we read in :1-3 that those who are weak in faith should be accepted and are accepted by God. But the person of :23 is "condemned" because he "doubts". I suggest the idea is that if a person 'has faith' although based on misunderstanding, that is acceptable with God; but the person who has no faith, and acts on the basis of secular thinking, is to be condemned. Clearly God sees degrees of faith, and is prepared to accept even misguided faith. But He condemns those who are "not of faith". Another take is to see the word play in the Greek behind "he that doubts [*dia-krin*o] is damned [*kata-krino*] if he eat". The *krino* suffix is the word for judgment / condemnation. The idea may be that he who condemns another for their position will be condemned. Acceptance of the weak [in our opinion] is therefore critical; because we must reflect to others the Lord's tolerance of us and His bearing of our weaknesson the cross.

And whatever is not of faith is sin- "Of faith" is a phrase used earlier by Paul in Romans; and I have argued that the practical section of the letter is full of reference to the theological foundations given in the opening section. "The just shall live by [s.w. "of"] faith" (1:17). If we are not living in justification in Christ, free from the Law, then we are in sin. This is the tough dualism Paul presents in the opening chapters of Romans. If they ate unclean food whilst still thinking they were thereby justified by the Law, then they were in sin- for Paul has proved that legalistic obedience to Law leaves us in sin, and only faith in Christ can get us into a status outside of "sin". The Jews could only be justified by or 'of' faith (3:30; 4:16). Rightness before God is only "of faith" (5:1; 9:30,32). Any other way leaves us "in sin". And yet we are left with a significant logical problem: If indeed justification and salvation are *only* "of faith" in Christ and not by keeping Mosaic commandments, then why does Paul as it were allow this whole question of obeying Jewish laws to be as it were a matter of personal conscience? I can only conclude that he accepts that God's grace in Christ is such that even those who did not fully 'get it' would still be saved. And that is grace indeed. This also answers the question as to what was to become of the Jewish Christians amongst Paul's readership who didn't fully accept his arguments. Were they thereby condemned? If they sought justification by obedience to Law, then yes- "he that doubts is condemned". But if they still hankered after obedience to Law and couldn't emotionally accept the full implications of that status- well Paul seems content to allow them some concession to that weakness.

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

15:1- see on Rom. 12:1.

Now we that are strong- As noted at the end of chapter 14, Paul is writing specifically to those who knew the Law to be ended and who rightly felt free to eat anything.

Ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves- In chapter 14, Paul has defined "the weak" as those who could not come to terms with grace and who persisted in misinterpreting Bible teaching about food laws. In effect, they were in denial of much of Paul's inspired reasoning earlier in Romans. But he has urged these "weak" be accepted in the church (14:1), but not endlessly argued with. The more mature had "to bear" their weakness of understanding and behaviour. This is at variance to the pure Biblicist, truth vs. error scenario, where those who are Biblically in the right keep on attacking the weak and will not fellowship them. The Greek for "infirmities" is the word used about how Abraham was *not* weak or infirm in faith (4:19); and how the Law was "weak through the flesh". Those still under the Law simply did not have the faith of Abraham. And others had been made weak or infirm by the intolerance of those who understood better than them (14:21 AV "is made weak"). But the strong were to accept them into the church (14:1) and carry / bear them. And this is indeed how life is in any church; there are some who will need to be carried to the Kingdom. That is how it is. And it is the serious sin of those supposedly 'strong' to refuse to carry them.

The Lord Jesus didn't sin Himself but He took upon Himself our sins- to the extent that He *felt* a sinner, even though He wasn't. Our response to this utter and saving grace is to likewise take upon ourselves the infirmities and sins of our brethren. If one is offended, we burn too; if one is weak, we are weak; we bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. 15:1). But in the context of that passage, Paul is quoting from Is. 53:11, about how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross. We live out the spirit of His cross, not in just bearing with our difficulties in isolation, but in feeling for our weak brethren. We should be able to say with Paul that we are indeed co-crucified with Him. For most of us, this co-crucifixion isn't in terms of literal pain or violent persecution for His sake. So in what terms, then, are His sufferings articulated in us? Surely, therefore, in our mental suffering with Him. Thus Paul can quote a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion and apply it to our sufferings as a result of bearing with our weak brethren (Rom. 15:1-3).

15:2 *Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to encourage him*- The ordinary people must take responsibility. Each of us should build up his neighbour- and 'neighbour' is usually to be understood in the NT as our neighbour within the ecclesia (Eph. 4:25; James 2:8; 4:12). In the context, encouraging or [Gk.] 'building up' is by bearing the weaknesses of the weak. According to 14:1 ff., those weaknesses involve their misunderstanding of the Lord's sacrifice and 15:3,4 suggest that these weak brethren insulted the 'stronger'. Building up others, loving our neighbour, was to be by accepting their weaknesses of understanding and conscience.

15:3 *For Christ also did not please himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached You fell upon me*- We must receive one another, even as the Lord has received us (Rom. 15:7)- and this includes receiving him who is even weak in the faith (Rom. 14:1). We should be looking for every reason to receive and fellowship our brethren, rather than reasons not to. The essence of living this kind of life is the cross of Christ. Paul brings this out in Rom. 14:21-15:3: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak…We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The

reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me". The quotation is from a Psalm which refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet Paul applies this to us, in our bearing with the weaknesses of our brethren and seeking not to offend them. For this is the living out of the crucifixion life in ours. This is putting meaning into words, reality into the regular action of taking bread and wine in identity with that sacrifice. Sensitively bearing with our brethren, not doing anything that weakens or offends them, but rather building them up by our patience and tolerance of their scruples and limited perceptions. This is the cross, for us. The more we realize the height of the calling, the more even like our Lord we balk at what we are really being asked to do. It is so hard not to offend others and to commit ourselves to only building them up. As hard, in barest essence, as the cross of Calvary, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, about 1970 years ago.

The love of Christ in the cross is to have a continual inspiration upon us- endless love, countless moments of re-inspiration, are to come to us daily *because of the cross*. This is how central it is to daily life. The crucifixion prophecy "The reproaches of them that reproached You fell upon me" is quoted in Rom. 15:3 about Christ's crucifixion; but on this basis Paul appeals to *us* to please not ourselves, but to edify our neighbour; and thus the prophecies about Christ's sufferings for us were written for *our* learning and encouragement (Rom. 15:2,4,5). This works out as being the case insofar as we are to see in His sufferings a direct, personal compulsion to *us* to respond in selfless service of others. The connection between Him there on that piece of wood and us today, struggling to live life in selfless service, is absolutely live, concrete and powerful.

15:4 *For whatever things were written previously were written for our education, that through patience and through the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope*- Paul has just quoted a prophecy of the Lord's sufferings; and he has drawn a bridge between Him there, and us today. His sufferings are ours. In the first century Roman context, our patience with legalists and their taunts is a form of sharing His experience on the cross. Those things were therefore written for us, as well as Him. And they are therefore for our "comfort". The *paraklesis*, "comfort", is literally a 'coming near'. He there in His time of dying comes near to us, in that all He suffered is in essence what we do in various ways.

15:5 *Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you*- Patience and comfort are internal attributes; and God is willing to give these things to us. They are if you like spiritual, relating to the spirit or mind; and God is eager to give us that spirit- His Spirit.

To be of the same mind one with another, according to Christ Jesus- What God gives is His Holy Spirit, or as it is termed elsewhere, the mind or spirit of Christ. We are counted as Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us. But God seeks to make this how we actually are- by the transforming power of the Spirit within. Each believer is given the same mind of Christ- and so unity between believers is achieved on account of "Christ Jesus". And yet in chapter 14 we see Paul accepting that some of the believers were "weak" in their understanding of some aspects of the Lord's sacrifice. But he focuses on the fact that despite that, they are of the same spirit of Christ as those who understand better. Unity is not the same as uniformity, neither is it achieved by identity of belief or understanding, let alone common ascent to a document such as a statement of faith. The verb translated "be of the same mind" is that used in 14:6

about those who regard or mind the Sabbath as holy and those who do not. They could legitimately have a different mind to each other over the interpretation of Scripture [for both sides considered they had God's word behind their positions]. But they were of the same mind with each other if they had the spirit of Christ- this was the essential unity, and not identity of Biblical interpretation. The same word is used in Phil. 2:2,5, where Paul appeals for believers to be of the same mind- and then defines that as being the mind of Christ. This is how we are of one mind- by having the same devotion to the mind or spirit of Christ and being open to receiving it. Paul has earlier used the word in describing how those who are justified by grace receive the gift of the Spirit which results in minding the things of the Spirit (8:5,27). Our efforts to consciously be of one mind toward each other (12:16 s.w.) are therefore an effort to allow the mind of Christ to be our rule and guide in all human relationships.

15:6 *That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*- "With one accord" is a phrase often used of the early church, who were clearly made that way by their common receipt of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, despite their major differences. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is to glorify His Father- and all those who have received that spirit will do so.

15:7 *Therefore receive one another*- This forms an *inclusio*, a kind of bookmark, concluding the section which began in 14:1. They were to receive one another on the basis that they each had the spirit / mind of Christ. The basis for receiving another is because God has received them (:3). And clearly enough, Paul understood the Father and Son to have received these 'weak' ones who had not fully accepted everything revealed about the Lord's work and sacrifice.

Even as Christ also received you each one, to the glory of God- This may be a warning against blanket positions on fellowship, whereby people are not treated as individuals but as blocks of persons. Each one of us was received by the Lord and so each one we encounter is to be received.

15:8 *For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given to the fathers*- Paul seeks to bring together Jew and Gentile in the church at Rome by reasoning that the Lord's death as a Jew and for Israel was the basis for Gentile salvation. He died in the first place for Israel, those under the law, to redeem God's Israel (Gal. 4:4). When was Christ made a servant ["minister"]? According to Phil. 2, in His death on the cross. "The truth of God" is a phrase Paul elsewhere uses in Romans for the Gospel which is the universal truth for all men, Jew and Gentile. It was by the Lord's death that the promises to the Jewish fathers [which are the basis of the Gospel] were "confirmed". He was the sacrifice previsioned in Gen. 15 which was God's confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant. God's covenant commitment to us is amazing. In Genesis 15, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties

passed between the dead animals- but only Yahweh does. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant. See on Mt. 28:10.

15:9 *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy*- It was because of the Lord's death and resurrection that the promises to Abraham were confirmed. He became thereby in the fullest sense the seed of Abraham who would inherit the earth for ever. And all who identify with Him and become "in Him" by faith and baptism are thereby assured of the salvation promised to Him and Abraham. This was the thought of 4:16: "To the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed. Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all". The promise was made sure or confirmed (:8) in the Lord's death. And thus His death initially for Israel became the world's salvation.

As it is written: Therefore will I give praise to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your Name- The quotation from Ps. 18:49 is of David wanting to praise God among the Gentiles. Paul reads this as meaning that David looked forward to a day when the Gentiles would praise God, and he would be there amongst them doing the same.

15:10 *And again He says: Rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people*- "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people" (Dt. 32:43) is quoted here in the NT concerning Gentile response to the Gospel. But they will rejoice and respond *because* of God's terrifying judgment of His enemies outlined in the context (Dt. 32:41-44). In some way, the harder side of God attracts, in that men see in truth that He is God and they but men. His rod and staff of correction are our comforts (Ps. 23:4). Israel will finally realize that God's judgments upon them have brought them to know Him: "They shall know that I am the Lord, in that I caused them to go into captivity" (Ez. 39:28 RV).

15:11 *And again: Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him*- This quotation from Ps. 117:1 is understood as putting "the peoples" in parallel with "all you Gentiles". The "peoples" were the tribes of Israel, and they along with "all the Gentiles" would praise Yahweh. The writer looked forward to a time when the Gentiles along with Israel would unite in praise of Israel's God. I suggest this because the other quotations here in Rom. 15 parallel the Gentiles with Israel. And this was Paul's context here- Jew and Gentile should praise the Lord together in the church at Rome. "All the Gentiles" is defined in Acts 15:17 as "all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called". The language of all the world or all the Gentiles refers not to every single person, but to all those who have believed in Christ.

15:12 *And again Isaiah said: There shall be the root of Jesse and he that arises to rule over the Gentiles*- The 'arising' of the One who was the offshoot of Jesse was a reference to the Lord's resurrection. It was that which enabled all people to identify with His death and resurrection and thereby be saved. The "root of Jesse" rather than of David suggests that the Lord was prefigured by David himself.

On him shall the Gentiles hope- "In Him"; by becoming in Christ by faith and baptism, the dead and resurrected Lord becomes the One through whom salvation is possible for anyone. Jew or Gentile.

15:13 *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit*- The "hope" is the certainty of salvation made possible for all men by becoming "in Christ" (:12). The certain hope ahead comes from having sin dealt with, and the subsequent peace with God. And this brings joy. But the God who is the source of that Hope fills believing human minds with that joy and peace, "in the power of the Holy Spirit". The arena of the Spirit's operation is therefore in the human heart- for that is where joy and peace is experienced. This 'filling' by the Spirit is that found in Acts 13:52, where the believers "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit". We note from that reference that 'filling' is an ongoing process, and not something which only occurs at baptism. The believers in Rome had already been baptized, and Paul wishes them to experience another 'filling', as happened in Acts 13:52. Paul uses the same word in :14 concerning how he believed they had already been 'filled' with all knowledge and goodness; but he wished that filling to be ongoing.

So that you may abound in hope- They already had hope (:12), but the work of the Spirit in their hearts was to help them feel that, so that they might abound in that hope. Following through Paul's reasoning in Rom. 15:9-13, he seems to be saying that "hope" (RV) leads to joyful praising, which in turn leads to hope and trust. It's an upward spiral, a positive circle. And each of those fruits of the Spirit become more gripping upon us the more we develop them.

15:14- see on Mk. 4:8.

And I myself also am persuaded about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness- Paul has just said that he is "persuaded" that there is nothing unclean of itself (14:14); and he is equally persuaded that those who don't agree with his persuasion {the "weak" in the church] were just as much filled with the Spirit ["*full* of goodness"]. This is what we observed in chapter 14- Paul felt that they were all to be of the same mind, that of Christ, the Spirit, even if they had theological differences.

Filled with all knowledge, able also to encourage one another- The Holy Spirit filled the hearts of each of them, those with the old view of the food laws, and those who understood better in Christ. Paul believed that therefore they were able to 'admonish' (Gk.) each other, in the power and wisdom of the Spirit given to each of them. This was quite some unity- that the weak in understanding could still admonish the more mature or correct in understanding by the power of the Spirit within them. This is indeed "the unity of the Spirit", whereby those who have defective understandings of some things can still admonish those who have better understandings. All this is of course impossible of understanding by those who insist that 'truth' in terms of correct understanding is the final arbiter as to a believer's standing.

15:15 *But I write the more boldly to you in some way, as if putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me by God*- Again, having explained the intended unity between the two groups, Paul weighs in on one side of the debate as he did previously, in stating that indeed there is no food which is unclean of itself. He insists that he has the gift / grace of God to teach, and it has

clearly been revealed to him that the Gentiles are to be accepted by God on the altar of Christ (:16). And moreover, he has been chosen to play a part in the acceptance of the Gentiles, and so his views about the food issue were not just his opinions but actually inspired by God.

15:16 *That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable*- See on :15. Throughout my commentary on Acts, I noted that Paul got himself into so much avoidable trouble through insisting on ministering to the Jews. His ministry was for the Gentiles. But he seems to have envied Peter's ministry to the Jews; for Paul was so much better qualified for that. But the Lord chose him for a ministry which he naturally appeared less suited for; because the Lord loves to work through human inadequacy. The double emphasis upon 'ministering' or serving shows that all Gospel preaching is a slave like service. All pride is thereby removed from any preaching work. Paul had had it revealed to him that the Jewish food laws were not to be binding upon Gentiles- and yet his calling was to make them an acceptable sacrifice. Therefore the acceptability of that sacrifice meant that his position on the Law was not just his opinion. They would be acceptable even without keeping the food laws. He uses the same word to explain how he hoped that his work for the Gentiles would be "acceptable" with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (15:31); he wanted them to accept the Gentile converts just as God accepted them. And this has been his theme in this section- that we should receive those whom God and His Son have accepted. The Gentile believers were to be 'offered up'; they were to be a sacrifice. By using that figure, Paul shows his understanding that every believer is called to a life of sacrifice. He was simply enabling their acceptability.

Rom. 15:16 speaks of the preacher as offering up his converts upon the altar [note how Acts 11:7 uses the same image of 'offering up' sacrifices to describe preaching]. And this connects with how Paul had earlier spoken in Rom. 12:1 of offering ourselves as living sacrifices in dedication. The aim of the preacher, therefore, is to provoke a sacrificial life in his or her converts, after the pattern of the Master whom they learn of.

When we read of 'ministering' in the NT, we are to generally perceive an allusion to the spirit of priesthood; for it was the OT priests who were understood as "ministers". Paul speaks of preaching God's word, both in the world and to brethren and sisters, as ministering (Col. 1:23,25; 1 Cor. 9:13). He saw himself as a minister of the Gospel "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable" (Rom. 15:16). This is priestly language. Paul saw his efforts for others as preparing a sacrifice. He says that we are *all* ministers (cp. priests) of God, stewards of the true Gospel, and should act appropriately (1 Cor. 4:1). Others gave money to poorer brethren, and again this is described as ministering, priest-ing (Rom. 15:27; Heb. 6:10). Reminding brethren of basic doctrines they already know is another kind of ministering (1 Tim. 4:16). Indeed, Peter says that we *each* have something to minister to each other, there is some way in which we can each serve each other (1 Pet. 4:10,11). We must bear one another's burden, as the priesthood bore the burden of Israel's iniquity (Num. 18:1,23). This is the meaning of priesthood.

Paul speaks of his preaching as being like a priest bringing the offerings of the Gentile converts as an acceptable sacrifice to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:16). This is very much the language of the prophets concerning the Messianic Kingdom- as if to imply that the Kingdom is brought about by our successful preaching? Hence it is in keeping

with this to think that there would be a burst of conversions to herald in the Kingdom. Paul speaks of his preaching work as offering up the Gentiles, as if he is a priest (Rom. 15:16)- and in the same figure, Peter is encouraged to preach to Gentiles by killing and eating animals in a peace offering (Acts 11:7). The command that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel is referring back to how the priests had no material inheritance but lived off the sacrifices (Num. 18:11). And for us, the honour and wonder of preaching Christ should mean that we keep a loose hold on the material things of this life. And as we are *all* priests, we are all preachers.

Being sanctified by the Holy Spirit- The presence of the Spirit in their hearts made them acceptable, as he has argued since the start of chapter 14, and as he explained theologically in chapter 8. The presence of the Spirit is what makes a believer "one of His", i.e. Christ's. We are not to think that they are unacceptable because of a difference on theology or practice if they have the Spirit. This central role of the Spirit in Paul's theology and practice must be given far greater weight in our communities.

15:17 *I have therefore my boasting in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God*- Paul has just argued that the presence of the Spirit in the hearts of the Gentiles makes them acceptable to God, and the Jewish Christians must accept this (see on :16). Now Paul goes on to demonstrate how that same Spirit has been manifest in a very public, even miraculous way in his entire mission to convert Gentiles to Christ. The "things pertaining to God" alludes to the Jewish language of sacrifice. Those sacrifices were the Gentile converts, and they were acceptable despite Paul's position on the Law.

No flesh may glory before God (1 Cor. 1:29); but Paul, in his spiritual man, as counted righteous before God, could glory (Rom. 15:17).

15:18 *For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed*- Paul saw himself as an agent of Christ. The Lord Jesus is not therefore passive. He is seeking to save others, He works through others to that end. He is trying to make Gentiles obedient. It is not enough to say that He has given them His word and it's just over to them now to obey or disobey. He works to persuade men towards obedience. And in the context here Paul is saying that this is done through the work of His Spirit.

Paul seems to have consciously modelled his life upon that of Moses; he evidently saw Moses as his hero. For example, he speaks of how he has been used to bring about God's glory through "signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:18,19), in the very language of Moses bringing "signs and wonders" upon Egypt (Ex. 7:3,9; 11:9,10; Dt. 4:34; 6:22). See on 1 Cor. 14:3.

15:19 *In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit*- The same Spirit active in the sanctifying or making holy of the hearts of Gentile believers had been more visibly active through the miracles he had performed, which were part of the efforts of the Lord Jesus to make the Gentiles obedient (:18). That the spirit does not just refer to the naked power of God is evident from Rom. 15:19: "the power of the spirit of God".

So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum- His desire to go to Spain (Rom. 15:24 AV) indicates a commitment to taking the Gospel to the very ends of the world he then knew. He may well have been motivated in this by wishing to fulfil in spirit the Kingdom prophecy of Is. 66:18,19, which describes how Tarshish (which he would have understood as Spain) and other places which "have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory" will be witnessed to by those who *have* seen

His glory and have “escaped” from God’s just condemnation by grace. Paul sees this as referring to himself. For he speaks in Rom. 15:19 of his ambition to take the Gospel to Spain; and in that same context, of how he will bring the Gentile brethren’s offering up to Jerusalem. This is precisely the context of Is. 66- the offerings of the Gentiles are to be brought up to Jerusalem, as a result of how the Lord’s glory will be spoken of to all nations. So Paul read Isaiah 66 and did something about his Old Testament Bible study; he dedicated his life to taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he encouraged them to send their offerings to Jerusalem. He was no mere theologian, no academic missiologist. His study and exposition of Old Testament Scripture led to a life lived out in practice, to hardship, risk of life, persecution, loneliness, even rejection by his brethren. It is also significant in passing to note that Is. 66:19 speaks of nations which occur in the list of nations we have in Genesis 10, in the context of the effect of Babel. It is as if Paul sees the spreading of the Gospel as an undoing of the curse of Babel and the establishment of the Kingdom conditions described in Is. 66. By his preaching of God’s Kingdom and the reign of Christ, he brought about a foretaste of the future Kingdom in the lives of his converts. And we can do likewise. Note how once again, the preacher preaches from his personal experience; Paul takes the vision of glory which he has beheld to those who have not seen nor heard. Paul speaks of how he had preached the Gospel from Jerusalem "as far round as Illyricum" (Rom. 15:19). This was a Latin-speaking province. Was he not implying that he had preached throughout the Greek speaking world, and now wanted to take it into the Latin-speaking world? He wanted to preach to the regions beyond his previous limits (2 Cor. 10:15); his aim was to spend some time in Rome and then preach in Spain.

Preaching, on whatever scale, involves a certain spirit of spiritual ambition; for example, the hope and faith that a leaflet, a mere piece of paper, might be the means of directing someone on to the Kingdom road. That a scrappy piece of paper, a passing comment at a bus stop should really lead a small mortal towards the eternal glory of God's nature... without spiritual ambition the preacher just wouldn't bother to start. Paul was the supreme model of ambition in preaching: “I have *fully preached* the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I *strived* (been ambitious, RV mg.) to preach the gospel" (Rom. 15:19,20). In his last days (or hours?) Paul's mind returned to these words. His swansong in 2 Tim. 4:17 is a direct allusion to Rom. 15:19: "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the *preaching* might be *fully known*, and that all the Gentiles might hear". Paul's reference here to 'completing the Gospel from Jerusalem and in a circle as far as Illyricum' is a window into his ambition in preaching. He speaks of his ambition to preach in Spain; and so we get the impression of him planning a circle starting in Jerusalem, curving north-west, then further west to Rome, and then south-west to Spain. To complete the circle to Jerusalem would have involved him preaching in North Africa- where there were major Jewish centres, e.g. Alexandria. Perhaps he implies that his ambition was to preach there too, in order to 'complete the circle of the gospel'.

I have fully preached the gospel of Christ- Paul speaks of having 'fulfilled' the Gospel by preaching it (Rom. 15:19 Gk.); the Gospel is in itself something which demands to be preached by those having it.

15:20 *Yes, making it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation*- Paul appears to have had a policy of breaking fresh ground for the Gospel and not getting involved where someone else had preached. It was his aim to spread the Gospel. He implies therefore that there were others preaching the Gospel apart from him. The metaphor of building

is in context of Paul's teaching that they should be building one another up (a closely related word is used in 14:19; 15:2). Always Paul consciously sets himself up as their example. He has reasoned that just as the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of the Gentile converts in Rome to sanctify them, so the same Spirit has been at work with him in his missionary work. He sees a huge unity of the Spirit throughout. And likewise he speaks of how they in Rome can build each other up, including the Jewish brethren building up the Gentiles, just as he is at work empire-wide building up the Gentile converts. When a person is baptized, they call upon themselves the name of the Lord Jesus. "Where Christ was already named" may therefore refer to areas where there had already been converts made.

Paul read the OT prophecies of how "to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see"; and he didn't just see them as descriptions of what would ultimately happen. He realised that the fulfilment of this prophecy depended *to some extent* on our human freewill; and therefore he *strove* (against so many odds) to preach Christ where He had not yet been named (Rom. 15:19,20). And he asks the Romans to *strive together* with him in prayer (15:30)- i.e. to join him in the struggle to witness world-wide, in that they would pray for his success. It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren.

15:21- see on Acts 13:47.

But, as it is written: They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand- Paul's policy of preaching in fresh areas was guided by his understanding of this prophecy. We are to use our initiative in fulfilling Bible prophecies, rather than assuming the fulfilment shall come about anyway. Indeed it could be argued that God's purpose is so open ended that He as it were depends upon our initiative in fulfilling some of the prophecies. Here Paul appropriates a prophecy of how the news of the crucified Christ would spread to those who had never heard it. He didn't just read those verses as prophecy; he saw in them an imperative to fulfil them. In Rom 15:21, Paul justifies his preaching by quoting from part of the suffering servant prophecy in Is. 52 / 53. That whole passage is set in a context of explaining "how beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings… all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is. 52:7,10). The preaching of good tidings and the declaration of God's salvation was through the crucifixion. Paul quotes Is. 52:15: "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand". This was Paul's justification for taking the Gospel to where Christ has not been named. Note in passing how the Lord Jesus sees us as "beautiful" in our witness to Him (as in Song 7:1). Yet further into Is. 53, so much else jumps out at us as appropriate to Paul's preaching: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high [cp. Paul knowing how to be exalted and abased, themes that occur in Is. 53 about Jesus' death]. As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man [cp. Paul's thorn in the flesh?], and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider". Paul appeared before Agrippa, Festus, and one or two Caesars, with a visage marred by his evangelistic sufferings.

15:22 *Therefore I was hindered these many times from coming to you*- Paul could now see why he had been hindered from visiting the church in Rome- for they were

converts of others, not his. He saw that it had been the Lord's wish that he continued his policy of breaking fresh ground for the Lord. His final insistence on going to Rome was not blessed- it could be argued. The Lord kept trying to hinder him, the wind / spirit blew against him as he voyaged there... but the Lord allowed Paul his insistence.

15:23 *But now, there is no need for me in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come to you*- The regions are of :19. He seems to be saying that he has done his shot in preaching to the Gentiles by preaching in an arc that began at Jerusalem; and now he is free, so he thinks, to come to Rome. But I would suggest that he was obsessed with a trip to Rome, capital of the empire. He speaks of how he had tried so hard to come to them previously (:19, and in 1:9-11). The Lord had hindered him- because his work was to break fresh ground for Christ (:20). I suggest that he talked himself into thinking that he had done his work in breaking fresh ground for Christ. But surely that was wishful thinking. That work was not done fully, nor could one man ever surely come to a point where he could say that he has taken the Gospel to all the Gentiles. In commentary on Acts, I point out repeatedly that Paul's journey to Rome was not blessed, and he didn't find there what he had hoped for. The Lord of course worked with him in his desire, but I would take his argument here as an example of self-justification.

There can be no doubt that the emphasis in the life of Paul was upon the geographical spread of the Gospel as far as possible. In around ten years, he established ecclesias in the four provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. And then he speaks as if his work was done in that part of the world, he had spread the word from Jerusalem round to Illyricum [i.e. throughout the Eastern half of the Empire], and therefore "I have no more place in these parts" (Rom. 15:19,23). He speaks as if he has fulfilled the "line" or geographical apportion of areas to him, and now he was turning his attention to the Western side of the Roman empire, going to Rome, planning a visit to Spain. In some ways, this is surprising, for his letters indicate that the ecclesias he had already established were weak indeed. All in Asia turned away from him, and he warned the Ephesian elders of this. Ecclesias like Corinth were hopelessly weak in doctrine and practice, and many were turning away, either to the world, or back to Judaism as in the Galatian ecclesias. He could so easily have spent his life running around the Eastern half of the Roman empire, seeking to strengthen what remained. But he seems to have considered his work to have been done, and presses ahead with fresh witness in another part of the world. He wrote letters and made occasional visits to address the problems as they arose, but his stress was repeatedly on pushing forward with the work.

This comment that Paul no longer "had any room for work in these regions" may not necessarily mean that he had preached the Gospel to completion; rather could it be a sad admission from Paul that opposition from the Judaist wing within the church meant that he could no longer work for the Gospel sensibly without causing division, and so he proposed opening a new front of work in Spain. And this wouldn't have been the first time when division between brethren has actually led to the Gospel spreading further, such is the way God works through the dysfunction of His children.

15:24 *I hope to see you during my journey, and to be helped on my way by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while*- His obsession was to "see Rome". I suggest that his appeal to Caesar was a desperate attempt to as it were force the Lord's hand

and let him go there, when the Lord had hindered him several times from doing so (1:9-11). If he had not done so, he could have been set free and continued his work amongst the Gentiles. He makes out that he just wants to drop in and see them en route to Spain (:28). But Rome was not particularly en route to Spain. If Spain was his destination, there were more direct routes there, not least via Alexandria. But he clearly had an obsession with Rome, and broke away from his intended mission to only break fresh ground for the Lord. "To be helped on my way" is a phrase used to mean 'Fellowshipping me in my missionary journey' (3 Jn. 8; 1 Cor. 16:6,11; Acts 15:3; 17:14,15). He was trying to get them to participate in the work of preaching to the Gentiles- see on :20.

The AV mentions his ambition for Spain- his spiritual ambition at a time when most men scarcely travelled 100km. from their birthplace, is just superb (Rom. 15:24,28).

He says that if he is "satisfied" by the fruit of the converts in Rome, then he could move on to preach in Spain, if he could seal the spiritual fruit of unity between Jewish and Gentile converts in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:24 RV). This is the spirit of 2 Cor. 10:15, where Paul told the Corinthians that "when your faith is increased", then the measure or extent of his missionary work could be geographically expanded.

15:25 *At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints*- The Jerusalem welfare project had been another project Paul tried in order to bring Jewish and Gentile believers together in the work of the Spirit. And he was hoping to get the Roman church to in essence get involved in something similar; see on :20 and :24.

15:26 *For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem*- This was a very positive take on the project. For it ran into big difficulties; the believers in Achaia didn't come up with their promised contributions, even though Paul had boasted that they were going to make those donations (2 Cor. 9:2). And there is no record of what was raised being received positively; all we read of in :31 is Paul's doubt as to whether it would be received. Rather it seems did the Jewish Christians betray Paul into the hands of the orthodox Jews and Romans. Again we sense an obsessive side to Paul, a desire to make things work out, to prove that Jew and Gentile were in fact harmoniously united in Christ.

God is believer-centric; to Him, His 'world' is the believers. He speaks of "Macedonia and Achaia" as meaning 'the believers in Macedonia and Achaia' (Rom. 15:26). “Samaria… received the word of God” (Acts 8:14)- not everyone in Samaria, but those who did are counted as “Samaria” to God. The field of the ecclesia is “the world” to God; and note how the Corinth ecclesia were “God’s field” (1 Cor. 3:9 Gk.). Often Scripture speaks as if "all men" will be raised. Rom. 2:6-9 speaks of "every man" being judged at the second coming. We know that literally "all men" will not be.

15:27- see on Rom. 15:16.

They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them- The believers in Achaia had to be cajoled by Paul to come up with what they had promised, according to 2 Cor. 9-11. And clearly there was much opposition from them towards Paul and his welfare project.

For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in material things- Again this is Paul rightly perceiving that Jew and Gentile both have the Spirit within them and working through and with them; and they ought therefore to work together. See on :20, :24 and :25. But he seems to wish to paint a picture of this actually happening on the ground, when in fact it was not at all like that. Human dysfunction was too strong.

All nations of the land were to be blessed because of Abraham and his seed, his one special seed [Jesus] and also his natural descendants. His children were intended to be a blessing to the other nations who lived around them, especially in that they were intended to bring them to Abraham's God and Abraham's faith. Now this is not to say that ultimately, Abraham and his seed will not bring blessing on literally the whole planet. Rom. 4:13 interprets the promise of the land of Canaan as meaning 'the whole world'. But this was by later development, and on account of the universal blessing achieved by the sacrifice of Abraham's greatest seed, the Lord Jesus. In the first instance, the blessing was to be upon all the families who lived on the 'earth' / land (12:3). There is a paradox here. For those already living in the land promised to Abraham, their land would be taken from them but they would be blessed. God was telling Abraham: 'You will possess the land and all nations of that land will be blessed'. They were to give up their physical inheritance to receive a spiritual one- this was the ideal. Paul applies this idea to us when he says that if Gentiles have received the spiritual blessings of Abraham's seed, ought they not to give their physical blessings to that same physical seed of Abraham? This is how and why he tells Gentile converts in Rome to send donations to the poor Jewish brethren in Jerusalem: "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things… I shall come in the fullness of the *blessing* of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:27-29).

15:28 *When therefore I have accomplished this, and have given to them this fruit, I will leave for Spain by way of Rome*- We rather wish Paul would have added 'God willing'. For this was not how things worked out. He was arrested and imprisoned in Jerusalem, nearly killed, spent at least 2 years in prison, and then forced his way to Rome by choosing to appeal to Caesar rather than being set free. And there is no Biblical evidence he ever made it to Spain. This situation also shows that having access to miraculous Spirit gifts didn't enable people to foretell their own futures. "Given to them this fruit" is not the best translation. The idea is that he wanted fruit sealed for them. The idea is as in Phil. 4:17 where he says he asked the Philippians for a gift not because he needed it, but because it would be a spiritual fruit for them with the Lord. For all his obsessive characteristics, this was a lovely move of Paul. He wanted the Spirit within the converts to bring forth fruit which would be to their credit before the Lord. We too need to consider how best we can encourage fruitfulness in others.

15:29 *And I know that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ*- The language is very similar to that of 1:11 "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to strengthen you". Paul seemed to think that his personal presence in Rome would result in their receiving some spiritual gift.

Indeed he speaks of a fullness of blessing, as if he had something spectacular in mind. But there is no record of his doing anything of the sort when he finally arrived in Rome. So I am inclined to read this as I do his certain talk about going to Spain etc. He appears to have been "sure" (AV) of things which were not at all confirmed by the Lord- in his obsessive enthusiasm for 'Rome'.

15:30- see on Col. 2:1.

Now I beseech you brothers- Paul was so earnest for their prayers because he knew that prayer for others does really affect outcomes. Prayer for others either works or it doesn't, and each person must simply pray for their issues alone. But seeing that clearly prayer for others does 'work', Paul urges their prayers for his project. And we should have the same attitude.

By our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit- The idea of *dia* here is more 'for the sake of...'. He wanted their prayers for the Jew-Gentile fellowship project because he was doing it for the sake of the Lord Jesus. He knew it would please the Lord, such unity and expression of love was what He died in order to achieve and enable. And it was for the sake of the love inculcated by the Spirit working within their hearts. Elsewhere Paul defines the fruit of the Spirit in the singular- simply, "love" (Gal. 5:22). The love brought forth by the Spirit was what would motivate their prayers for the fellowship project. Paul's idea so far in this chapter has been that the Spirit is within both the weak and the stronger in Rome, it is operating in and through Paul too; and he asks that they channel the love brought forth by the Spirit into praying for his work with the Gentiles.

That you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me- The allusion may be to Jacob's wrestling with God in prayer. Paul had so many times been hindered in coming to the Romans (1:9-11; 15:22,23); and he thinks those hindrances were from God, who had wanted to keep him focused on breaking new ground for the Lord Jesus. A visit to the church in Rome would not achieve that. And it seems Paul was as it were praying, even struggling with God, to be released from his calling to preach to the Gentiles, for his existing work to be counted as if he had fulfilled the ministry completely- so that he could then visit the existing church in Rome with God's blessing. Their prayers were so that Paul could come to Rome "through the will of God" (:32), with God's will behind it. So he believed that prayer could alter or at least affect God's will.

Paul read the OT prophecies of how "to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see"; and he didn't just see them as descriptions of what would ultimately happen. He realised that the fulfilment of this prophecy depended *to some extent* on our human freewill; and therefore he *strove* (against so many odds) to preach Christ where He had not yet been named (Rom. 15:19,20). And he asks the Romans to *strive together* with him in prayer (15:30)- i.e. to join him in the struggle to witness world-wide, in that they would pray for his success. It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren.

15:31 *That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe*- He is asking them to pray the Lord's prayer for him: "Deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13). Paul realized he faced a real threat from the Jews who did not believe in Jesus. If he had focused upon his ministry to the Gentiles, he need not have run the risk of engaging with them. It could be argued that these prayers were not answered; Paul was not

delivered from this element, who got him imprisoned for at least 2 years, and his plans to jet off to Spain from Jerusalem via Rome... simply didn't happen. I have argued that his appeal to Caesar was a way of trying to force the Lord's hand in letting him achieve his obsession with visiting Rome.

And that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints- He has just used this word about the Gentile converts being an acceptable sacrifice on the Christ altar (15:16). He uses the same priestly language about his 'service' of bringing an offering to Jerusalem, which he hoped would be acceptable *to the believers there*. He seems to be confusing acceptability to God, and acceptability to men. The idea of his Gentile-Jewish welfare project was that the Jewish Christians would accept the Gentiles and be deeply grateful to Paul personally, and accept him. His exclusion by the Jerusalem Jews, including it seems the Jewish Christians there, was painful beyond words for Paul. And he was trying to by all means find a way to end it, whilst at the same time being genuinely committed to producing unity between Jew and Gentile in Christ. In the end, there is no evidence that what offerings he did cobble together were accepted by the Jerusalem Jewish Christians. Rather have I suggested in my commentary on Acts that they in fact played a large part in his arrest and imprisonment. So these prayers and desires were not in fact answered, or at least not as Paul hoped.

After all his spiritual diplomacy in raising the fund, he had to ask the Romans to pray with him that the Jerusalem ecclesia would accept it (Rom. 15:31). Presumably they didn't want to accept help from Gentile converts whom they despised. And if they didn't accept it, then Paul would look as if he had got them to raise the money just to give to him. There must have been times when he thought of quitting the Christian community because of slander in the church. Paul was not a larger than life figure in the eyes of the early church. They didn't see him as we do. The harder he worked, the more he was slandered, and the more painfully.

15:32 *That I may come to you in joy through the will of God*- See on :30 *Strive together*. Paul asked them to pray that he could come to Rome according to God's will; so he believed that the will of God was not the inflexible 'will' of a false god like Allah, but the willing of God- which is an emotion, a feeling, which is thereby open to change and influence.

And together with you find rest- The fact nobody from the Roman church stood with Paul at his trial, and he had to ask Timothy to bring him a warm jacket and writing equipment, all rather indicates that his hope and prayer for this was not finally realized. I suggest he had an obsession with the situation at Rome, albeit mixed with good motivations about the work of the Spirit and Jew-Gentile unity.

15:33 *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen*- "Peace" in Roman means peace with God through the Lord's work, and it is a fruit of the work of the Spirit which is given to all believers. "With you *all*" refers to the divide between weak and strong, Jew and Gentile within the church. He wished them each, regardless of their misunderstandings or misplaced dogmatism, to experience the peace of sin forgiven and the knowledge that our salvation is assured.

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

16:1- see on :23.

I commend to you Phoebe- Paul in 2 Corinthians seems to criticize the idea of letters of commendation and the practice of wanting to have some external commendation. He is not simply saying 'I converted you at Corinth, so you know me, and it is inappropriate for you to demand third party commendations of me'. He is saying that, but he says so because of his belief that it is only the Lord's commendation which means anything (2 Cor. 10:18). And yet he goes along with this idea in the case of Phoebe, because he goes along with their weakness and culture on this point. And we can take that wider principle.

Our sister- Paul argues to Philemon that if Philemon considers Paul a brother in fellowship, then he must also consider Onesimus such. Because Paul considers Onesimus a brother. And the same logic applies here; Phoebe was Paul's sister in Christ, and the Romans were to likewise accept her as a sister. It could be of course that she was his literal sister; for we know that his sister's son was supportive of Paul.

Who is a servant of the church- She was indeed a 'deacon' but the word simply means a servant and it is impossible to argue whether this referred to an official church position or not. Paul has just described himself in chapter 15 as a minister to the Gentiles, and it would seem he is extending that idea to Phoebe. So he is asking the 'weak' who were tacitly against the work with the Gentiles to accept another who was working likewise for the Gentiles- for the church at Cenchreae were likely Gentiles.

That is at Cenchreae- The port of Corinth, from where it seems Paul was writing.

16:2- see on Lk. 11:7.

That you may welcome her in the Lord- This is the same idea as the exhortation to 'receive' the 'weak' in fellowship (14:1; 15:7) exactly because they too were "in the Lord". We suspect there was some opposition to receiving her- hence Paul's raising of the matter. Perhaps because she was a woman, or perhaps because she too was engaged in the ministry to the Gentiles. For Paul has just written of both the Lord Jesus and himself as being ministers of the Gentiles; and now he states that Phoebe is also a minister. Active fellowship of the kind envisaged here is predicated upon being "in the Lord". It is therefore utterly wrong to accept on one hand that a person is "in the Lord", but to deny them fellowship for reasons of church politics.

In a way worthy of the saints- "The saints" is a term used about the final acceptability of the believers in God's future Kingdom. Being 'worthy' or 'not worthy' is likewise the language of the last judgment (Mt. 22:8; Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:32 etc.). Accepting our fellow believers is the "way" to eternal life; this is a characteristic of those who will be 'worthy' or appropriate to be saints eternally. Likewise those who refuse to fellowship their brethren are behaving as the unworthy of being saints.

And I ask that you assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you- "Assist" is a legal term, used of presenting witnesses in a court (see Acts 24:13). Paul uses the word of how the Lord Jesus stood with him in his trial (2 Tim. 4:17). Romans 12-16 continually alludes to the theological section of Romans; here to the triple request to "yield" or present ourselves for service to our new master who bought us out of slavery to sin (Rom. 6:13,16,19), the word meaning to present yourself. We are now the Lord's servants, but we need to present ourselves for service. And in practice this means saying to those in Him "Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be the Christ to you". As she had 'stood before' others ["been a helper of many"], so they now were to stand before her ready to offer assistance.

For she herself also has been a helper of many, and of my own self- Or, "succourer". According to Barnes: "The word used here means properly “a patron, a help,” and was applied by the Greeks to one who “presided” over an assembly; to one

who became “a patron” of others; who aided or defended them in their cause; and especially to one who undertook to manage the cause of “strangers” and foreigners before the courts". The Cambridge commentary adds: "Lit. a champion; one who stands before another. The word conveys a graceful allusion to the request that they would “stand by” Phœbe: she had “stood before” many a needing and suffering Christian". The legal language used here leads me to think that she was in Rome on legal business on behalf of the Christian brotherhood. Perhaps she needed witnesses to testify, and Paul urges the Romans to participate. But we note from 2 Tim. 4 his lament that when he had to stand trial in Rome, none of them stood with him. Phoebe may simply have been noted as a patron or supporter of Paul and others; for clearly his work had to have been funded by someone. But it would seem there is more to it than that. A theme of chapter 16 is not only the mixture of Jewish and Gentile names, but also of slave and free, rich and poor. And further, the role of women is emphasized. It's as if Paul seeks to demonstrate that in the way the Spirit has worked with the Romans and those associated with his ministry, there was exhibited an amazing unity and breaking down of social barriers.

16:3 *Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus*- Priscilla is usually mentioned first in the records, perhaps because she played the leading role in the ministry. And as noted on :2, the collapse of barriers between male and female, as well as between Jew and Gentile, was a feature of the Spirit's movement in Paul's circle of ministry.

Acts 18:2 explains that Aquila was a Jew, born in Pontus, who had resided at Rome, and who had left Rome, and come to Corinth, when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome; so there is an internal consistency when we read that they have returned to Rome, as the decree was rescinded.

16:4 *Who for my life laid down their own necks. To whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles*- This suggests they at some point (perhaps in Ephesus) had been willing to take Paul's death sentence. This was and is a response to the fact that the Lord laid down His life for us. According to Deissmann, this Greek term refers to the possibility of being murdered in the place of someone condemned to death. But 1 Clement 55 speaks of Christians serving prison terms for each other: “We know many among ourselves who have given themselves up to bonds, in order that they might ransom others”. They did this, presumably, because they believed Paul's freedom would result in the Gospel spreading further than it would by their own continued freedom. Therefore Paul goes on to say that "the churches of the Gentiles" were grateful for this. The context in Romans 15 is of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, and his desire that the Romans participate fully in it. So it would appropriate to mention the great example of Priscilla and Aquilla in this matter. We likewise may sacrifice money or even more to enable another to do work which we know we cannot do so well. If indeed they served a prison sentence on Paul's behalf, this might explain why they were back in Rome. Although :5 says that they had a house church.

16:5 *And greet the church that is in their house*- The first of several mentions in this chapter of house groups. There is no archaeological evidence of dedicated Christian meeting places in the first century; the believers met as house groups, occasionally coming together as larger groups. If all the Roman house groups are mentioned in this chapter, then the size of the church in Rome may not have been larger than 100 members at the most- probably far less.

Greet Epaenetus my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia to Christ- It depends how we define "Asia", because 1 Cor. 6:15 says that “the household of Stephanas was

the first-fruit of Achaia". Perhaps Epaenetus was one of that extended family, perhaps a slave within it. The first convert in Asia, therefore, was an obscure slave. This is typical of how God works with the small things in human eyes.

16:6 *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on you*- Some manuscripts have the Hebrew form, Mariam; in any case, this is a Hebrew name. So she was a Jewish Christian in Rome who had done much for Paul personally, although Paul had never visited Rome. It seems all those in Rome whom he greets were in fact known to him personally, and had for various reasons ended up in Rome.

16:7 *Greet Andronicus and Junias*- Junia could be Joanna.

My kinsmen- Their names are Greek and Latin (respectively) as was common for Jews living in the empire. But they were "kinsmen". Perhaps his relatives, maybe from the tribe of Benjamin, but the point was- they were Jews. And Paul has been writing earlier about how the Jewish element were "the weak", still tempted to rely on legal obedience for justification. And yet it now emerges that a number of the Jewish element were in fact well known to Paul and actually his friends. His position on them was therefore purely from principle, as his natural desire would have been to cut his friends some slack, understanding their culture and where they came from.

And my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me- Paul mentions elsewhere that he had "often" been imprisoned. The Acts record is very abbreviated, and most of them we are unaware of. It could be that even at Corinth, from where Paul wrote Romans, he was in prison- and these who were in prison in Rome were his fellow prisoners. Or perhaps at some previous point they had been imprisoned along with him.

16:8 *Greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord*- Tertius was a "scribe" (:22), which was a learned profession; Luke (:21) a doctor. Yet next to these brethren are listed the likes of Ampliatus, which was a common slave name. Romans 16 is an essay in the unity between rich and poor in the early ecclesia.

16:9 *Greet Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ*- "A common Roman slave name found among members of the household" (Sanday and Headlam).

And Stachys my beloved- A rare Greek name, but recorded as being used among members of the imperial household. "My beloved" suggests that Paul knew this person from his previous missionary work- and now somehow this believer was in Rome and perhaps in Caesar's household. Paul's point is that the Gospel has united Jew and Gentile, and penetrated the most strongly Gentile places. And he asks the Roman church to participate in that mission which clearly was of the Lord through His Spirit.

16:10 *Greet Apelles the approved in Christ*- A name used among Jews and the name of a famous tragic actor. If this individual is referred to, then the point would be that his approbation was from Christ, and not because of his secular fame. And he is listed alongside petty slaves, at the other end of the social spectrum, but all together in Christ.

Greet them that are of the household of Aristobulus- Paul writes to them as if there was one church in Rome, and yet he mentions the house groups of Aristobulus and Narcissus (Rom. 16:10,11). Indeed, in Rom. 16:14,15 we have lists of names of brethren, and then the comment "and all the saints which are with them". It could be that the long list of greetings to named individuals was more like a list of greetings to the various house churches which comprised the larger 'ecclesia' in Rome. Robert

Banks observes: “Justin in his *First Apology* refers to several distinct house-based meetings in Rome as much as a century after the New Testament”.

Lightfoot suggests that this Aristobulus may have been the grandson of Herod the Great. But the reference to his "household" may not require that he himself was converted. For Paul doesn't greet him, but rather those of his household. So here we have a Roman of considerable distinction who had Christians among his servants or his slaves. He may have been dead, and the slaves continued to be known by their association with his extended family. Again we have the picture of slaves being a significant part of the Rome ecclesia. The metaphors in Romans related to slavery, and the message of radical freedom in Christ, would have been the more meaningful to them.

The greetings to the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus (:11) suggests that the heads of these households had not been converted; otherwise they would have been greeted "and the church in their house". It was normal for slaves to follow the religion of the head of household. But these slaves had refused to do so and were Christians, although the head of household wasn't. Here again we see the sheer pulling power of the Gospel of Christ.

16:11 *Greet Herodion my kinsman*- Probably one belonging to the Herod family, but a Jew like Paul. Again Paul is seeking to demonstrate the very wide range of the Spirit's work with Jew and Gentile alike.

Greet them of the household of Narcissus, that are in the Lord- Not all the extended family had been converted. Suetonius and Tacitus both mention a notorious Narcissus, a freedman of Claudius, who became one of Nero’s bad favourites. But within the household slaves of that man, there were baptized Christians, who it seems had been known by Paul personally at some other place in the empire. Again, the scope, range and penetration of the Spirit's work amongst the Gentiles is being emphasized. For these Gentiles of the Gentiles are listed along with Paul's "kinsman" Herodion, a Jewish believer.

16:12 *Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who laboured much in the Lord*- The two sisters were labourers in the Lord, but sister Persis is commended for labouring much. The aorist may refer to some special occasion in the past, some particular great work she had done. Or maybe she had lost her labouring zeal and therefore laboured no more, or was too infirm to do the kind of labour she had once done.

16:13- see on Mt. 27:32; Rom. 16:23.

Greet Rufus the chosen in the Lord ; and his mother, who also was as a mother to me- A very common slave name, perhaps the Rufus of Mk. 15:21. Paul the Roman citizen considered a slave’s mother to be his mother, who presumably was dead or had rejected him. Again we see the closeness of the new relationships in Christ.

16:14 *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the believers that are with them*- Asyncritus is a name on an inscription in Rome, referring to a freedman of Augustus. If it is the same person, then he is significantly listed next to Hermes, a very common slave name. Paul would be demonstrating the truth of Gal. 3:27-29- slave and freedman were all together in Christ. Likewise there is an inscription in Rome mentioning
Patrobas as a freedman of Nero. And this name is followed by Hermas, a common slave name. Slave and free are therefore being purposefully juxtaposed together. See on :23 *Quartus*. "The believers that are with them" would suggest that there was a

small house church associated with each of them. The slaves could feasibly run a house church comprised perhaps of other slaves and household members, right within the premises they lived and worked in.

16:15 *Greet Philologus*- Another common slave name.

And Julia- The commonest name for female slaves in the imperial household because of Julius Caesar. Perhaps the wife of Philologus.

Nereus and his sister and Olympa- This name is found in inscriptions from the imperial household. Along with Julia, there is reason to think that there was a house group of Christians right in Caesar's household, comprised of believers whom Paul had personally known or maybe converted in other parts of the empire. He mentions no fewer than 26 such people here, whom he knew personally. They were at this point in Rome, although Paul had never been there. Perhaps had been driven from Rome by Claudius and had returned now Claudius was dead; Aquila and Priscila would be examples (Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:3). People were mobile within the Roman empire. Aquila had moved several times, from Pontus to Rome to Corinth to Ephesus and now back to Rome (Acts 18:1,2,18,26; 1 Cor. 16:9). But many of these names are slave names. We marvel how many slaves Paul knew personally. He, the Jewish rabbi, the intellectual, the educated and literate- had mixed with and converted those at the very lowest level of the social ladder. Many slaves could not easily get away from their masters, and so we imagine Paul entering the wealthy homes where they worked and lived.

And all the saints that are with them- As noted on :14, this would seem to refer to house churches connected with each name.

16:16- see on Acts 2:46.

Greet one another with a holy kiss- There is repetition of the command to *all* ecclesial members to greet *all* the other members with a "holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14). It's hard to translate into our terms the huge meaning of this in the first century world. It would've been unthinkable for a slave to take such initiative to kiss their master, or indeed any free person. This practice of all kissing everyone else in the congregation would've been arresting and startling. Sociologically, it stood no chance of ever being done. And yet these social and inter-personal miracles were what made Christianity stand out so noticeably- and in essence, our overcoming of social and inter-personal barriers ought to do the same for our community in the present world. But does it? Are we *so* markedly different from others... ? Is our love and unity of such an evidently deep and different quality? The implication is that all these various slaves from different households did meet each other for fellowship. We can imagine the issues they faced with shifts, getting free time off, permission to leave the household etc. And the same effort is required by us to achieve face to face fellowship in Christ.

All the churches of Christ greet you- Just as Rome was comprised of house churches who met together occasionally, so it seems the church at Corinth [from where Paul was possibly writing] was likewise composed of a similar network. And Paul would have made the effort to tell all in Corinth that he was writing to Rome, and solicited the greetings from the various house groups where he was.

16:17 *Now I urge you brothers, mark those that are causing divisions*- The article with each noun points to some well-known division; and the teaching in chapters 14

and 15 has made clear that the division related to issues between Jew and Gentile, and whether the Jewish food laws should still be kept by the Gentiles. It is not judgmental to note that certain individuals are divisive. Christianity is no call to naivety. We are not to judge in the sense of condemning, but we are indeed asked to be wise.

And create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught- Those who cause divisions cause "occasions of stumbling" (RV) and should therefore be avoided- because, the implication is, division causes stumbling. A *skandalon* referred to the twig on a trap which causes it to open. Divisions within the church may be over trivial matter, as trivial as a twig. But they cause people to stumble from the path to the Kingdom. It's as simple as that. People stumble, in Paul's experience, because of divisive people within the ecclesias. To be disunited was contrary to the doctrine taught; the specific teaching in view may simply be the commands relating to unity.

Turn away from these- And yet has not Paul been speaking about the all-important need for unity? There are different levels of being out of fellowship with other believers. Any analysis of the NT teaching about ecclesial discipline will make this clear. Some brethren should be simply *avoided*, kept away from, not *necessarily* because they themselves are teaching any false doctrine (Rom. 16:17 Gk.). More seriously, 2 Thess. 3:15 speaks of some cases where we should not count a brother as an "enemy", 'an opposing one', but admonish him as a brother, while *separate* from him; whilst Mt. 18:17 describes other cases where the errant brother should be treated as we would a worldly Gentile (although note: "Let him be unto *thee*" singular; this is talking about personal decisions, not ecclesial withdrawal); and, going a stage further, 1 Cor. 5:11 suggests we should not even keep social company with a brother who is involved in sexual perversion. These different levels of being 'out of fellowship' can be applied to the different level of separation there may be in practice between us and a false teacher, and those who perhaps in a misguided view of 'love' still tolerate him in fellowship. Even if we insist that Mt. 18:7 should be applied to someone, it must be noted that the Lord's attitude to tax collectors and Gentiles was to mix with them, even share table fellowship with them, with a burning desire to win them for His cause (Mt. 9:9; 10:3; 11:19; 28:19). It is no accident that all these passages in Matthew have some reference to Matthew the tax collector being called and saved by the Lord. Matthew is effectively saying under inspiration that we should treat the person we decide to relate to as a tax collector and Gentile just as he had been treated by the Lord's saving, calling grace.

16:18 *For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ*- Those who make divisions don't serve "our Lord Christ" (Rom. 16:17,18 RV); if they saw Christ's Lordship, they wouldn't be divisive, but be humbled into loving co-operation with His brethren. And yet those who make divisions in churches nearly all claim to be reluctantly doing so as part of their devotion to the Lord Christ. It was the same in the first century, and Paul clearly states that this is just so much flannel and excuse.

But their own belly- It could be that there was some financial issue which further nuanced the question of obedience to the Law. Perhaps some were appealing to the Jewish law in order to demand tithes from other members.

And by their smooth and fair speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent- The language of the serpent in Eden. See on :20.

16:19 *For your obedience is known to all*- Obedience is a major theme in Romans; Paul liked to see the believers in Rome as a parade example of Gentile obedience to the Gospel (1:5; 6:16; 15:18; 16:26). He therefore feared that they would be led away by the Jewish false teachers, and this would negatively impact all those

who had looked to them as an example of obedience. As noted in our study of Galatians, Titus and 1 Timothy, the legalism of Judaism was strangely attractive to the Gentile converts. To believe in salvation by pure grace is actually very demanding- for the wonder of it requires our all. The flesh finds it attractive to retain our acceptance that God and Jesus exist, but to slip back into a half-hearted attempt to keep a few laws in the hope that maybe we might be thereby accepted at the last day.

But I would have you to be wise regarding that which is good and simple concerning evil- A reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the need to not listen to the voice of the serpent. The true wisdom was in Christ, not in the serpent. See on :20.

16:20 *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*- The 'satan' in view is I suggest the Jewish opposition, which was to be shortly destroyed in the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem elite in AD70. The Jewish system ceased to be a serious adversary or Satan to the Christians in the aftermath of its destruction in A.D. 70, as Paul prophesied here. A closer study of the context reveals more precisely the mentality of the Judaizer Satan. Satan being bruised underfoot alludes back to the seed of the serpent being bruised in Genesis 3:15. The Jews are therefore likened to the Satan-serpent in Genesis (as they are in Jn. 8:44), in their causing "divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" (Rom. 16:17). Other details in Romans 16 now fall into the Genesis 3:15 context: "they that are such serve... their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (:18). The fair speeches of the Judaizers were like those of the serpent. Instead of 'Why not eat the fruit?' it was 'Why not keep the law?'. Is. 24:6 had earlier made the point that because of the sin of the priesthood "therefore hath the curse devoured the earth / land"; "their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Ps. 59:4).

The tree of knowledge thus comes to represent the Law – because "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). The fig leaves which Adam and Eve covered themselves with also represented the Law, seeing they were replaced by the slain lamb. Their initially glossy appearance typifies well the apparent covering of sin by the Law, which faded in time. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. It seems reasonable to speculate that having eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they made their aprons out of its leaves, thus making the tree of knowledge a fig tree. Both the tree and the leaves thus represent the Law and Jewish system; it is therefore fitting if the leaves were from the same tree. It is also noteworthy that when Christ described the Pharisees as appearing "beautiful" outwardly, he used a word which in the Septuagint was used concerning the tree of knowledge, as if they were somehow connected with it (Mt. 23:27).

It was as if the Judaizers were saying: 'Yea, hath God said you cannot keep the law? Why then has He put it there? It will do you good, it will give you greater spiritual knowledge'. Colossians 2:3–4 shows this kind of reasoning was going on: "In (Christ) are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words". Here is another allusion to the serpent. Because all spiritual knowledge is in Christ, Paul says, don't be beguiled by offers of deeper knowledge. Thus Adam and Eve's relationship with God in Eden which the serpent envied and broke is parallel to us being "in Christ" with all the spiritual knowledge that is there. Hence Paul warned Corinth: "I fear, lest... as the

serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). The 'simplicity in Christ' was therefore the same as man's relationship with God in Eden. So again we see the Judaist false teachers equated with the Satan-serpent of Genesis. Titus 1:10 and 2 Peter 2:1 – 3 specifically define these men who used an abundance of words and sophistry as "they of the circumcision", i.e. Jewish false teachers. Those in 2 Peter 2 are described as speaking evil of Angels (:12 cp. Jude 8) – in the same way as the serpent spoke evil of the Angelic commands given in Eden. It's been pointed out that there's an Aramaic pun which connects the serpent [*hewya*] with the idea of instruction [*hawa*] and also Eve, the false teacher of Adam [*Hawah*].

Back in Romans 16, the Judaizer Satans/ adversaries are spoken of as serving "their own belly" (:18) like the serpent did. Maybe the serpent liked the look of the fruit and wanted to justify his own eating of it; to do this he persuaded Eve to eat it. Because he served his belly, he had to crawl on it. Similarly the Judaizers wanted to be justified in their own keeping of the Law, and therefore persuaded Eve, the Christian bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1–3), to do the same. "Yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple (AV mg. "harmless") concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19) – "be wise as serpents, (primarily referring to the Pharisees?) and harmless as doves", Jesus had said (Mt. 10:16).

16:21 *Timothy my fellow-worker greets you, as do Lucius*- Luke the writer of the Gospel, who was often together with Paul and Timothy.

Jason- The Jason of Acts 17:5,7.

And Sosipater, my kinsmen- Perhaps the Sopater of Acts 20:4, from where we learn he was Jewish. if these indications are correct, then Paul chosen to send greetings from Jewish brethren; having spoken of the Jewish element in Rome as "the weak". "Kinsmen" could mean they were Paul's relatives, or that they were also Jews, perhaps also from Tarsus.

16:22 *I Tertius, who write this epistle, greet you in the Lord*- See on :8.

"Note Paul's exquisite courtesy in leaving Tertius to salute in his own name. To dictate to him his own salutation would be to treat him as a machine".

16:23 - see on Lk. 8:3.

Gaius my host (and of the whole church) greets you- Gaius had a home big enough for the Corinth ecclesia to meet in (Rom. 16:23). The social mix amongst believers must have been startling. Excavations at Ostia near Rome have revealed how the spacious homes of the wealthy stood right next to the *insulae*, the blocks of squalid flats in which the poor lived. There was little differentiation of rich and poor according to which neighbourhoods they lived in. So when we read that the wealthy believer Gaius was 'host of the whole church' (Rom. 16:23), we are to imagine this wealthy man opening his spacious home to the urchins who lived in the neighbouring blocks who had come to Christ. This must have been startling for the surrounding populace. Such was the witness of true Christian unity.

Erastus the treasurer of the city greets you; and Quartus the brother- The list of believers' names in Romans 16 is there for a purpose: to show how all types had come together in the Rome ecclesia. Women are named and greeted [uncommon in contemporary Jewish letters of the time]; some names are common slave names: Phlegon, Hermes, Philologus; whereas tradition has it that the Narcissus mentioned was a famous and wealthy member of the court of Claudius. Greetings are given from two members at Corinth: "Erastus the treasurer of the city [of Corinth] salutes you, and Quartus, a brother" (Rom. 16:23). There is an intended juxtaposition here: of the

wealthy and powerful brother Erastus, and the unknown [slave?] Quartus, who all the same was "a brother", on the same spiritual standing. Phoebe is described as the *prostates* of the Cenchreae ecclesia and Paul himself- a word translatable as "patroness" (Rom. 16:1,2). It could be that she funded Paul's activities at least in part. The same implication may be behind Paul's description of the mother of Rufus as being his "mother" (Rom. 16:13). This would have continued the example of wealthy women like Joanna supporting the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 8:2). If one goes through the Acts and the New Testament letters and makes a list of all the individuals who are named, we have a list of about 78 people. About 30 of these people have some indication in the narrative as to their social status; and the majority of these are from above average social stations. For example, the way Achaicus, Fortunatus, Tertius and Lucius in Corinth and Clement in Philippi all have Latin names in Roman colonies could well indicate that they were from the original stock of colonists, who tended to be well ahead of the local population.

16:24 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*- The stress is upon "all". Both weak and strong, Jew and Gentile, those who correctly understood and those who didn't or wouldn't, are all covered in the Lord's grace. Yet *charis* is used also of the gift- of the Spirit. Paul has argued that the experience of the Spirit's work is what binds believers together, and he wishes this to be with them all.

16:25 *Now to him that is able to establish you*- Stability of faith involves the direct operation of God in the human mind; he writes in 1 Thess. 3:13 of how the Lord can establish hearts. And this is exactly the work of the Spirit about which this epistle has had so much to say. "Is able" uses the word Paul has earlier employed to explain how the unassisted sinner is *not* able to please God or obey his law (8:7,8). But God is able through the Spirit to transform us towards salvation- if we are willing and believing. The word "establish" is exactly how Paul began the letter, wanting to give them "Some gift of the Spirit, to the end you may be established" (1:11). He clearly did not have in view the word of the Gospel, for they already knew that. There was a Spirit gift which God was willing to give them which would stabilize them in faith so that they didn't believe the false teachers. But surely Paul had somewhat justified his trip to Roman by saying that he wanted to come to them in order to impart that gift to them. God was willing to give that gift in any case and by any means. And he wishes that in whatever way, they may receive it.

According to the gospel I preach, which is the preaching of Jesus Christ- As the Lord is the light of the world, so are we. We are Him to this world insofar as we preach Him. The message of salvation by faith alone and Holy Spirit strengthening was central to the good news Paul preached. But again the point is made to the Jews that Paul is not merely sharing his personal opinions about the law and salvation by faith- the Lord is preaching to them through his very words.

According to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal- The mystery was of salvation by faith alone and not obedience to law, and of internal strengthening by the Spirit. Paul felt these things were indeed found in "the scriptures of the prophets" (:26)- once you start searching for them, looking back from a Christian perspective. But until the time of Christ, this great mystery was as it were kept secret.

16:26 *But now is manifested, and in accordance with the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known to all the nations to obedience of faith*- This is surely an allusion to the great commission- a command to take the good news to all the nations, so that they might believe and be baptized. The act of baptism is therefore hinted at in the phrase "the obedience of

faith". Paul has used the same word about how God has made known the riches of His grace to us (9:23); our response is to make it known to others. Preaching is therefore a response to His grace and initiative towards us.

16:27 *To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever*- That God alone is wise may be a final parry against the way the false teachers claimed to be offering new wisdom unknown to others. But clearly Paul also is simply commenting upon the wisdom of God in doing things the way He has.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 1 CORINTHIANS

1 CORINTHIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

Paul and Corinth

In the letters to Corinth we really come to learn something of the mind of Paul; and he asked us to follow him, so that we might follow our Lord the more closely. So we want to analyse the relationship between Paul and Corinth in some detail; for we are all in desperate need of learning how to relate to each other better.

Firstly, let's firmly place in our minds the supreme spirituality of Paul. He saw visions which were unlawful to be uttered, he could look back on a string of ecclesias worldwide which were a result of his work, his writings show that he reached higher into the mysteries of God than most other man have ever gone. Naturally speaking, it must have been so difficult for him to relate to immature or unspiritual brethren and sisters! And yet his sense of identity with his spiritual children comes through all the time. Note how he purposefully mixes his pronouns: "*We* know in part... *I* know in part... *we* see in a mirror... *I* spoke as a child" (1 Cor. 13).

Now consider Corinth. Getting drunk at the breaking of bread, some members openly committing incest and other sexual perversions; and being justified by much of the ecclesia. Some had not the knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34). The basic truth of Christ's resurrection and the second coming were denied, and Paul was slandered unbelievably. There is fair emphasis on Corinth's willing belief of the vicious denigration of Paul's character, made by some of their elders (1 Cor. 2:16; 3:10; 4:11-14; 9:20-27; 14:18). The depths to which that ecclesia sunk are hard to plumb. And yet Paul believed that they abounded in love for him; he asks them to abound in their generosity to others as they abounded in their love for him (2 Cor. 12:7). Truly Paul reflected his own experience of having righteousness imputed to him.

So the relationship between Paul and Corinth is fascinating, but above all it's instructive of not only how we should relate to each other, but how Christ relates to us. There is a strange paradox throughout the letters to Corinth. Paul uses the most exalted and positive language about them, enthusing about the certainty of their salvation, and yet he also accuses them of the most incredible spiritual weaknesses. There's a clear example in the chapter we've just read. In 1 Cor. 1:8,9, we read of Paul enthusiastically saying that God would "confirm *you* (note that) unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus". But then in v.12 he accuses every one of them of being guilty of factionism and division: "*Every one of you* (the same 'you' of v.8,9) says, I am of

Paul...(etc.)". Paul really believed what he says in v.4: " I thank my God always on your behalf (implying: 'You ought to be thanking Him, but I'm doing it for you'?), for the grace of God which is given you...". This was the secret of how Paul managed to relate to them so positively; He deeply believed that they were in receipt of God's grace on account of their being in Christ.

The Love Of Paul

So let's just review the positive way in which Paul felt towards his Corinthian brethren. His love for them was "in (his) heart, known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2). He boasted to others of their "zeal" to give money to the poor, even though it seems they had just made empty promises (2 Cor. 9:2). And in 2 Cor. 9:13 he goes even further; he speaks as if they had already distributed money to other churches. He saw them as righteous, even though they hadn't performed the acts they vaguely spoke of. Paul was surely reflecting the spirit of the Father and Son here. It may even be that Paul mentioned his devotion to Corinth in his 'front-line' presentation of the Gospel to others: "We preach... Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). His great wish was their "perfection" (2 Cor. 13:9). Paul's deep-seated love for Corinth was absolutely evident to all who knew them; it was not an act of the will, which occurred just within Paul's mind. So often our 'love' for difficult members of the ecclesia is no more than a grimly made act of the will. Even in the midst of rebuking them, Paul uses the language of real endearment: "Wherefore, *my dearly beloved,* flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14). The word "brethren" occurs as a refrain throughout the letters; it appears 19 times in the first letter alone, compared with 9 times in the letter to the Romans (a longer epistle). This is similar to the way in which Jeremiah repeatedly describes the Israel who rejected and betrayed him as “my people” (e.g. Jer. 8:11,19,21,22). Despite all the cruel allegations made by them against Paul, he did not deal with them in the cagey, 'political' manner so common in our circles: "*O ye Corinthians,* our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged" (2 Cor. 6:11). It is noteworthy that Paul is here alluding to Ps. 119:32, which speaks of God's word enlarging a man's heart. It was through his application to the word that Paul came to this large-hearted attitude. A smaller man than Paul would have trod mighty carefully with Corinth, making no more than succinct, measured statements. But his deep love for them led Paul to be as open-hearted as can be. Indeed, his pouring forth of his innermost soul to them in the autobiographical sections of 2 Cor. is evidence of how his heart and mouth were truly opened and enlarged unto them. There was no shrugging if the shoulders within Paul at the spiritual plight of Corinth: "Ye are in our hearts, to die and live with you" (2 Cor. 7:3). And it was this basic love which was in Paul’s heart which led him to a wonderful spirit of hopefulness; so that even towards the end of his second letter he can speak of his “hope, that as your faith grows, we shall be magnified in you” (2 Cor. 10:15 RV).

Corinth's Response

This love of Paul found at least some response from Corinth. Titus told Paul of their feelings for him: "He told us your earnest desire (for Paul), your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Cor. 7:7). Here they were, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and Gentiles of the Gentiles; in a state of spiritual love with each other. The strange paradox of Paul's great love for them, yet also his repugnance at their evil ways, is perhaps explicable in terms of their spiritual 'in-loveness'. As a spiritual sister (cp. Abigail?) can marry an alcoholic (Nabal?) because she sees the good side in him, whilst not turning a blind eye to his drinking; as a father ever loves wayward children; so Paul felt towards his beloved sons, his attractive young bride (2 Cor.11:2) of Corinth. That there was at least some love for Paul by Corinth is made tragically evident from 2 Cor. 12:15: "The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved". This is surely the language of falling out of love. And Paul was the aggrieved party. As with so many a father and young husband, Paul had to go through the pain of sensing that the object of his love was keeping him at arm's length, was being partial in their response to the great love he was showing: "You have acknowledged us (our love) *in part*, that we are your rejoicing" (2 Cor. 1:14). Yet Paul took great comfort from their albeit partial response: "Now I *praise you* brethren, that ye remember me in all things" (1 Cor. 11:2); whilst struggling on to make them realize the intensity of his feelings towards them: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears (picture the old boy sobbing as he moved his quill)... *that ye might know the love* which I have *more abundantly* unto you" (2 Cor. 2:4). Despite the spiteful way in which they demanded Paul bring letters of recommendation with him (2 Cor. 3:1), Paul jumped at their even partial spiritual response: "Great is my glorying of you! I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation" because of their positive spiritual reaction to the visit of Titus (2 Cor. 7:4).

Hard Discipline

It is often implied that Paul was perfectly happy to put up with the mess at Corinth, and that therefore we should not be unduly concerned at the state of our latter day ecclesias. This could just not be further from the truth. Perhaps the greatest indication of Paul's love for Corinth is seen in his apparent severity towards them, his desire that they really should abide in Christ. Thus in 1 Cor. 4:21 Paul parallels coming to them in love with coming "with a rod". The sarcasm of 1 Cor. 4:8-14 (and many other places), his hard words of 1 Cor. 3:1-3, all indicate that he saw Corinth for the apostates which they were; and responded to this. "If I come again, I will not spare... know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:2,5). This was more than the externally strict schoolteacher with a soft heart, more than dad just laying the law down one evening. What Paul was threatening was radical; it may be that he would have used the power of the Holy Spirit to smite them with literal death. 1 Cor. 11:30 would imply that either Paul or another apostle had done this to them on a previous visit. "I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2) is one of a series

of allusions in that chapter to the events of Num.25, where Phinehas was moved with jealousy to slay those who were "unequally yoked" with the things of Belial (cp. 2 Cor. 6:14). Paul had accused his Corinthians of just that; and he was quite willing to play the role of Phinehas.
"I will bewail many that have sinned... if I come again, I will not spare" (2 Cor. 12:21; 13:2) is actually an allusion to Ez. 8:18: "Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here (in the natural and spiritual temple of Yahweh, cp. 2 Cor. 6:16)?... therefore will I also deal in fury: my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them". God's anger with Israel as expressed at the Babylonian invasion was going to be reflected in Paul's 'coming' to spiritual Israel in Corinth. Yet for all his high powered allusions, Paul mixed them with the most incredible expressions of true love and sympathy for Corinth. In this we see the giant spiritual stature of that man Paul.

No Blind Eye

Paul evidently did not turn a blind eye to his brethren's failures. He spoke of them in one breath as being spiritually complete, whilst in the next he showed that he was truly aware of their failures. There's a glaring example of this in 1 Cor. 5:6,7: "A little leaven (which they had in their bad attitude, and also in the presence of the incestuous brother) leavens the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, *as you are unleavened*". They had leaven; otherwise Paul would not have told them to purge it out. But then he tells them that they are "unleavened". In other words, he saw them *as if* they were unleavened, but he recognized that they had the bad leaven among and within them. There's another blatant example of this in 1 Cor. 8:1,4,7: "As touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge... (v.4) we know that an idol is nothing in the world... (v.7) howbeit there is not in every man (in the ecclesia) that knowledge". So Paul starts off by saying that they all knew about the correct attitude to meat offered to idols. But then he recognizes that in reality, not all of them did know, or at best, they did not appreciate what they knew. 1 Cor. 11:2 has more of the same: "I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you"; but then Paul goes on to show how they had blatantly disobeyed the ordinance he delivered them concerning the breaking of bread. Again, Paul sees the Corinthians *as if* they were perfect, but then goes on to point out their failures. This is surely a reflection of how the Lord Jesus sees each of us His people. 1 Cor. 3:1,18 shows how the Corinthians thought they were wise, when actually Paul could only address them as carnal babes in Christ; they were not "wise". Yet in 1 Cor. 10:15 Paul concludes a section with the words: "I speak *as* to wise men...". He treated them *as if they* were wise, when he knew that they weren't in reality. He begins by rejoicing that “in every thing you are enriched by him...in all knowledge” (1 Cor. 1:5), even though this was only potentially true- they had been given the knowledge, but had failed to turn it into true wisdom. Likewise Paul spells it out to them that their behaviour

was likely to exclude them from the Kingdom; but in the same context he speaks as if it is taken as red that they will be in the Kingdom: "*The saints* shall judge the world. And if the world shall be judged by *you*... *we* shall judge Angels" (1 Cor. 6:2,3,9).

It is so significant that Paul did not turn a blind eye to his brethren's faults. In seeking to be positive, we so often do this. But we are asked to relate to each other, as Christ does to us. And he certainly doesn't turn a blind eye to our failures. Yet our problem is that if we don't turn a blind eye, we find it so hard to relate to our brethren. So what is the secret of being able to look at both the good and bad sides of our brethren? I suggest the answer is something along these lines:

At baptism, a new man was born inside us, personified in the New Testament as "the man Christ Jesus", "the Spirit", etc. Yet there is still the devil within us, a personification of our sinfulness. We identify our *real* selves as our spiritual man (note how Paul refers to that side of him as "I myself" in Rom. 7:25). God looks upon us *as if* we are Christ Jesus, He sees us as justified in Him, He sees us as if we are as perfect as Christ; not that we are in ourselves, of course. This is how He wants us to view our brethren; if we see them as God sees us, we will see them as the spiritual man which they have within them. Yet like God, we will not turn a blind eye to their weaknesses. Paul looked ahead to the day when God would have confirmed Corinth "unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus" (1 Cor.1:8). We too need to try to live the Kingdom life now; we must live *as if* we are in the day of Christ's Kingdom (Rom. 13:12,13). So in some ways we must see our brethren as they will be in the Kingdom. Thus in 2 Cor. 10:6,15 Paul speaks about the day when Corinth's "obedience is fulfilled... *when* your faith is increased... we shall be enlarged by you... abundantly". "We are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours, *in the day of the Lord Jesus*. And in *this confidence* I was minded to come unto you..." (2 Cor. 1:14). Paul's confidence in them was on account of the rejoicing he looked forward to having concerning them at the day of judgment. Some of his final words to them totally summarize his attitude: "This also we wish, even your perfection" (2 Cor. 13:9). He looked earnestly towards the day when they would be spiritually matured. We too must recognize that we are all only children. We must look to what both we and our brethren *will be* one day, in spiritual terms. This certainly takes some spiritual vision. Yet Paul had just this: "...having hope, *when* [not 'if'] your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you" (2 Cor. 10:15). He here recognizes that their faith is now weak, and must increase; but he also had written that they were to remain standing in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13). They were weak in faith; this he recognized. But he recognized their *status* as being 'in the faith'. So concerned was he with them that he says that if they were obedient to what he had asked them, then he would be ready to "revenge *all* disobedience" (2 Cor. 10:6). It's as if he was taking them one step at a time in bringing them to realize their errors; like the Lord, he spoke the

word to men as *they* were able to hear it, not as *he was able* to expound it or expose their failures. We are seeking the salvation and betterment of our brethren, not simply to air our perceptions of their inadequacies.

Corinth: Washed And Sanctified

He saw Corinth as truly saved in prospect, by reason of their being in Christ. He quotes the words of Lev. 26:13 “I will dwell in them and walk in them… and they shall be my God” about Corinth (2 Cor. 6:16)- even though those words were said to be describing a status conditional upon Israel’s obedience. "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and *shall* present us (not 'hopefully, if you get your act together!') with you" (2 Cor. 4:14) sounds as if Paul fully expected the Corinthians to be there, and to be joined at the right hand side of the judgment seat by himself and Titus. 1 Cor. 15:51 has the same certainty of their acceptance: "*We* shall be changed". "*We* (Paul and Corinth) know… we have a building of God… eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1), i.e. the spiritual man Christ Jesus within each man who is in Christ. Truly could Paul write: "Our *hope* of you is steadfast, knowing that, as you are partakers of the sufferings, so should you be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1:7). *They*, woolly Corinth, would judge the world in the Kingdom age (1 Cor. 6:2). "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, *be with you all "* (2 Cor. 13:14) must have taken some writing, even under inspiration. "Be with *you all* "would have included those Judaist-influenced brethren hell-bent on destroying Paul's work and image, those who had sinned grievously, and those whose doctrinal appreciation was starting to slip. Yet this was how Paul saw them; as being in Christ, and abiding in the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit; thanks to their baptism into Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and abiding (at least for that present time) in that blessed relationship. 2 Cor. 11:2 even shows Paul likening Corinth ecclesia to the guileless Eve in Eden, not yet having sinned, all innocence and uncorrupted beauty. And yet he saw himself as the Eve who had been deceived and punished by death (Rom. 7:11,13 = Gen. 2:17; 3:13); but he saw them as the Even who had not yet sinned. This was no literary trick of the tail; he genuinely felt and saw them as better than himself to be- such was the depth of his appreciation of his own failures. Paul saw Corinth as abounding in knowledge and love (2 Cor. 8:7), even though they had some who lacked the basic knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34), and they needed exhortation to confirm their love to the disfellowshipped brother (2 Cor. 2:6-8). Likewise, unfaithful Israel is still addressed as "the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing" (Jer. 18:13); she was seen as a virgin right up until the Babylonian invasion, where she was as it were ‘raped’ (Jer. 14:17 Heb.). We reflect the same paradox in our efforts to see evidently weak brethren as still sanctified in Christ.

Having spoken of fornicators, idolaters, thieves etc., all of whom were found within the Corinth ecclesia, Paul says: "But such *were* some of you: but you are washed, but you

are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). The reference to washing, and the Father, Son and Spirit all points back to baptism for the remission of sins (Mt. 28:19). The fact those people had been baptized meant so much to Paul. The significance of our brethren's baptisms should also make a deep impact on ourselves. By this act they became "in Christ". The Corinthians were committing idolatry, fornication etc. Paul was aware of that. But he was prepared to see them as being sanctified in Christ; he counted them as if this was not happening: *for the time being*. There was coming a time when he would no longer accept that they were in Christ, and when he would not spare them in any way (2 Cor. 13:2). The repented of failures of our brethren, however severe they may seem to us, must be overlooked if there is real evidence that they are making effort to abide in Christ. Unrepentant fornication or idolatry is hardly proof of this. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20) indicates that Paul did not see them as reconciled to God; yet he looked at the man Christ Jesus within them in order to be able to have all the positive feelings towards them which he did. So clear was Paul's vision of their spiritual man that he could actually boast about their 'good side' to other ecclesias (2 Cor. 7:4,14; 9:2). So enthusiastic was Paul about the great grace of God which Corinth basked in, that he actually made other ecclesias truly affectionate of Corinth: "which long after you for the exceeding grace (Paul knew just how exceeding it was to Corinth!) in you" (2 Cor.9:14).

And Paul showed this same spirit in all his dealings with his brethren. He could say in all honesty that “I am convinced, my brothers, that you are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another” (Rom. 15:14 NIV)- even though there must have been major problems in Rome, not least the Jew: Gentile division. He was so positive about them that he could write that he was sure that Corinth’s labour was “not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58)- and yet he knew that labour was in vain if converts fell away (1 Thess. 3:5). Yet he acted towards them, and genuinely felt as if, they would not and had not fallen away. This was quite some psychological and spiritual achievement, given the depths of their apostasy. Corinth hated Paul, slandered him, despised him. And yet he can write that their love for him "abounded" (2 Cor. 8:7). I take this not as sarcasm, but as a deep attempt by him to view them positively. We are challenged by Paul’s example to look at our brethren the same way.

"As God… has forgiven"

We are told to forgive one another, "*as* God for Christ's sake *has forgiven* you" (Eph. 4:32). All our sins were forgiven, in prospect, at baptism. All our irritating habits and attitudes, our secret sins, all these were forgiven then. And we must respond to this by counting our brethren to have received the same grace. Seeing we have received this grace, why do we find it so hard to see our brethren like this? Surely the answer rests in

the fact that we don't fully believe or appreciate the degree to which God really does see us personally as being perfect in Christ. Paul was so super-assured of his own salvation, of the fact that God really did see him as a man in Christ, and therefore he found it easier to see his brethren in such a positive way. He was so conscious of how his many sins were just not counted against him. He knew that he was "chief of sinners", he didn't turn a blind eye to himself; because he could realistically face up to his own position before God, he found it easier to do the same for his weak brethren.

The fact that Paul saw the spiritual man in all his brethren means that to some degree he saw them all as equal. He seems to bring this point out in 1 Cor. 4:14,17: "As my beloved sons I warn you (Corinth ecclesia)... for this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son...". Paul calls both Corinth and Timothy his beloved sons. The implication is that to some degree, he felt the same towards dodgy Corinth as he did towards the spiritually strong Timothy. Likewise Christ showed his love for the whole church when he died on the cross. This does not mean, of course, that Paul did not have deeper bonds with some than with others. But the fact is that in spiritual terms, he saw all his brethren as equal, in that they shared the same status of being justified in Christ. Whether one had 2% righteousness and another 5% was irrelevant; they both needed the massive imputation of God's righteousness through Christ. As Paul could call both Timothy and Corinth his "beloved sons", so God calls both Christ and ourselves by the same title (Mt. 3:17 cp. Col. 3:12; 1 Jn. 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:13) . The reason? Because "he has made us accepted (by being) in the beloved (son)" (Eph. 1:6).

1:1 *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother*- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understood the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

1:2 *To the church of God which is at Corinth, those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints*- There is a play on words here. By baptism into Christ we are in Him, and are therefore made holy, sanctified; and therefore we are saints, holy or sanctified ones. Paul approaches the various behavioural issues in Corinth by encouraging them to live

out in practice what they are by status in Christ, and to make use of the Spirit power potentially available to enable this transformation.

With all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place- The Jerusalem pattern of gathering collectively in the temple and yet also having home groups was repeated in Corinth. 1 Corinthians is addressed to the singular church in Corinth, which he parallels with "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). Those 'places', I submit, referred to the various house churches in the city. He specifically mentions the house churches of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11) and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15). The exhortation that "you all speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10) would then refer to the need for the various house churches to all "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment". As we know, there was an issue of fellowship in Corinth, concerning a deeply immoral brother. If he avoided church discipline by simply joining another house church, they were not going to be joined together in "the same judgment", and inevitably division would arise amongst those Corinthian house churches. There was to be peace rather than confusion "in all churches" (1 Cor. 14:33)- i.e. all the house churches in Corinth. Paul's complaint that "every one of you saith, I am of Paul... I of Apollos" (1 Cor. 1:12) surely makes more sense if read with reference to each of the house churches, rather than every individual member. Paul speaks there as if the believers 'came together' 'in ekklesia' (1 Cor. 5:4), i.e. the various home groups occasionally met together. Hence he speaks of when "the whole church be come together into one place" (1 Cor. 14:23), i.e. all the house churches gathered together for a special fellowship meeting. He says that when they 'came together', then they should make a collective decision about disfellowshipping the immoral brother. Paul wrote to the Romans from Corinth, and he describes Gaius as the host of the whole church (Rom. 16:23)- implying that he had premises large enough for all the various house churches to gather together in. The abuses which occurred when the whole church 'came together' presumably therefore occurred on his premises.

Their Lord and ours- Paul could be saying that Jesus Christ is Lord both of 'us' and also of all the congregations of believers. But he could also mean (and the Greek rather suggests this) that the same Jesus *understood and interpreted somewhat differently amongst the various believers "in every place"* was in fact Lord of them all. For your interpretation of the Lord Jesus and mine will inevitably differ in some points. Now this must of course be balanced against John's clear teaching that those who deny Jesus came in the flesh are in fact antiChrist. However the idea is more likely that Paul is preparing the way for his repeated appeals for unity- Jesus is Lord of 'they' over there and also of 'us' here. "Theirs and ours" suggests Paul saw himself very much as standing with the Corinthians- which is significant, given his later criticisms and exposure of their behaviour.

1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- This was no mere formality; the "grace", *charis*, the gift Paul wished them was that of the Spirit in their hearts, and he goes on to develop this idea of the *charis* in :4.

1:4 *I thank my God always concerning you*- The Corinthians slandered Paul, refused his teachings etc. But he can continually be grateful for them. We see here a lovely spirit. h thanks God because of what has been given them by status, and for how be believes God sees them, because of the righteousness imputed to them. Serious adoption of Paul's perspective would solve absolutely every church division and argument.

For the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus- There is a clear connection between baptism and the receipt of the gift of the Spirit. By baptism "in Christ", the converts were given a *charis*, a gift or grace, from God.

1:5 *That in everything you were enriched in him*- In detailing the work of the Spirit gift in the hearts of those who believe, Eph. 3:16-20 uses this same word for 'riches', and the same kind of ideas Paul uses in this section of 1 Corinthians 1: "He would grant you, according to the *riches* of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you would be rooted and grounded in love, that you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, and to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him that is able to do immeasurably above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...". The complete spiritual enrichment of the Corinthians ["in everything"] is hard to square with their rather woeful spiritual state- getting drunk at the breaking of bread, denying the Lord's resurrection etc. But the point is that the gift of the Spirit had potentially enabled them not to be like this- and the appeal was for them to make use of the potential they had. They "were enriched" at baptism; but needed to make use of the gift.

In all utterance and all knowledge- In all *logos* and *gnosis*. These were the very things the Corinthians were tempted to seek from secular sources, and to leave Christ for. But they were blessed with everything- every word of wisdom was in Him, provided by His Spirit. They need not look to other sources of these things because all had been made available to them potentially by the Spirit they had received.

1:6 *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you*- The preaching of Christ was confirmed *in* the believers by the gift of the Spirit within their hearts. And this was itself the testimony of Christ to the validity of their conversion to Him. The external miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to confirm the preaching of the Gospel (s.w. Mk. 16:20), but their withdrawal doesn't mean that the Lord Jesus doesn't still confirm the preaching of His word by the Spirit in an internal sense. This is the significance of the word *in* you. Paul says that this confirmation will work in them "until the end", i.e. the

final glorification at the Lord's return (:8 s.w.). It was not temporary nor was it going to be withdrawn. A process is ongoing which is intended to bring us to final salvation at the Lord's return. This confirmation or 'establishment' is achieved by our being 'anointed'- a clear reference to the gift of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21 s.w.). The same word is used in Rom. 4:16, speaking of how the promise of salvation to Abraham is confirmed or [AV] "made sure to all the seed". In this sense the gift of the Holy Spirit is the deposit which guarantees that really, our salvation is sure (2 Cor. 1:22 "who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts"; 2 Cor. 5:5 "God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee"; Eph. 1:14 "having heard the word of the truth... and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is a guarantee of our inheritance"). John puts it like this: "hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave us" (1 Jn. 3:24). It is the seal or guarantee: "the Holy Spirit of God, by which you were sealed until the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

1:7 *So that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ*- The allusion is to how the disciples, sent forth in the power of the Spirit to do the Lord's work, lacked nothing: "When I sent you... did you lack anything?" (Lk. 22:35 s.w.). The gift of the Spirit is therefore in order to do the Lord's work. But the Corinthians didn't want to do that, and so they felt they still didn't have what they wanted. They had been enriched spiritually in every way (:5). But this was only true potentially. And this explains why a baptized believer may not sense the power of the Spirit in their hearts- because they are not allowing the potential to work. Paul is going to be appealing for radical changes in thinking and behaviour- but he begins by saying that all the power for that is already potentially with them. Paul later urges the Corinthians to covet the most useful Spiritual gifts (14:1). But he says here that they already have them all. So clearly enough he means that they must use their potential.

1:8- see on Gal. 6:4.

Who shall also confirm you to the end- The gift of the Spirit given as a confirmation at baptism (see on :6) would continue to work with them, if they allowed it, to present them acceptable at the day of final judgment. "Confirm" is the word elsewhere translated "establish": "He that establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21,22). In this way we are established by Jesus- if we allow Him to do His psychological work upon us: "rooted and up built in him and established in your faith" (s.w. Col. 2:7).

The same idea, in different language, is in Phul. 1:6 which speaks of how God began a good work in us and will continue working it out until the day of Jesus Christ. As in Phil. 1:6, we note the context of "the day of Jesus Christ", the final day of judgment when we shall be immortalized and made "unreproveable"; and the work of the Spirit which began at our water baptism. The work which began then and keeps on within us (Phil.

1:6) is the confirming / establishing to the end of 1 Cor. 1:8. But the Corinthians were not spiritual, despite having been given this working of the Spirit within them. There has to be some freewill response.

Unreproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ- We can only be without accusation (Gk.) before the day of judgment by having righteousness imputed to us; this is the great theme of Romans. This is made possible by our part in the Lord's representative death for us (s.w. Col. 1:22). But as Romans 8 explains, this is made true for us in practice by the Spirit working within us to lead us to that end in practice, and seeking to make us in reality what we are counted as by status.

1:9 *God is faithful*- The claims made here for the work of the Spirit may seem incredible, given our weakness, and the evident weakness of the Corinthian believers. But God is faithful- He will really do what He has promised. The faithfulness of God is associated in the Old Testament with His faithfulness to the covenant; and the Abrahamic covenant included within it the implication of the Spirit's work; this is very much part of the "blessing" promised. And God will surely fulfill His part; it is for us to be open to this and believe it.

Through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord- We through the Spirit are in active fellowship with the Lord Jesus. It's not a case of mere theological agreement with a set of Biblical principles. Paul assumes that the Corinthians, with all their immorality and misunderstandings of basic doctrine, were in fellowship with Jesus; and he therefore treated them accordingly. This is a huge challenge to those who feel they can only accept in fellowship those who can jump certain bars of their own creation regarding doctrine and practice. Repeatedly in this opening chapter, Paul speaks of "our Lord Jesus" (:2,7,8,10). Despite their major doctrinal and moral inadequacies, and their personal tension with him, Paul still saw them as connected with him in the Lord Jesus.

1:10- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

Now I urge you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment- This appeal was made for the sake of the fact they were all "in the name" of the Lord Jesus by baptism into that name. They had therefore been given "the spirit of Christ", the mind of Christ. The "one mind" or "same mind" which Paul appeals for us to have is the mind of Christ (see on Phil. 2:5). He's not confusing unity with uniformity, but rather reasoning that if we each allow the mind of Christ to be dominant within us, then we shall have the same mind / judgment because we will each have *His* mind. This is not therefore an appeal to each study the Bible in the same way and reach the same conclusions, or have the same level of discipline for

those who fail in certain moral areas. Rather is it quite simply an appeal for us to have the mind of Christ. And thereby we shall be united, regardless of other issues over which we may differ.

“Be perfected together" (1 Cor. 1:10) uses the same Greek word as in Heb. 10:5, where we read of the Lord's one body "prepared", joined together. Being joined together in unity is therefore something which comes from allowing the Lord Jesus to do this. Human devices such as common statements of faith and unity agreements will not bring about the unity of the Spirit. That is just human wordsmithing. It only comes from allowing the Lord Jesus through the Spirit to join us together. Those open to this will be joined together in the unity of the Spirit, or as it is termed here, the fellowship of Jesus (:9), the fellowship "of" Him in that it is a fellowship created by Him.

1:11 *For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers*- Paul doesn't mean 'They dobbed you in to me, so I'm taking it with you'. That would be responding to gossip. The 'report' would appear to refer to a formal, written statement- that may well have been inspired by the Spirit. Otherwise Paul surely could not have written such confidence that the report was true.

By those of the household of Chloe- The 'church' at Corinth was comprised of various house groups; this one was apparently led by a woman, or at least were comprised of her household servants and family. Perhaps like Lydia she had converted her 'household' or extended family, including servants.

That there are contentions among you- If they each had the mind of Christ, then there would not be contentions amongst them. Therefore 'contentions' are a sign of not having the Spirit (3:3)- i.e. the spirit / mind of Christ.

The first problem in the Corinth ecclesia, Paul said, was that they were divided. He begins his letter by addressing this problem, not the incest, the drunkenness at the breaking of bread, the false doctrine... See on Gal. 2:2.

1:12- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

By this I mean, that each one of you is saying: I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I am of Christ- 1 Cor. 3:22 speaks of three groups in the Corinth ecclesia, following Paul, Peter and Apollos. Yet in 1 Cor. 1:12 someone says “I am of Christ" . This seems to be Paul himself- so Christ-centred was he, that he wanted no part in ecclesial politics nor in the possibility of leading a faction. His Christ-centredness was a phenomenal achievement.

A case can be made that the letters of Peter and Jude were also written to Corinth. Peter visited Corinth, presumably focusing his preaching on the Jewish community, and perhaps he was writing his letters specifically to the Jewish house churches there (1

Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5). The same concerns are apparent as in Paul's letters to Corinth: The need to distinguish between spiritual and unspiritual persons who despised others (Jude 19 = 1 Cor. 2:6 - 3:4; 8:1-3); those who perverted liberty into licence (Jude 4 = 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23), becoming slaves of sensuality (Jude 8,10,16,23 = 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 12:21); some eating and drinking abusively at the love feast (Jude 12 = 1 Cor. 11:17-33); refusing the authority of their elders (Jude 8,11 = 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 9:1-12); both Peter and Paul warn Corinth of the danger of worldly wisdom. Peter's reminder to them about the authority of Paul is very understandable in this case. However, the point of all this is to observe the tenderness of Peter and Jude in writing to the Corinthians ["my beloved..."], whilst at the same time warning them of the awesome judgment which there behaviour was preparing for them. It was the same passionate love for Christ's weak brethren which Paul showed them.

1:13 *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?*- There are times when Paul uses the word "Christ" when we'd have expected him to use the word "church"- e.g. "Is Christ divided?... as the body is one... so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 1:13; 12:12). This synecdoche serves to demonstrate the intense unity between Christ and His people- we really are Him to this world. Think through the reasoning of 1 Cor. 1:13: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?". The fact Jesus was crucified for us means that we should be baptized into that Name, and also be undivided.

Christ being undivided is placed parallel with the fact Paul was not crucified for us, but Christ was (1 Cor. 1:13). The implication is surely that because Christ was crucified for us, therefore those He died to redeem are undivided. We have one Saviour, through one salvation act, and therefore we must be one. The atonement and fellowship are so linked. Christ is not divided, and therefore, Paul reasons, divisions amongst brethren are a nonsense. *Christ is not divided, and therefore neither should we be* (1 Cor. 1:13; 3:3). Let's remember this powerful logic, in all our thinking about this issue. Paul even goes so far as to suggest that if we do not discern the body at the breaking of bread, if we wilfully exclude certain members of the body, then we eat and drink condemnation to ourselves. This is how serious division is. The devil’s house is divided (Mt. 12:25,26); Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13 s.w.). We were called to the Gospel *so that* we might share in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ- i.e. fellowship with Him and His Father, and with all the others within His body (1 Cor. 1:9,10). If we accept that brethren and sisters are validly baptized into and remain within His body, then we simply *must* fellowship with them. Should we refuse to do this, we are working against the essential purpose of God- to build up the body of His Son now, so that we might exist in that state eternally.

1:14 *I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius*- Paul goes on to list others he had baptized, and admits the possibility he had baptized even more than he named. So we have an example here of a grammatical construction whereby 'None' or 'Not' is not global and absolute; and we need to bear this in mind in the interpretation of :17.

Gaius had a home big enough for the Corinth ecclesia to meet in (Rom. 16:23). Crispus was the leader of the Corinth synagogue and yet he and Gaius were the first people Paul converted there (1 Cor. 1:14). Thus in this case the initial response was from the socially well to do, although the later converts were generally poor. By all means compare with how wealthy Lydia was the first convert in Philippi. Anyone who was a household leader or with a home large enough to accommodate the ecclesia was clearly of a higher social level. Thus the Philippian jailer, Stephanas and Chloe had a "household" (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:15), as did Philemon; and even Aquilla and Priscilla although artisans were wealthy enough to have room to host an ecclesia (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-5). Titus Justus [whose name implies he was a Roman citizen] lad a house adjacent to the synagogue in Corinth. Mark's mother had a home in Jerusalem that could accommodate a meeting (Acts 12:12); Baranbas owned a farm (Acts 4:36); Jason was wealthy enough to stand bail for Paul and entertain his visitors (Acts 17:5-9). An Areopagite was converted in Athens (Acts 17:34). Apollos and Phoebe were able to travel independently. Remember that most people at the time lived in cramped tiny rooms, so unbearable that most of their lives were lived outdoors as far as possible.

1:15 *Lest any of you should say you were baptized into my name*- Paul did baptize some in Corinth. But he means that he avoided baptizing people because of the way it would likely be used as the basis for factions in the future. He could have taken the position that 'I do not baptize into my name; and if at some later point some are to say I did, well, they are wrong, I did not'. But Paul is more sensitive to human weakness, just as we should be. He often sees ahead to the likely interpretations of his words and actions. Later he will parry possible misunderstandings of his words about resurrection by saying "But some man will say...". We too must move away from a bald truth- error scenario, leaving the misinterpretations of others upon their own heads, but rather anticipate their likely weaknesses; and by all means, seek to not make others stumble.

1:16 *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas. Besides these, I do not know whether I baptized any other*- He doesn't mean 'I don't remember whether I did'; for he would have used a different word. He means that he is not aware of it in that he kept no record of who he baptized, neither formally nor mentally. This is a far cry from those who insist on getting all the details of the candidates they baptize, filling out forms and so forth. Such behaviour is appropriate to admission to membership of a club; but baptism into Christ is into Christ and is not a sign of having joined any human club or institution.

1:17 - see on Mt. 3:8; Gal. 6:14.

For Christ sent me not so much as to baptize, but to preach the gospel- See on :14. The construction involving 'not' doesn't have to mean 'Not at all', but rather 'not' with conditions. Sometimes we need to read into the text the idea of "not so much *this*, as *that*". Thus "Christ sent me not [so much as] to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17 AV). Paul of course *did* baptize people, as he goes on to say in that very context (1 Cor. 1:14). Or take Jer. 7:22,23: "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them... concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God". God *did* command sacrifices; but He *not so much* commanded them *as* required Israel's spirit of obedience and acceptance of Him.

Paul's mission was to spread the word; human response to it was not something he unduly focused upon. Inappropriate focus on results in terms of baptisms can lead missionary endeavour into all manner of wrong paths. This is probably hyperbole (i.e. grossly exaggerated language to make a point). The command to preach and baptize as given in the great preaching commission was just one command; preaching-and-baptizing went together. It seems to me that Paul *did* baptize; but using the figure of hyperbole, he's saying: 'My emphasis is on getting on with the work of preaching the Gospel, the fact I've held the shoulders of many men and women as I pushed them under the water is irrelevant; Christ didn't send me to just do this, but more importantly to preach the Gospel'. And may this be our attitude too.

Not in the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no power- Paul did not seek to pressure people into baptism because he believed that the simple presentation of the cross of Christ would of itself elicit faith in people. This for all time demonstrates that apologetics and "the wisdom of words" will not persuade men to faith. That persuasion is in the message itself, which is of Christ crucified. No amount of smart arguments from science, archaeology, Bible prophecy being fulfilled etc. will of themselves persuade to faith. The bald presentation of the Gospel of the crucified Christ will of itself be 'powerful' to convert. And I speak from wide personal experience- as well as the clear implication of Paul's argument here. The paradox is that on the cross, the Lord 'made Himself of no power' (s.w. Phil. 2:7), and it was that moment of human powerlessness which is of power to convert. This is the mystery of faith. It is a paradox which is developed in the following verses; what appears foolishness in the eyes of men is in fact the deep wisdom and saving power of God.

Paul had been reconciled, as have all men, by the cross. But he still needed to be converted, and this depended upon the freewill obedience of the likes of Ananias. It really is so, for Paul warned that preaching the Gospel with wisdom of words would

make “the cross of Christ… of none effect” (1 Cor. 1:17). The effect of the cross, the power of it to save, is limited in its extent by our manner of preaching of it. And we can make “Christ”, i.e. His cross, of “none effect” by trusting to our works rather than accepting the gracious salvation which He achieved (Gal. 5:4).

Paul declared unto Corinth “the testimony of God", i.e. “Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1,2). This message was “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", “the wisdom of God", “Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:17,23,24; 2:4,5). Indeed, “the cross of Christ" is put for ‘the preaching of His cross’ (1:17). All these things are parallel. The cross is in itself the testimony and witness of God. This is why, Paul reasons, the power of the cross itself means that it doesn’t matter how poorly that message is presented in human words; indeed, such is its excellence and power that we even *shouldn’t seek* to present it with a layer of human ‘culture’ and verbiage shrouding it.

1:18- see on Rom. 1:18.

For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness- See on :17 *Not in the wisdom of words*. What seems foolish is the wisdom and saving power of God. There is a temptation to make our witness to the world in terms and colours which appear intellectually or even academically respectable. But we must ever remember the dichotomy here presented- that the wisdom of God will be seen as foolish to those who will not believe it. We can't have it both ways- an argument with secular respectability which is also the power and wisdom of God.

Because we are in Christ, therefore we witness Him; and we witness as He witnessed. *His* witness is in fact ours. But there is a sober theme in Scripture: that the essential witness of Christ was in His time of dying. “The preaching [‘the word’] of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18) refers to the way in which the cross itself was and is a witness, rather than speaking of preaching *about* the cross.

Do we feel ashamed that we just don’t witness as we ought to? There is no doubt that the cross and baptism into that death was central to the preaching message of the early brethren. Knowing it, believing it, meant that it just had to be preached. The completeness and reality of the redemption achieved is expressed in Hebrews with a sense of finality, and we ought not to let that slip from our presentation of the Gospel either. There in the cross, the justice and mercy of God are brought together in the ultimate way. There in the cross is the appeal. Paul spoke of “the preaching of the cross", the word / message which *is* the cross (1 Cor. 1:18). Some of the early missionaries reported how they could never get any response to their message until they explained the cross; and so, with our true doctrinal understanding of it, it is my belief that the cross is what has the power of conversion. A man cannot face it and not have a deep impression of the absoluteness of the issues involved in faith and unbelief,

in choosing to accept or reject the work of the struggling, sweating, gasping Man who hung on the stake. It truly is a question of believe or perish. Baptism into that death and resurrection is essential for salvation. Of course we must not bully or intimidate people into faith, but on the other hand, a preaching of the cross cannot help but have something compulsive and urgent and passionate about it. For we appeal to men on God's behalf to accept the work of the cross as efficacious for them. I submit that much of our preaching somehow fails in urgency and entreaty. We seem to be in places too expository, or too attractive with the peripherals, seeking to please men... or be offering good advice, very good advice indeed, background Bible knowledge, how to read the Bible effectively... all of which may be all well and good, but we should be preaching good news, not good advice. The message of the cross is of a grace and real salvation which is almost too good to believe. It isn't Bible background or archaeology or Russia invading Israel. It is the Man who had our nature hanging there perfect, full of love, a light in this dark world... and as far as we perceive the wonder of it all, as far as this breaks in upon us, so far we will hold it forth to this world. The Lord wasn't preaching good *ideas*; He was preaching good *news*. The cross means that we have a faith to live by all our days; not just a faith to die by, a comfort in our time of dying, as we face the endgame.

But to us who are saved it is the power of God- The cross is the power of salvation to us who are 'being saved', in the saving process. The cross is not only the means of our forgiveness, in a transactional sense, as if at that moment in time, God enabled our forgiveness and salvation. For He can and could have saved in any way He chose. The cross is the ongoing salvation of God in that the Lord there is our endless inspiration and His death released and releases the living waters of the Spirit into human hearts- if they continue to believe in Him there, in an ongoing sense.

1:19- see on Job 5:12,13.

For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise- The quotation from Is. 29:14 refers to the false 'wisdom' of the unfaithful Jews in Jerusalem at Hezekiah's time. It was perhaps the attraction of the Jewish false teachers which Paul is alluding to. Judaism had a strange attraction for even hedonistic Gentiles; as pointed out throughout our commentary on Titus. See on :20.

And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nothing- There is an allusion here to the Lord's words: "You did hide these things from the wise and prudent, and did reveal them to babes" (Mt. 11:25). Paul alludes to some parts of the Gospels more than to others. The record of John the Baptist, the sermon on the mount, the parables and the record of Christ in Gethsemane are all referred to far more than average. This surely would not be the case if the connections between Paul's writings and the Gospels were

only the result of the Spirit irresistibly carrying Paul along. We have suggested that Paul's enthusiasm for the record of John the Baptist was because he had probably first heard the Gospel from John; i.e. there was a reason personal to Paul as to why he alludes to much to that particular part of the Gospels. And so with his sustained allusions to Gethsemane, far more than we would expect statistically. Presumably the picture of the Lord Jesus struggling against His own nature, driven to the brink of eternal failure, was an image which echoed in Paul's mind. Likewise the parables were intended to be memorized and meditated upon; Paul did just this, and that's why he alludes to them more than average. This sort of pattern is just what we too experience; there are parts of Scripture which stick in our minds, often for personal reasons. And so it was with Paul. Mt. 11:25 was a verse which was perhaps very much in his mind as he wrote to Corinth; it is alluded to in 1 Cor. 1:19; 2:8; 14:20- and nowhere else.

1:20 *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*- As noted on :19, this quotation is from a passage talking about the vanity of Jewish wisdom (Is. 33:18). And it was Jewish false teaching which was the source of the problems at Corinth. Truly Paul despised all worldly advantage and insisted upon the radical principles of the Lord- that true greatness is in humility, wealth is in poverty, worldly learning is the very opposite of Divine wisdom, etc. He mocks, even, such things when he writes to the Corinthians: "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Every one of these terms would have been true of Saul the Pharisee, Paul the powerful user of rhetoric, Paul of the razor sharp mind. And he knew his worldly advantage, and despised it.

1:21 *For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know God*- This is the paradox; that worldly wisdom does not lead to relationship with God. 'Knowing God' refers to relationship and salvation, not simply claiming some form of belief in the existence of a Divine being or force. Life eternal, living the Kingdom life we shall eternally live, is to 'know God' (Jn. 17:3). The Gospel message begins with the statement that to know God is a gift (Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10); for those to whom it is not given, everything about God remains in parables. And so faith is not reached by reading learned books about science, creationism, archaeology or the historical fulfilments of Bible prophecy. For that is the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. If that indeed were the path to faith, then the illiterate and simple would be unable to come to faith. Yet the poor of this world are those "rich in faith". But the gift of faith is available for all- who will look to the cross of Christ as Israel looked to the lifted up serpent, and allow the power of it to transform them. Yet faith therefore is not arrived at by intellectual process; it is a gift. From God. And it is the cross of Christ (:18), the foolishness of the thing preached (:21), which leads to knowing God. There can be no

real belief in God nor knowing of Him without Christ- for He is the only way to the Father. Any attempt to reach faith in God by intellectual process is therefore ultimately doomed; it can only be reached through encounter with Christ.

It was God's good pleasure through the apparent foolishness of the message preached to save them that believe- 1 Cor. 1:21,25 speak of the Gospel as "the foolishness of the thing preached" (RV) – not that it *is* foolish, but it is perceived that way. The thing preached is clearly the cross- "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (:18).

1:22 *Seeing that Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek after wisdom*- The Jews, like modern Pentecostals, demanded miraculous signs in order to believe; and the Gentiles thought that secular wisdom could be the only way to a respectable faith. But faith in the true God is predicated upon encounter with the crucified Christ. Nothing visible nor intellectual will of itself bring a man to faith; both the Bible and observed experience support that. Whilst there is a tendency to chalk up conversions to various forms of outreach, and it is hard to define why belief is reached, Paul is here crystal clear that the ultimate force in conversion is encounter with Christ crucified.

1:23 *But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness*- The cross was foolishness to the Gentiles and an offence to the Jews. In Roman thought, the cross was something shocking; the very word 'cross' was repugnant to them. It was something only for slaves. Consider the following writings from the period.
- Cicero wrote: "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but... the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man... your honours [i.e. Roman citizenship] protect a man from... the *terror of the cross*".
- Seneca the Elder in the *Controversiae* records where a master's daughter marries a slave, and she is described as having become related to *cruciarii*, 'the crucified'. Thus 'the crucified' was used by metonymy for slaves. The father of the girl is taunted: "If you want to find your son-in-law's relatives, *go to the cross*". It is hard for us to appreciate how slaves were seen as less than human in that society. There was a stigma and revulsion attached to the cross. This was the offence of the cross.
- Juvenal in his *6th Satire* records how a wife ordered her husband: "Crucify this slave". "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband, "no delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake". She replies: "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man?".
The sense of shame and offence attached to the cross was also there in Jewish perception of it. Whoever was hung on a tree was seen as having been cursed by God (Dt. 21:23). Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho, records* Trypho (who was a Jew)

objecting to Christianity: “We are aware that the Christ must suffer…but that he had to be *crucified*, that he had to die a death of such shame and dishonour- a death cursed by the Law- prove this to us, for we are totally unable to receive it”. Justin Martyr in his *Apology* further records: “They say that our madness consists in the fact that we place a *crucified* man in second place after the eternal God”. The Romans also mocked the idea of following a crucified man. There is a caricature which shows a crucified person with an ass’s head. The ass was a symbol of servitude [note how the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass]. The caption sarcastically says: “Alexamenos worships God”. This was typical of the offence of the cross.

1:24 *But to them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God*- It has been pointed out that if some NT passages are translated into Aramaic, the common language of the day in first century Israel, there would have been ample encouragement for memorization. Thus: We preach Christ crucified (*mishkal*), unto the Jews a stumblingblock (*mikshol*), and unto the Greeks foolishness (*sekel*), but unto them that are called… the power (*hishkeel*) of God and the wisdom (*sekel*) of God" (1 Cor. 1:23,24). "To them that are called" raises concerns as to whether faith, therefore, is just a gift given to some. But the call is in the Gospel, and specifically in the outstretched arms of the crucified Christ. All who encounter it are called; but many refuse to respond. Likewise we noted on :21 that to know God is a gift; but it is available to all who encounter His Son.

1:25 *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men*- That Almighty all-wise God could inspire 1 Cor. 1:25 is another example of God’s humility: “The foolishness of God… the weakness of God”. In Jer. 14:21 we find something likewise wonderful: “Do not abhor *us*… do not disgrace the throne of thy glory”. *We*, weak humans, are paralleled with the throne of God’s glory.

And the weakness of God is stronger than men- The same word is used in :27 about the believers being "the weak things". Many times, this word is used about spiritual weakness, especially in 1 Corinthians (4:10; 8:7,10; 9:22; 11:30; 12:22). The foolishness of God has been defined as the cross of Christ; but that is now made parallel to the way God calls spiritually weak persons to be His vehicle of operation. Such an observation was relevant to the Corinthian situation. Those weak believers were used by God on account of their association with the cross of Christ, "the foolishness of God".

1:26 *Consider your calling, brothers; not many of you had worldly wisdom, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth*- The references to 'wise' and 'powerful / mighty' men use the words just used about the Lord Jesus as the wisdom and power of God (:24). He can only be those things to those who are not wise or powerful- or, rather, who recognize that they are not those things. So the attraction of His wisdom and power is to those who recognize they lack those things- the unwise and the powerless. And

that is why it is the chain smokers and the asylum seekers and the get rich quick scheme enthusiasts... who have what it takes to believe in Christ as the power and the wisdom of God.

The Lord Himself had implied that it was to the poor that the Gospel was more successfully preached. And Paul observed that in Corinth, not many mighty had been called, but most of them were poor (1 Cor. 1:26-28). “Christianity in its beginnings was without doubt a movement of impoverished classes... the Christian congregation originally embraced proletariat elements almost exclusively and was a proletarian organization”. It has also been observed that the New Testament generally is written in very rough Greek, of a low cultural level when compared with other Greek literature of the period. The way he exhorts the Thessalonians to work with their own hands so that the world couldn’t criticize them implies the readership of Thessalonians were mainly manual workers (1 Thess. 4:11). Likewise Eph. 4:28. Paul wrote as if the “abysmal poverty” of the Macedonian ecclesias was well known (2 Cor. 8:1,2); and yet he goes on to reason that they had “abundance” in comparison with the “lack” of the Jerusalem Christians (8:14). The Jewish Christians called themselves “Ebionites”, based on the Hebrew word for ‘the poor’- “it was probably a conscious reminiscence of a very early term which attested by Paul’s letters as an almost technical name for the Christians in Jerusalem and Judaea”. Even if not all these poor converts were slaves, they were all subservient to their employers / sources of income. Craftsmen would have had to belong to a pagan trade guild, normally involving idol worship which a Christian had to refuse, and slaves of course had no ‘right’ to their own religion if it differed from that of their household.

1:27 *But God chose the foolish things of the world*- The word *moros* is predominantly used about the spiritually foolish. This was so relevant to the spiritually weak Corinthians. They had been chosen so that in God's strength they could come to glory. Maybe this is why the Lord forbids us to call each other *moros,* "fool" (Mt. 5:22). That is indeed how we are, spiritual blockheads. But we are not to see ourselves nor each other from that perspective- for we are called to be so much more, and it is through that weakness that God is to be glorified in His Son. Paul is not saying that God only works with men who are fools or simple / uneducated. His point is that if any man thinks himself wise, he must become a fool (1 Cor. 3:18), and he puts himself in that category when he says that "we are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4:10).

That He might put to shame those that are wise- The 'wise' here are those who appear to be wise. The fools confounding the wise is an inverse allusion to the Lord's parables, where the wise are saved and the foolish are condemned [e.g. in the parable of the two builders]. But here, the foolish shame the wise. "Shame" is the language of condemnation at the last day- this 'shaming' will happen only then, when those who appeared to be so 'wise', so sorted out, so spiritually and worldly wise, shall be

condemned and shamed by the salvation of the transformed 'fools'. This whole approach was very necessary in approaching a church as weak as Corinth. And it has enormous implications for us today. The idea of 'putting to shame' looks ahead to the day of judgment, when the rejected shall be shamed before the accepted (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 16:15). And so :29 likewise: "That no flesh should glory in His presence", at the day of judgment. That is the day when the fools of this world shall be glorified, and the wise shamed.

And God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong- The word for "weak" is elsewhere used about the spiritually weak (Mt. 26:41; Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:7,10; 9:22; 11:30; 1 Thess. 5:14). The 'shame' is in the condemning of the apparently 'strong' at the last day by the apparently 'weak'. These terms effectively mean 'those who consider themselves weak / strong'. Rather like the Lord's statement that it is the sick and not the healthy who need a doctor- we must read in the ellipsis: 'those who consider themselves to be...'. All this is an outworking of the principle that "the weakness of God [in the crucified Christ] is stronger than men" (:25).

1:28 *God chose what is low and despised in the world*- "Low" is *agenes*, without descent. This may be a reference to the Gentiles, but "the world" of the first century despised people who could not prove where they came from. For people were identified by their ancestors and place of origin. Those who were on the very edge of society were those weak ones through whom His strength could work. Accepting this reasoning would make us conclude that the Christian church generally, and not just Corinth, should be comprised of the low, the stateless and those at the edges of society. For this is a general principle being explained here; it is not just relevant to Corinth. And yet in the West, the church is for the middle class. Historians claim that the early church was full of slaves, women and others on the edges. And this is what a mission church comprised of first generation converts will look like. The same Greek word for "despised" is used of the Pharisee despising the sinful publican in Lk. 18:9, and those who understood more of the Gospel despising those who were still stuck in their old ways (Rom. 14:3,10). We note with interest the usage of the same word in Paul's appeal to ask those despised *within the church* to judge matters (6:4). Perhaps that too has a spiritual reference? But it was of course the Lord Himself who on the cross was the despised one; the same word is used about Him there in Lk. 23:11 and Acts 4:11. He there was identified with the spiritually low and despised; for He died for sinners and not for the self-righteous.

"Despised" is a word nearly always used about someone being spiritually despised. The publican was despised by the spiritually superior Pharisee (Lk. 18:9), the Lord was despised [s.w. "set at nought"] by the Jewish religious leadership (Acts 4:11), some spiritually despised others for their position on Jewish food laws, despising ['setting at nought'] their brethren (Rom. 14:3,10), some were despised ["least esteemed"] by

others *in the church* (1 Cor. 6:4), the word of prophecy was despised by some *in the church* (1 Thess. 5:20). God has this special interest not only in the economically and socially marginalized, but in the spiritually marginalized within the church. The alcoholics, depressed, mentally unwell, those who have been in many failed relationships... they are the ones who so often are the great ones in His eyes.

Even things that are not- The language here recalls Rom. 4:17: "God, who gives life to the dead, and called things that are not, as though they were". The context there is of imputed righteousness. Those who had no righteousness are counted as if they do- by grace. This fits in with the context here in 1 Corinthians- the Corinthians were woefully immature but in God's strength would be justified by grace through faith- and bring to nothing those people / things which [appeared to] be spiritually strong.

To bring to nothing things that are- 'Bringing to nothing' is the language of condemnation at the last day (6:13; 2 Thess. 2:8 etc.). The apparently strong, the things that apparently 'were' spiritually, therefore refer to those who shall appear at the day of judgment and be rejected. The idea of some at the judgment condemning others is to be found in various places- e.g. the men of Nineveh shall condemn the Jews of the Lord's say. So perhaps the picture is of those who appear so sorted out, so spiritually stable, so acceptable in secular terms... being condemned at the last day because they didn't really believe in the good news of Christ crucified, whereas those who were socially, spiritually and intellectually disadvantaged compared to them actually did believe in that saving good news. This is a powerful challenge to today's church.

1:29 *So that no flesh should boast before God*- In Gal. 6:14, Paul says that he will boast [s.w.] in nothing but the cross of Christ. We are not to boast of works, but only of what was achieved for us by grace through our faith in the Lord's cross (Eph. 2:9; Phil. 3:3). Any trust in human strength or wisdom is so abhorrent to God. He chooses the powerless and unwise, or at least those who recognize their lack of power and wisdom, to be the ones through whom He shall work. No wonder the Lord taught that the wealthy will scarcely be saved. AV "in His presence" looks ahead to the day of judgment as the time when the foolish shall eternally triumph over the wise (see on :27). It is then that we shall boast in the Lord (:31)- an allusion to the picture of judgment day in Is. 45:23-25: "To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. They will say of Me, ‘There is righteousness and strength only in Yahweh’. Even to Him shall men come; and all those who were incensed against Him shall be disappointed.
In Yahweh shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory". These words are quoted by Paul about judgment day in Romans. We will not boast in ourselves in that day, for we shall be flat on our faces before the Lord Jesus. But we shall arise to boast in the Lord Jesus (:31).

1:30 *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus*- We are "of God" in that we are born of Him by being in His Son by baptism into Him.

Who was made to us by God to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption- It is those who lack these things, and recognize their lack of them, who are likely to earnestly believe in the Lord's offer of those things through the cross of Christ.

1:31 *That, according to what is written: He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord*- The whole purpose of calling the unwise, unrighteous and unholy is so that when they are saved at the last day, they will be glorying totally in the Lord's grace and in Him, in His characteristics which are counted to them. It is all a question of giving total glory to the crucified Christ and the plan of salvation by grace which is in Him. This is why self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, self congratulation, human wisdom and acceptance within human society... are all the very characteristics of the person who will not truly respond to the Gospel. The boasting in the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment is the scene of Is. 45:23-25; see on :29.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1- see on Jn. 1:14.

I brothers, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God- Paul has just argued in chapter 1 that the wisdom of God is in the crucified Christ, and those who are humanly wise will not respond to it. So Paul reasons that we should likewise present the Gospel with no attempt to make the cross of Christ somehow intellectually respectable, or acceptable in a secular sense. I have previously failed in this and so has so much Gospel outreach. Paul of course as a Rabbi and an intellectual could indeed have presented the Gospel with the trappings of secular wisdom. But he writes here as if he consciously stripped his message of anything like that. His message was after all, that of God in Christ- "the testimony of God". The Greek here seems to specifically mean 'evidence'. Faith is not built upon evidence that is visible (Heb. 11:1,2)- and that includes arguments from science, archaeology etc. The evidence / testimony of God is "the cross of Christ"; and the addition of human wisdom to it makes it of none effect (1:17). This is God's evidence which He provides to us in order for us to have a basis for faith. In encountering the Lord Jesus there, we are challenged to believe in God, as faith in God really is. All the energy expended upon apologetics to provide a supposed basis for faith is therefore in my view misguided. It is psychological encounter with the crucified Christ which elicits faith.

2:2 *For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified*- See on :1. The "determined" reflects Paul's struggle with the temptation to make the message of Christ crucified somewhat respectable in secular terms.

The letters to Corinth must have been very difficult to write. Paul was walking an absolute minefield. Therefore he says that his attitude to Corinth was that he wanted to know nothing among them, saving Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2); he wanted to keep his mind fixed upon the Lord Jesus and the intensity of His passion, rather than get sidetracked by personality issues and ecclesial politics. And his letters

reveal this. They contain many unconscious allusions to the suffering and death of Christ. Paul refers to Christ as "Lord" throughout all his letters about once every 26 verses on average. And yet in Corinthians he does so once every 10 verses on average. The Lordship and suffering of Jesus were therefore very much in Paul's mind as he wrote. His Christ and cross-centred perspective is a real example to us, living as we do at a time when the body of Christ increasingly distracts us from the central object of our devotion: the Son of God who died for us, and was raised again for our justification.

When Paul faced Corinth, the ecclesia whom he had loved and brought into being with great labour pains, yet now riven with carnality, fabricating the most malicious rumours against him, bitter at his spirituality... he determined to know nothing among them, saving Christ, and Him crucified. The antidote to ecclesial problems and selfishness is reflection upon the cross. By insisting on our rights, Paul says, we will make the weak brother stumble, "for whom Christ died". 'Think of His cross and sacrifice', Paul is saying, 'and the sacrifice of self restraint *you* are asked to make is nothing at all'.

Despite “the offence of the cross", Paul preached it. “I determined not to know [i.e. ‘teach the knowledge of'] any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". Paul didn’t accommodate his message to the ears of his hearers. There are times when God’s revelation *is* accommodated to us, but not when it comes to the basic message of Christ and the demands which His cross makes upon us.

2:3 - see on 1 Cor. 8:9; 2 Cor. 12:7.

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling- For Paul, his glory was not in heroic "deeds of the body" [see on Gal. 1:10] but rather in the fact that when he first preached to the Corinthians, he was suffering from "weakness... much fear and trembling"- a reference to anything from agitated nervous breakdown to malaria. We have Gal. 4:13 in the same vein: "You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at the first". So it could be that this is a reference to his physical weakness at the time he preached to the Corinthians. But William Barclay understands the Greek words to more imply “the trembling anxiety to perform a duty”, and I tend to run with this. The words are a reflection of the heart that bled within Paul. The man who has no fear, no hesitancy, no nervousness, no tension in the task of preaching…may give an efficient and competent performance from a platform. But it is the man who has this trembling anxiety, that intensity which comes from a heart that bleeds for ones hearers, who will produce an effect which artistry alone can never achieve. He is the man who will convert another. It has truly been said that “the need is the call”. To perceive the needs of others is what calls us and compels us to witness, coupled with our own disappointment with ourselves, our race, our nature.

2:3-5- see on Jn. 15:26.

2:4 *And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*- This is parallel in thought to Paul's idea that he would preach the cross of Christ without any words of human wisdom. The "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" is thus paralleled to the cross of Christ. Here was and is the demonstration of Spirit and power. And yet in what sense can the cross of Christ be so powerful? I would say that the Lord's death was designed and is

empowered to produce faith in God within those who accept it. For the Spirit was released as rivers of waters from His slain body. And especially in the first century context of illiteracy, the cross of Christ had power in that it was the motivation for the living examples of Christian sacrifice which were Christianity's best advert.

The essence of all this is the same today as it was then- the revelation of the person of Jesus isn't solely through Bible reading and getting the interpretation right; it's through a living community, His body. It is there that we will see His Spirit / personality in action. I don't refer to miraculous gifts- but to the spirit / mind / disposition / essence of the Lord, man and saviour Jesus.

2:5 *So that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*- Paul has earlier defined "the power of God" as the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 1:18,24). Paul correctly perceived that a person's faith 'stands in' the message they first receive and believe. The teacher / preacher therefore has huge responsibility to teach the right thing. Real faith is not in the wisdom of men, Paul has argued, nor is it predicated upon anything other than the cross of Christ. And so he preached likewise- simply of the cross. The Greek phrase translated "stand in" is the closest we get in the Bible to an explanation of the substance of faith; of what faith is based in. And it is *not* in "the wisdom of men", including apologetics. It is in the "power of God" which we have earlier defined as Christ crucified (1:18,24).

2:6 *We speak wisdom, however, among them that are mature*- Paul spoke only of Christ crucified (:2), and so the true wisdom was Him. The "mature" would perceive this. For we have just been told that God has made Christ to be "wisdom" for us (1 Cor. 1:30). The Corinthians needed exhortation to become "mature" (1 Cor. 14:20); maturity has been reached by some now (Phil. 3:15; Col. 4:12; Heb. 5:14; James 1:4) and yet in another sense it is yet future, when we attain the full measure of Christ's maturity (Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28). The same Greek word is used in all these passages. The idea that faith is predicated upon encounter with Christ crucified will be struggled against, shot down as philosophically lacking, intellectually weak and so forth. But the paradox is that the mature will perceive it. When you reach 'Christ', the maturity that is Him, then we will understand that *all* is of Him and His cross.

Yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nothing- The wisdom of this world and its "princes" (AV), its academics and philosophers and chat show hosts, is 'coming to nothing'. Paul has just used the same word in 1:28 of how the despised simple believers shall 'bring to nothing' what seems so smart and wise. The means by which the wise of this world shall be brought to nothing is through the simple believers. And the Greek tense used suggests that this is ongoing- the wise of this world are already "coming to nothing". The world rulers are defined in :8 as those who crucified the Lord; Paul envisaged the overthrow of the Jewish system as being at the hands of the humble Christian believers, including the worldly Gentiles of Corinth. Things didn't work out that way because the Lord's return was delayed until our last days, but the principle remains the same.

2:7 *But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery*- Paul doesn't mean that he has shrouded the simple message of the cross in "a mystery". For he has spoken of how his preaching is of the cross of Christ, stripped of literally anything else (:2). He means that the message of God's wisdom, which is Christ crucified (1:24), is so simple that it is received as a mystery by the wise of this world and indeed by all those who do not believe it.

Even that which was hidden, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory- The appeal of the cross is "hidden" in that the 'wise' won't see it because they choose not to believe it. The allusion is surely to the usage of the same word in the

Lord's teaching that the things of the Gospel had been 'hidden' from the wise, and revealed to babes (Mt. 11:25). 1 Cor. 2:6-9 stresses how the early believers possessed a truth which nobody else apart from them could know. Whilst this feature of true Christianity led into the arrogance and pride which eventually doomed the early church, when and whilst used properly, it bound them even closer together. Nikolaus Walter observes that the first century generally "did not experience religion as a binding force that was capable of determining everyday reality by offering support, setting norms, and forming community". And yet the Truth of Christ enabled just such things to occur. In this, as today, the example of the community is the ultimate proof that the doctrine of Christ which we teach is indeed the Truth and of itself demands conversion.

2:8- see on 1 Cor. 1:19.

Which not one of the rulers of this world has known. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory- The rulers or princes of the world therefore referred specifically to the Roman-Jewish leaders who crucified the Lord. As noted on :6, those rulers were already 'coming to nothing' and would be condemned by the simple faith of illiterate Christians. Such talk of the overthrow of empire and ruling systems was criminal within the first century Roman empire. But Paul writes as he does, so important is the message of how simple faith shall gloriously triumph over all secular splendour.

Paul saw the naked, forsaken, mocked, bleeding, spittle covered body of Jesus as glorious. This was another inversion of all human values. And His glory is ours- for :7 has just mentioned that this mystery was foreordained for "our glory". The Lord's glory is ours, and ours is His.

2:9 *But as it is written: Things which eye saw not and ear heard not and which did not enter into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for them that love Him*- The context is speaking of man's rejection of the crucified Christ. Unbelievers did not perceive [see or hear] that message, neither therefore did it enter their heart. The "things God prepared" are therefore those of the crucified Christ, who died in order to achieve that great salvation "for them that love Him". The 'things prepared' are those of the Kingdom feast (Mt. 20:23; 22:4; 25:34); but the same word is also used of the 'preparation' of the Lord Jesus as our sacrifice (Lk. 2:31). The cross of Christ enabled all the wonderful things of the Kingdom and the salvation experience in Christ. And it is all those things which are not really believed by the eyes, ears and heart of secular man, because the wisdom of this world has blinded them to it.

So the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, things which the natural eye has not seen but which are revealed unto us by the Spirit, relate to our redemption in Christ, rather than the wonders of the future political Kingdom (because Mt. 13:11; 16:17 = 1 Cor. 2:9,10). The context of 1 Cor. 2 and the allusions to Isaiah there demand the same interpretation. We have a similar teaching discussed on Is. 55:7-9, where although God's ways and thoughts are high as heaven, Judah were condemned because "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways". When clearly they ought to have been.

I have argued throughout my commentary on Isaiah 63,64 that we have there a cynical lament by the faithless exiles. Is. 64:4, which Paul quotes, is set in the midst of generally unreasonable criticisms of God, complaining that He is far too distant to have a relationship with. Interpretation isn't made easy by the difficulties of the Hebrew text, and the way Paul quotes it in 1 Cor. 2:9 in a way different to any of the original texts. I suggest that the idea in Is. 64:4 is in line with the context, as if to say 'No human eye nor mind can see what You, God, have prepared / are planning for

Your people who wait on / serve You'. And that would explain why Paul quotes this verse and then appears to alter the sense by adding: "But God has revealed them [these things no man can understand] unto *us* by His Spirit". He is saying that these things are revealed to us, when the verse appears to be saying that they are far beyond understanding by any human being. Paul read this verse as the cynical lament of God's rejected people; and shows that this claim is simply not the case, for those who have received the Spirit of the new covenant.

2:10 *God revealed them to us through the Spirit*- Again the allusion is to Mt. 11:25, where the Lord praises the Father for 'hiding' His identity from the wise and prudent, and revealing it [s.w.] to "babies". Those immature, largely illiterate disciples who 'got it' about Jesus are therefore us. Here Paul adds that the process through which that revelation happens is "through the Spirit". This is not to say that one person is zapped by the Spirit and forced to believe, but another is not. There is indeed an element whereby faith is not simply a result of human steel will, but involves the gracious work of the Spirit on human minds. Yet as explained so far in Corinthians, it is our freewill choice to encounter the crucified Christ and believe in God's salvation through Him.

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God- The "things" in view are surely those concerning the Lord Jesus and His kingdom of :9. These are the deep things, and not any apparent profundity of human wisdom or debates. The 'Spirit' is personified as searching around all the depths of God's mysteries because we are going to now read that this Spirit has been given to us, so that *we* might know those deep things. This is all beautifully shown by a comparison of Is. 64:4 and 1 Cor. 2:9: "Men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what He has prepared for him that waits for him". Paul quotes this in 1 Cor. 2:9,10: "It is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto *us* by His Spirit". The passage in Is. 64 says that no one except God can understand the things He has prepared for the believers. However 1 Cor. 2:10 says that those things have been revealed to *us*. Because His Spirit is given to us and becomes our spirit.

2:11 *For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God nobody knows, save the Spirit of God*- The spirit of a person is intimately connected to themselves. Only the heart knows its own bitterness in this sense, and likewise an external person can never totally get involved with the heart's joy (Prov. 14:10). This is the wonder of the fact that God's Spirit is given to us; this is the intimacy possible between God and man in Christ.

2:12 *But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, so that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God*- The "we" refers to the same "we" who were speaking / teaching the Corinthians (:13) and refers I suggest specifically to Paul and his preaching team. The spirit of the world is the mindset of "the wisdom of this world". Although Paul had that in his rabbinic days, he disregarded it. The Spirit he had received was in response to his faith in the crucified Christ whom he had encountered. This was God's Spirit, and revealed the things of God; and it was those things which he taught to the Corinthians in his preaching of the Gospel. The "things" were "freely given" in that the Spirit of God as it were searches all of God's things. The connection between Christ crucified and the free gift of God's "things" is developed in Rom. 8:32, where the same words are used: "He that spared not His own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things?". Once we accept the gift of God's Son, then all else, quite

literally, is surely going to be given. And those things include faith and understanding. The Greek word for "freely given" is also that translated 'forgive'. Our experience of forgiveness on account of the cross opens the way to receive so much more too- all the things of God's free giving. For the cross not only is the basis for the 'free giving' of forgiveness, but of God's Spirit which knows all things.

2:13 *Which things also we speak about*- The "things" are those of the Gospel of Christ which Paul spoke or taught.

But not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in words that the Spirit teaches- Paul has said that he preaches Christ crucified without any words of human wisdom. They are the "things" in view. The words taught by the Spirit were therefore the words of or concerning the cross. Paul's teaching of the Corinthians was only verbalizing what the Spirit taught which flowed from the crucified Lord. We can now better understand why "the Spirit" is a title of the Lord Jesus in material like Romans, 2 Corinthians and Revelation. He personally is to be identified with His Spirit which He freely gives to all who believe in Him.

Combining spiritual things with spiritual- The Spirit in Paul's message would connect with the Spirit within the believers at Corinth. The GNB seems to get the point of this rather difficult Greek: "As we explain spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit". It was and is only to the spiritual that spiritual things make sense; to all others, who do not believe the simple message of the cross and all that is given to us through His work there, the spiritual things remain mysterious and unwise. And I have to add, that those believers who resist the current work of the Spirit will likewise find many things closed and hidden, because the Spirit of those teachings is not being allowed to combine with the Spirit within them.

2:14 *Now the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot know them*- Secular wisdom will not believe in a crucified Saviour. Instead of allowing the crucified Christ to convert them, they rush to Josephus and other early historians to enquire whether Jesus of Nazareth really died on a cross outside Jerusalem. But the point is that there is a power within Him there which of itself converts- if we let it, and humble ourselves to shed our human wisdom. Any references in Josephus etc. are at best confirmations of our faith, but play no part in essential faith in Christ. We must take seriously the repeated reports of the early missionaries, that they could not elicit belief in the message of Christianity or the Christian God amongst the illiterate folk they encountered in Africa or the Pacific islands- until they explained or drew pictures of the crucifixion. Then, all seemed to make sense- to those who felt their own sin and thirsted for forgiveness and connection with the one God. "The natural man" is the wise of this world who would consider the cross and all we have written about it to be foolish. Because human pride has stopped him believing. He will not "know" these things because he cannot- until he quits his human wisdom.

Paul saw the cross of Christ as parallel with “the things of the Spirit of God", the wisdom of God, what eye has not seen nor ear heard, but what is revealed unto the believer and not to the world (1 Cor. 1:18,23,24; 2:7-13). The cross of Christ was the supreme expression of the Spirit of God, and it’s true meaning is incomprehensible to the world. In the cross, according to Paul’s allusion back to Isaiah, God bowed the Heavens and came down. He did wonderful things which we looked not for. The thick

darkness there is to be associated with a theophany presence of God Himself. See on Jn. 19:19.

Because they are spiritually discerned- Only the Spirit within a person who has believed in the crucified Christ will be able to 'combine with' or connect with Spiritual things (:13). The Greek word means literally to question; asking questions as we read God's word is therefore an appropriate thing for us to be doing. Paul is not advocating a simplistic approach, nor a shutting down of any critical, analytical approach.

2:15- see on 1 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 2:17.

But he that is spiritual judges all things; and he is ultimately judged by no man- Those who have believed in the crucified Lord will receive of His Spirit, and are thereby able to judge or discern the truth of the things Paul was preaching. Such persons will be mocked and despised by the wise of this world; but ultimately, they are not judged by those men. Indeed, they shall bring to nothing all such pretensions in the day of final judgment, as explained in 1:27,28 (see notes there).

In the final analysis, we will meet Jesus alone. There will by God's grace be a moment when we will even see the face of Almighty God- alone. This was the light at the end of Job's tunnel- he would see his redeemer for himself "and not another". Paul possibly expresses the same idea of an unenterable relationship in 1 Cor. 2:15: "He that is spiritual discerneth all things (about God), yet he himself is discerned of no man". Our real spiritual being is a "hidden man" (1 Pet. 3:4). The Spirit describes our final redemption as our "soul" and "spirit" being "saved" ; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5). Notice that Paul styles the spiritual man "he himself" (1 Cor. 2:15 AV); as if the real, fundamental self of the true believer is the spiritual man, notwithstanding the existence of the man of the flesh within him. Likewise Paul calls his spiritual man "I myself" in Rom. 7:25. He now felt that when he sinned, it was no longer "I", his real, personal self, who was doing so (Rom. 7:17).

2:16 - see on Job 21:22.

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ- The person who knows the Lord's mind is the one who has His Spirit (:11). We have the mind of Christ, who had the mind of God. The spirit of Christ and that of God are the same thing. The idea that men should instruct God is unthinkable- but this is what effectively is the position of those who consider that their human wisdom is the true wisdom, and God's wisdom is foolishness. The quotation from Is. 40:13,14 is about God's people in Babylon being tempted to think that the wisdom of Babylon, perhaps the most advanced in the world at its time, was somehow superior to that of Israel's God. Paul uses the same idea in Rom. 11:34 concerning the false wisdom of Judaism claiming as it were to be superior to God's wisdom in Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *And I, brothers, can not speak to you as spiritual people, but as carnal people*- The "we" who have the Spirit in 2:13 refer to Paul and his preaching team and not all at Corinth. The Corinthians possessed the miraculous gifts, but were in a more fundamental sense Spirit-less. "John did no miracle", but was filled with the Spirit from his birth. Even the Comforter, which does refer to the miraculous gifts in its

primary context, was, in perhaps another sense, to be unseen by the world, and to be *within* the believers (Jn. 14:17). It could well be that the Lord's discourse with Nicodemus concerning the need to be born both of water and Spirit must be read in the context of John's baptism; his was a birth of water, but Christian baptism is being described with an almost technical term: birth of the Spirit, in that baptism into the Spirit of Jesus brings the believer into the realm of the operation of God's Spirit. But as happened with the Corinthians, it is possible to deny the Spirit any space to operate within us; those who resist any idea of the Spirit working directly within the human mind are putting themselves in the same position. This is the answer to those who complain that they were baptized but 'feel' no Spirit operation; the potential was given, and is still there, as chapters 1 and 2 make so clear about the Corinthians; but they were not Spirit-filled because they didn't allow it.

As infants in Christ- But they were still "in Christ". And Paul respects them for that.

3:2 *I fed you with milk, not with solid food. For you were not yet able to bear it; no, not even now are you able*- Paul has defined what he initially taught them as being the crucified Christ. And he has proceeded to develop the idea that the presence of the Spirit within believers in Christ will enable them to 'combine with' further Spiritual teaching. But despite their initial belief, like so many today, they had not remained open to the Spirit, and so Paul was unable to share with them the deeper matters of the Spirit. Or if he did, they could not connect with those things because they were lacking the Spirit within them (see on 2:13). The language here and in Heb. 5:12-14 surely alludes to Jn. 16:12, although it doesn't verbally quote it: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now". "Able" is *dunamis*, they were not of power to receive Spiritual things; and chapter 1 has laboured the point that *dunamis* comes from the Spirit of Christ received at baptism.

3:3 *For you are still carnal. For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are you not carnal and do you not walk after the manner of men?*- Paul can confidently conclude that they are not Spiritual, and therefore still carnal, because there is no evidence of the fruits of the Spirit. Jealousy, strife and division are the works of the flesh and advertise a lack of the Spirit within (Gal. 5:20). We are not to judge others in the sense of condemning them; but like Paul here, we can quite simply observe whether someone has the Spirit by whether they manifest the fruits of the Spirit. We may find that those who differ from us in some areas of Biblical interpretation clearly have the Spirit; and others who share our theology may be Spirit-less. Note that ″strife" here translates *eris*, from whence 'heresy'. The real heresy is division between believers; and yet it is the fear of heresy which so often creates divisions. Paul could have chosen various indicators of the lack of the Spirit amongst the Corinthians; but he chooses the strife and division amongst them as the clearest example of it on a group level. For the joint possession of the Spirit creates unity- the unity of the Spirit. Where this is lacking on a collective level, it is clear that generally, as a community, the Spirit is lacking. This is not to say there were not individuals in Corinth who had the Spirit. But the reasoning here is forceful- any divided church, denomination or community is evidence that on a general, collective level, they are carnal and not Spirit filled.

3:4 *For when one says: I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos- are you not mere men?*- They were "men" rather than being 'spirit' on a collective level; see on :3. The division of the church into groups based around which teacher they preferred or who had baptized them was an evidence that the Spirit received at baptism had not been allowed to dwell within them.

3:5 *Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Ministers through whom you believed, and each as the Lord gave to him*- A Christ centred approach makes the person who preached to us a mere instrument, a servant / minister used by the Lord to bring about faith. "Each as the Lord gave to him" could refer to the way that Paul and Apollos were simply fulfilling the ministries given to them by the Lord; but the context is of faith and how one comes to belief. So the reference may rather be to the fact that each of them had believed as a result of the Lord's gift / grace. This was to be paramount in their thinking; the human instruments used in the process were of utterly no account.

3:6 *I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*- The "increase" in the context is their faith; hence Paul later writes of "when your faith is increased" (2 Cor. 10:15). Faith is a gift from God. This metaphor would have stopped at the planting and watering if the Gospel alone was enough to provoke faith. Paul later explains how that in his preaching he laid the foundation of the Gospel of Christ, but other brethren were building on it, as here in this earlier parable he speaks of his planting the seed of the Gospel and Apollos watering it. He warned these 'builder' brethren to "take heed how he buildeth thereupon", because "every man's work (cp. "ye are my work in the Lord", 1 Cor. 9:1) shall be made manifest: for the day (of judgment) shall declare it... the fire [of judgment] shall try every man's work, of what sort it is... gold, silver... wood, hay, stubble... if any man's work abide which he hath built... he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:6-15). This clearly teaches that successful building up of brethren will have its specific reward at the judgment; and that to some degree their rejection will be a result of our lack of zeal, and we will thus lose the extra reward which we could have had for the work of upbuilding. No doubt if the brethren we have laboured hard with to help, are with us in the Kingdom, this will greatly increase our joy- as compared to the brother who has not had such intense fellowship with his brethren during this life, and whose close friends in the ecclesia have been rejected, he himself only barely passing through the fire of judgment himself ("Yet so as by fire").

3:7 *So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase*- The channels by which God works are not themselves the source of faith. In chapter 1, Paul has tackled the fact that the Corinthians were divided into camps based around various teachers or baptizers. What's significant is that the individuals being so fiercely followed (Paul, Peter and Apollos) did not themselves want that following. And this kind of thing has repeated itself in church history. People want a human leader, a badge to wear, a human identity- and so they will chose persons and even systems which do not want to be treated in that way, but all the same, those people are made to fit the very human needs of the people.

3:8 *Now he that plants and he that waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour*- Despite having said that in terms of giving faith and salvation, the channels are nothing- Paul is clear that those who do this work will be rewarded. The planter and waterer are "one" in that they are both being used by God, but they shall individually receive a reward for their work. Whilst salvation is by grace and not according to works, it is also true that the nature of our eternity will be a reflection of our works in this life. And the judgment process will reflect that; one will reign over five cities, another over 10 cities; just as one star differs from another in glory.

3:9- see on Rom. 15:26.

For we are God's fellow-workers- We are co-workers with Him in the building up of His house (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1). He could save men directly; but instead He has delegated that work to us, and thereby limited His power to save insofar as it depends upon our extension of it. Only through our preaching can the work of the cross be made complete- and that thought is frightening. God is building up His house, His ecclesia. But because we manifest God, we too are "labourers together with Him", not just puppets in His hand; we too are the builders of His house (1 Cor. 3:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:1). The contrast between "we" and "you" has been noted earlier- the "we" surely refers to Paul and Silas.

You are God's husbandry, God's building- "Husbandry" is literally 'farm'. The same word is used of how previously, Israel had been God's farm (Mt. 21:33-38); but now the likes of the Gentile Corinthians were that farm. But they appeared to be likewise yielding no spiritual fruit, despite all the work being done for them. We note that the Father is the husbandman (Jn. 15:1); and yet in another sense, we are the husbandmen. He is working with us through every effort made to promote spiritual fruit in His people. We are labourers together with none less that God Himself whenever we do anything to build up others.

3:10 *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder*- The gift ["grace"] of God, the Spirit gift, was Paul's 'wisdom'. For he has explained in chapter 1 that spiritual wisdom is a Spirit gift from God.

I laid a foundation, and another builds upon it- The foundation was in converting unbelievers to the cross of Christ (:11). The rejected stone of Christ becomes the foundation stone ["corner stone"] for the faith of every individual and every true church. Paul saw himself as called to break new ground, to lay the foundation of Christian belief where it had not been laid before (Rom. 15:20); but he depended upon others to build upon it. This is in line with the terms of the great commission- to preach the simple news of the Lord's death and resurrection, to baptize people into it, and then afterwards to "teach them all things that I have commanded" (Mt. 28:20).

But let each man take care how he builds upon it!- The allusion is surely to the parable of the wise and foolish builders; for Paul has just claimed that he is a *wise* builder, laying a firm foundation. And the tension between wise and foolish is often played upon in these early chapters of 1 Corinthians. His take on the parable is interesting, in that he seems to be arguing that it refers to the work we do in building up others, rather than in laying a personal foundation and building as it were our own house.

Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 3:10-12 is that "every man" will make a convert, and he should ensure they are firm in the faith, lest he lose them at judgment day. These assumptions of Paul reflect his positive way of thought, in a brotherhood that abounded in weakness and failure to live up to its potential. Likewise he writes of marriage as if marriage within the faith was and is the only model of marriage which he knows, even though there must have been many failures to live up to this ideal, as there are today. Paul seems to have assumed that all of us would preach and make converts (not leave it to just some of our community): he speaks of how "every man" in the ecclesia builds upon the foundation of Christ, but how he builds will be judged by fire. If what he has built is burnt up at the judgment, he himself will be saved, but not what he has built. I would suggest that the 'building' refers to our converts and work with other believers. If they fail of the Kingdom, we ourselves will be saved, but our work will have been in vain. This parable also suggests that the salvation of others, their passing through the fire at the judgment, is dependent upon how we

build. This may be hyperbole to make a point, but it is a powerful encouragement that we are *all* elders and preachers, and we *all* have a deep effect on others' spirituality. We have responsibilities to those who respond to our preaching.

3:11 *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ*- In chapters 1 and 2, Paul has explained that the foundation is Christ crucified; he determined to preach nothing other than that. The same word is used in Heb. 6:1 about the foundation of "faith toward God". Paul has explained that faith in God is predicated upon encounter with His crucified Son. And yet atheism was not popular in the first century Mediterranean world. The point is that in reality, we are not really believers in God unless we are believers in His Son; for the Son is the only way to the Father. Paul may be implying that some were seeking to claim to have laid some other foundation, disregarding the ground work Paul had done. The allusion to the parable of the wise and foolish builders suggests that the foundation is laid upon a rock- the Lord Jesus- rather than sand. This is the only valid building. And that rock is defined by the Lord Jesus as being Him and His words, believed and acted upon.

3:12 *But if anyone builds on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble*- The builders upon the foundation of Paul's basic preaching work were those who then did the pastoral work of teaching all that the Lord has commanded (Mt. 28:20). The materials they build with refer to the quality of those they build up. Gold, silver and precious stones can pass through the fire (:13)- the final test of judgment day. And these three figures are used elsewhere about the believers. The other corresponding three figures will be burnt up by the fire. Here we see the principle that the final acceptance of individuals is partly related to the quality of the teaching and caring work done for them by third parties. God has built this factor into the algorithm of our salvation in order that we may each one devote ourselves to caring for others spiritually, and so that likewise we may realize our own need for others' help in our own path to salvation.

3:13 *Each man's work shall be revealed. For the day of judgment shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire itself shall test each man's work of what sort it is*- The 'revelation' and 'declaration' will be public because in some [unimaginable] form, the judgment experience will be public. We shall each perceive the various factors in the final salvation and condemnation of each person. The judgment process will reveal openly the efforts made by others towards the salvation of others; the fire shall "test" our work with each other. And Paul writes not merely of himself and his preaching team, but of 'every man'; for we are each called to work in building others up against that day. The same word for "test" is used of how we can examine ourselves now at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:28); for that meeting is, or can be, a foretaste of judgment day. We can 'test our own selves' ahead of that day (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4 s.w.). Right now God is 'testing' our hearts (1 Thess. 2:4); the judgment process will be a declaration for *our* collective benefit of God's present judgments. Peter seems to allude to Paul's ideas here when he writes that the faithful are as gold who pass through the fire right now, and are 'tested' with fire through present experience (1 Pet. 1:7 s.w.). Through our response to trial we therefore have a foretaste of judgment day.

At the point of conversion, the secrets of our hearts are in a sense made manifest (1 Cor. 14:25); but secrets are made manifest in the last day (Mt. 6:4,6,18; 1 Cor. 3:13). The present judgments of God about us will be revealed at the judgment (Rom. 2:5).

Our actions "treasure up" wrath or acceptance (Rom. 2:5). The materialistic believer heaps up treasure for judgment at the last day (James 5:3). See on Lk. 11:23.

1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation (Josh. 6:24). Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful.

3:14 *If anyone's work shall endure which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward*- Our reward in the Kingdom will in some way be related to the work of upbuilding we have done with our brethren and sisters in this life. The "reward" which 1 Cor. 3:14 speaks of is the "work" we have built in God's ecclesia in this life. In agreement with this, Paul describes those he had laboured for as the reward he would receive in the Kingdom (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19). Paul has in mind that the Corinthians were his "work in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1). He encourages all the Corinthians to likewise abound in this "work of the Lord" (15:58)- i.e. of building up each other. Paul has said in :8 that he is liable for "reward"- depending on the growth of the Corinthians.

3:15 *If anyone's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as having passed through fire*- There is the implication in the New Testament that whoever lives the life of Christ will convert others to the Way. 1 Cor. 3 speaks of the converts a man builds on the foundation of Christ. They, like himself, must go through the fire of judgment, and if they are lost, then he himself will still be saved (if he has remained faithful). The implication is that all of us build up others, and our work is tried in the end.

The accepted will be saved "yet so as by fire" (AV). The fire of condemnation will as it were burn at them and remove all their surface spirituality. And as through death comes life, so through condemnation of the flesh comes salvation of the spirit.

If we invest our lives in seeking to save others and they are burnt up at the day of judgment, then we will indeed experience loss. "Suffer loss" is a term elsewhere used about being "cast away" in rejection at the day of judgment, or 'losing' ones own soul there (Mt. 16:26; Lk. 9:25). This is not teaching that the preacher / teacher will be rejected, for we go on to read that he shall not be- "he himself shall be saved". It's that if we really care for people, then the loss of any man is my loss; we identify with those we love and care for. Hence the faithful of the Old Testament felt that they had sinned along with Israel, and Ezra blushed to lift up his face to God because of the sins of the Israel with whom he was associated (Ezra 9:6). As we see those they laboured for condemned and burnt up, we will feel it as if it were us. This is why Paul openly admits that he has a vested interest in the salvation of the Corinthians. We too cannot work with others in some dispassionate, at-a-distance manner, as if it were a mere 9-5 job we were doing. If those we served are indeed burnt up, it shall be as if we were, although we ourselves shall be saved. This I believe is the sense of the next sentence: "But he himself shall be saved, yet as having passed through fire".

3:16 *Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?*- Paul began the chapter by saying that they were not spiritual (:1); and yet the Spirit dwelt in them. As explained earlier in these notes, the Spirit is given but this doesn't make us spiritual unless we allow that Spirit to take over our lives and allow it

free movement. And this was what the Corinthians weren't doing; for they instead gave freedom of movement to their flesh. The "you" here is in the plural; the Spirit was dwelling amongst them as a community.

3:17 *If anyone destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy; and such are you*- Judaism was very touchy about the destruction or damaging of the temple in any way. And Paul transfers that language to these Gentile Corinthians. He began in chapter 1 by appealing for holiness, or sanctification, on a personal level. He reminded them that they had been sanctified, in status before God in Christ and by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. But they had to allow that to work out in practice instead of justifying the flesh. The damaging of the temple is being spoken of on a collective, plural level. The concern here is not so much with damaging ones own physical body, but with damaging the temple / church of God. The letter will continue to give examples of that- division, prostitution and immorality within the church, over eating and drinking at the breaking of bread, false teaching etc. Those who stop the community from being sanctified by advocating the flesh are therefore standing against the Holy Spirit, which is amongst the church and within the individual believers. This becomes a form of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

3:18 *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone thinks that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise*- At this stage in the letter, there was in view a particular damaging of the church, God's temple. It was in the belief and teaching of human wisdom. For this stands opposed to the Spirit of God, as Paul has laboured from the start of the letter to this point. Paul is appealing here for a re-conversion- to 'foolishness', in the eyes of the world, by quitting human wisdom. The true wisdom was of the Spirit, which had already potentially been given to them. Chapter 1 has said that they are already enriched with all spiritual wisdom; they had to reject human wisdom, becoming 'foolish', in order to access it.

Job was the greatest of the men of the east (Job 1:3), people who were renowned in the ancient world for their wisdom (cp. Mt. 2:1; 1 Kings 4:30). Thus Job as the Jews would have been full of worldly wisdom, and this is maybe behind Paul's words of 1 Cor.3:18,19: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written (quoting Job 5:13, which is Eliphaz speaking about Job), He taketh the wise in their own craftiness". Job is equated with the false wisdom of the Judaizers, who were using "excellency of speech… wisdom... enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1,4), to corrupt the believers from the "simplicity that is in Christ", "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (2 Cor. 11:3).

3:19 *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*- Chapters 1 and 2 have defined the wisdom of God as the power of the crucified Christ. All else is foolishness with God. The whole structure of the argument and language used allows for no incorporation of worldly wisdom within Divine wisdom. Yet we in this age of all ages are so strongly tempted to proclaim a faith which appears intellectually and scientifically respectable.

For it is written: He takes the wise in their craftiness- The impossibility of combining secular and Divine wisdom is underscored by this. The worldly wisdom of the wise is actually what stops them from believing; which is why Paul insisted on preaching the bald message of the crucified Christ with no words of secular wisdom attached to it. For faith would not then be elicited. The quotation from Eliphaz in Job 5:13 raises

interesting questions as to the nature of Divine inspiration. The words of the friends are at times wrong, and God later says they are wrong. But here some of their words are quoted as being correct. The view that every single word we read in our translations of the Bible is 'true' can lead us into the problems evident in many Bible fundamentalists. Take the words of Eliphaz against Job (Job 5:13). They were wrong words (Job 42:7). Yet they are quoted in 1 Cor. 3:19. Wrong statements can still be recorded under inspiration and even quoted. Take the mocking of Sennacherib. It's recorded under inspiration, blasphemous as it was.

3:20 *And again: The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain*- The vanity of secular reasoning is that it is vain in terms of bringing a person to faith. For true faith is predicated, as Paul has explained, upon encounter with Christ. The quotation from Ps. 94:11 is changed, under inspiration; "men" becomes "the wise" to fit the context of Paul's argument. But it could be argued that secular man is to be identified with secular wisdom. The obsession of our age with education and learning makes these issues poignant. The context of Psalm 94 is a pleading with the faithful in Israel not to adopt the philosophy and belief system of their oppressors. And this is pertinent to Christians- mixing the truth of Christ with secular wisdom is the same error. And the wisdom of the world is thus presented most negatively.

3:21 *Therefore, let no one boast in men. For all things are yours*- The boasting in men may refer to boasting in human teachers and their words of human wisdom. But these "men" are defined in :22 as Paul, Apollos and Peter. In chapter 1, Paul laments how the church has split into factions around these men. So he is here repeating the basic point made there- the cross of Christ is the fundamental basis of faith. Anything else added to it is mere human thinking. To start talking about perceived differences between those three Christian leaders was just the same as worldly wisdom. And surely none of those three men in themselves approved of the divisions being made around them. The "all things" in view are those of 1 Cor. 1:5; the gift of the Spirit had given them "all things" in the Spiritual sphere. Again the appeal is to realize what they have potentially been given by the gift of the Spirit. To start talking about the superiority of Paul's teaching over Peter's was a sign that they failed to be awed as they should by the "all things" given them in Christ. The spirit of Christ gave them the "all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). Through the Spirit, God was working all things in all men in the church (1 Cor. 12:6) and will articulate this 'all things in all men' at the final change to immortality (1 Cor. 15:28).

3:22 *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come- all are yours*- If literally all things have been made possible by the Spirit, then there is no need to argue about who baptized us, or the different nuances of teaching between church leaders. These things pale into utter insignificance compared to the all things made possible for us right now. "All are yours" suggests that there was the idea that by having a certain baptism or having some supposed superior teaching of secular wisdom, they possessed more than their fellows. This kind of petty arrogance can so often be seen. Yet once the immensity of having "all things" is perceived, then such a mentality disappears.

3:23 *And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's*- Another nail in the coffin for Trinitarian views of Jesus being equal to God. If we feel we are Christ's, that we belong solely to Him, and through Him we are therefore also God's... then we shall not feel any allegiance to mere man. No human leader, even within the church, can

have our allegiance, nor should we even seek to give allegiance if we are wholly Christ's. Yet there is a tendency in us all, as there was in the Corinthians, to be someone's; someone whom we know, who is visible on this earth. And that in the end is why there are so many denominations and followers of people. The extent of Christ's Lordship ought to drive this from us.

If we believe that all in Christ, all who are 'Christian', will be in the Kingdom… then, we will act joyfully and positively toward our community, abounding in hope. We have to assume that our brethren are likewise going to be there; for we cannot condemn them. Therefore we must assume they too will be saved along with us. Consider how Paul repeatedly has this attitude when dealing with his apostate Corinthians: "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). See too 1 Cor. 6:3,11; 10:17; 13:12; 15:22,57; 2 Cor. 1:7; 3:18; 5:1.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Let a man regard us as servants of Christ*- Paul now begins to justify himself against criticism and gossip, and to lay the basis for his authority in appealing to the Corinthians regarding their serious misbehaviour and wrong teaching. Clearly some did not regard him and his team as "servants of Christ". The word for "servant" is that used by the Lord on the Damascus road in giving Paul authority to do the work he did: "I have appeared unto you... to make you a servant and witness of these things which you have seen" (Acts 26:16). The word *huperetes* is literally an 'under oarsman'. He was rowing, but the Lord Jesus was the captain directing the ship; and Paul was 'under' Him. He plays on this idea in 4:3 where he reasons that therefore it means nothing to him to be *hupo* man's judgment; for he is in fact *hupo* or 'under' the Lord's mastership. This is a liberating principle, and it flows directly from the apparently painless statement that Jesus is Lord and Master. If we are indeed 'under' Him, then we will not allow men to put us down, to make us 'under' their judgment. Their words and judgments will mean the less, indeed, nothing at all. For we are not 'under' them but the Lord.

And stewards of the mysteries of God- "Stewards" continues the idea of a 'servant' being 'under' a master. For a 'steward' was a slave within a household who managed day to day affairs. The goods in view were God's mysteries- and not Paul's own. I noted earlier that the Gospel of Christ was only a mystery to those who shut their eyes from understanding it.

4:2- see on Heb. 3:5.

In this, moreover, it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful- The same word is used in the parable of the unjust steward in Lk. 16:1-8. But the point was that the steward was found faithful or otherwise by his own master- and not by the gossip of other servants. And Paul goes on to develop this point.

4:3 *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or any man's judgment. I do not judge even myself*- Our being servants *under* the Lord Jesus, accountable to *Him*, means that we are not 'under' any human judgment; see on :1 *Servants of Christ*. This means that quite literally any human judgment of us, whether

by our critics in the church or even by our own self in our personal self-assessment, is utterly irrelevant. And yet so many beat themselves up all their lives over the fact that he said that, she thinks that about me, they judged me like this or that. If we are solely and completely under the Lord's judgment, then their view [and our own view of ourselves, whether too harsh or too generous] is irrelevant.

For Paul, the fact that he had only *one* judge meant that he could genuinely feel that it mattered very little to him how others judged him. The idea of worrying only about God's judgment of us rather than man's lies behind Prov. 29:26: "Many seek the ruler's favourable judgment; but a man's judgment [i.e. the ultimate judgment, the only one worth having] comes from the Lord". But this takes quite some faith to believe- for in this age of constant communication between people about other people, we all tend to get worried by others' judgments and opinions of us. But ultimately there is only *one* judge- God, and not the guys at work, your kid sister, your older brother, the woman in apartment 35. The idea of the court of Heaven is a great comfort to us in the pain of being misjudged by men. It's a case of seeing what isn't visible to the human eye.

Paul's thought here is building on what he had earlier reasoned in 1 Cor. 2:15, that the spiritual man "himself is judged of no man". There was only One judge, and the believer is now not condemned if he is in Christ (Rom. 8:1). He that truly believes in Christ is not condemned, but has passed from death to life (Jn. 3:18; 5:24). So however men may claim to judge and condemn us, the ultimate truth is that no man *can* judge / condemn us, and we who are spiritual should live life like that, not fearing the pathetic judgments of men, knowing that effectively we are *not* being judged by them. How radically different is Paul's attitude to so many of us. The fear of criticism and human judgment leads us to respond as animals do to fear- the instinct of self-defence and self-preservation is aroused. We defend ourselves as we would against hunger or impending death. Yet here the radical implications of grace burst through. *We* are not our best defence. We have an advocate who is also the judge, the almighty Lord Jesus; we have a preserver and saviour, the same omnipotent Lord, so that we need not and must not trust in ourselves. By not trusting in this grace of salvation, we end up desperately trusting ourselves for justification and preservation and salvation, becoming ever more guilty at our abysmal and pathetic failures to save and defend ourselves.

The message of imputed righteousness was powerfully challenging. For the whole message of Romans is that our only acceptability is through *God* counting us righteous although we are not... and it is *His* judgment which matters, not that of the million watching eyes of society around us. 1 Cor. 4:3-5 teach that the judgment of others is a "very small thing", an irrelevancy, compared with Christ's judgment of us. The fact that we have only one judge means that whatever others think or judge of us is irrelevant. That may be easy enough to accept as a theory, but the reality for those living in collective societies was far-reaching. Appreciating the ultimate importance of our standing before *God* means that we have a conscience towards *Him*, and a rightful sense of shame before Him for our sins.

4:4- see on Gal. 6:4.

For I know nothing against myself in my own conscience. Yet hereby I am not justified; but he that judges me is the Lord- As explained in the previous verses, Paul was under the Lordship of Jesus as his master. Only His judgment therefore was of any meaning; even if his own conscience were clear, this would not justify him. He

parallels his justification with his judgment; the Lord's present and final judgment will be our justification by His imputed righteousness. And so a comparison related to time is also introduced; whether we feel justified by our own self assessment now is nothing compared to His justification of us then. This idea is continued in the next verse- "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come".

Paul says that although he does not feel he has done anything wrong, this does not of itself mean that he is justified in God's sight. We cannot, therefore, place too much importance on living according to our natural sense of right and wrong. "It's OK in my conscience" is the only justification for many. They give more credibility to what they perceive to be guidance coming from within them, than to God's word of Truth. The words of the Lord Jesus in Lk. 11:35 seem especially relevant: "Take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. "It's OK in my conscience" is indeed dark light. Our conscience is not going to jump out of us and stand and judge us at the day of judgment. There is one thing that will judge us, the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48), not how far we have lived according to our conscience.
"He that judges me is the Lord" alludes to "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord" (Is. 49:4). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

1 Cor. 4:3-5 appeals to the reality of *God's* future judgment as a basis for not paying too much attention to how *man* judges us. If it is *God's* judgment that means everything to us, what men say or think about us, or what we perceive they do, will not weigh so heavily with us. The ultimate reality of our lives is the sense of God's future judgment, not the awareness of man's present judgment. If we really grasp the simple fact that God alone is judge, that there is only One who *can* judge us, that Christ will come, then we will say with Paul from our hearts: "He that is spiritual… himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:15). Of course, men *do* judge us; and it hurts. But we are to act and feel according to the fact that ultimately, they can *not* judge us. For there is only One judge, to whom we shall all soon give account.

Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me right now is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ another first principle means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. "Many seek the favour of the ruler 'judge'; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord" (Prov. 29:26). The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us, and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify.

4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come*- Any feeling OK in our own conscience *now* is irrelevant compared to the fact that the final judgment is not *now* but *then* when the Lord comes. The appeal to judge nothing before that time is directed very much at ourselves in our self judgment, rather than warning against judging others. We are not to judge, not simply because it is beyond our competence, but because *now* is not the time to judge.

Who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts- Judgment of others is impossible because we cannot see the hearts of

others, nor can we see in darkness. There is an element to which judgment will be public; and hidden things will be made manifest not only to those being judged, but to all of us. The real intentions of others will then be known by us all. And this is necessary to prepare us to live eternally together. The judgment process in that sense is for our benefit and education, rather than because God needs it in order to gather information. The same word for "bring to light" is used of how we can now live 'in the light', with our whole body as it were full of light and having no dark parts (Lk. 11:36; Jn. 1:9). This is the whole sense of our having been 'enlightened' (Eph. 1:18; 3:9; Heb. 6:4; 10:32 s.w.).

We can live in the spirit of judgment day right now, if we allow the Lord's light to operate as intended. He will reveal the hidden things of darkness (the human heart), and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts (1 Cor. 4:5). Of course He knows these anyway; but He will make them manifest *to us*. The judgment seat is for our benefit, not God's- He knows our lives and spiritual position already. The day of judgment is to purify us (Mal. 3:2)- not ultimately, for that has been done by the Lord's blood and our lives of faithful acceptance of this. But the fire of judgment reveals the dross of our lives *to us* and in this sense purges us of those sins. Without the judgment, we would drift into the Kingdom with no real appreciation of our own sinfulness or the height of God's grace. The judgment will declare God's glory, His triumph over every secret sin of His people. The heathen will be judged "that the nations may know themselves to be but men" (Ps. 9:20)- self knowledge is the aim, not extraction of information so that God can make a decision. And it was the same with Israel: "Judge the bloody city... (i.e.) shew her all her abominations" (Ez. 22:2).

At judgment God "shall bring forth thy righteousness (good deeds) as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day" (Ps. 37:6). The sins of the rejected and the good deeds of the righteous will be publicly declared at the judgment, even if they are concealed from men in this life (1 Tim. 5:24,25). This is how men will receive "praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rom. 2:29). The wicked will see the generous deeds of the righteous rehearsed before them; and will gnash their teeth and melt away into condemnation (Ps. 112:9,10).

And then shall each man have his praise from God- The praise, in the context, would be for the counsels of their hearts. This is exactly the sense of Rom. 2:29, where the same word is used: "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God". This is how critically important it is to be spiritually minded; this is the essence which the Father looks at. And yet "praise of God" at the judgment recalls the Lord's parable of how we shall be praised in that day for having fed, clothed and visited the suffering Lord Jesus in the form of the least of His brethren. With such an awesome prospect ahead, we will not be interested in being judged positively by men; and neither will their negative judgment of us mean anything much.

Whilst we ourselves will feel the need to "confess to God" (Rom. 14:11,12) our failures and unworthiness, we have shown earlier how our Lord will not mention these to us, but instead joyfully catalogue to us those things which have so pleased him in our lives. This will be to our genuine amazement: "Lord, when..?". Keeping a subconscious inventory of our own good works now will surely prevent us from being in this category. 1 Cor. 4:5 speaks of us as receiving "praise of God" at the judgment, presumably in the form of praise for the good works which we are not aware of, as outlined in the parable (cp. Ps. 134:3). "Praise" suggests that our Lord will show quite

some enthusiasm in this. Not he that commends himself will be approved [cp. The listing of good deeds by the rejected], "but whom the Lord commendeth" in as it were listing the good deeds of the accepted (2 Cor. 10:18).

There are some instructive parallels here:

"Bring to light"	"Make manifest"
"The hidden things of"	"The counsels of"
"Darkness"	"The hearts"

The hidden man is therefore "the counsels" of the heart. How we speak and reason to ourselves in our self-talk, this is the indicator of the hidden man. This will be 'made manifest' to the owners of those hearts, the Greek implies. "All things are naked and opened" unto God anyway; the second coming will reveal nothing to Him. The making manifest of our hidden man will be to ourselves and to others. The purpose of the judgment seat is therefore more for our benefit than God's; it will be the ultimate self-revelation of ourselves. Then we will know ourselves, just as God knows us (1 Cor. 13:12). Through a glass, darkly, we can now see the outline of our spiritual self (1 Cor. 13:11,12), although all too often we see this picture in the spiritual mirror of self-examination, and then promptly forget about it (James 1:23,24).

4:6 *Now these things, brothers, I have applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes*- The letter opened with a lament that the church had split into factions, after Paul and Apollos. Presumably the reference here is to the mention he has made of Apollos and himself a few verses earlier in 3:22: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours". He may mean that he has addressed the issue of following men by quoting Apollos and himself as examples of those who were being followed- even though they themselves did not want it. The implication might be that there were others whom he could name but didn't wish to, "for your sakes".

That from us you might learn not to go beyond the things which are written- The example of Paul and Apollos was of being leaders who did not want a personal cult following. The presence of the article ["the"] after "learn" requires us to read this as: "That you might learn the 'Not beyond the things which are written'". "Written" translates *grapho*, the writings, or, the Scriptures. 'Not beyond the writings' was a Rabbinic expression, and Paul is saying that the Corinthians would see it exemplified in the demeanour of Apollos and himself. The Corinthians were to learn from their example not to go beyond respect of leaders and fall into cult following. 'The things written' would in this context therefore refer to things written against following leaders into a cult situation; and that is what Paul has been writing about so far in the letter. The things written which must not be 'gone beyond', just as the Rabbis were not supposed to 'go beyond the [inspired] writings', would therefore refer to what Paul has just written under inspiration. So whilst turning down any personal cult following, he is also making clear that what he is writing is inspired and should be treated with as much respect as the OT Scriptures.

So that none of you get puffed up, one against the other- As noted earlier on this verse, the inspired message so far given was to stop such following of leaders in a

divisive, cult-like sense. 1 Corinthians contains many warnings against being "puffed up" (1 Cor. 4:6,8,19; 5:2,6; 13:4). These warnings often come in the context of statements about the Lordship of Jesus, or about the sacrifice of Jesus, the Passover lamb. The fact He is our Lord and died as He did means that we must live Passover lives without the leaven of pride and being puffed up about leading brethren etc. Perceiving *His* greatness will mean that we will not seek to follow men.

4:7 *For who makes you to differ? And what have you that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*- Their differences were made by themselves; the differences were in their following of different leaders. What was 'received' by the Corinthians was the free gift of the Spirit (s.w. 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4). "Boast" translates a Greek word Paul has used in speaking of how we should glory in the Lord and not glory or boast in human leaders (1 Cor. 1:29,31; 3:21). This boasting would only be made by those who did not have the Spirit; for such boasting is of the flesh and not the Spirit. We noted earlier that the Corinthians had been given the Spirit, and yet they acted as if they didn't have it. Their boasting was done as if they had not received the Spirit. Instead, their lives should have been wholly Spiritual, taken up with the things of the Spirit; so that it would be true that they had nothing in life apart from what they had been given by the Spirit and accepted from the Spirit. And this would utterly preclude boasting in mere men and their human words and examples. Yet the Corinthians had not made use of the Spirit gifts given them, as made clear in chapters 1 and 2; see on 3:1.

4:8 *Already are you filled, already you have become rich, you have come to reign without us*- The ideas of filling and being enriched were used in chapter 1 with reference to how the Corinthians had been filled with the Spirit, but had not made use of it. I suggested on :7 that what was 'received' was the Spirit. Here in :8 Paul is using sarcasm, which was more acceptable to use as a literary figure than it currently is in our times. They considered themselves wealthy, reigning and with no hunger or lack of anything. Paul is saying that they are indeed like this spiritually, if only they would know it; but their arrogant boasting was "without us", i.e. without the support of Paul and Apollos and Paul's team.

Yes, and I hope that you will indeed reign, that we also might reign with you- Paul's thought is of the 'reigning' in God's Kingdom (Rev. 5:10 etc.). He sees his future reward as related to whether or not they his converts enter God's Kingdom. He has earlier developed this thought in 1 Cor. 3:8,15.

4:9- see on Ex. 7:4; Rom. 3:19; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 23:6.

For I think God has sent us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men- The Roman spectacles included men doomed to death who were made to fight as gladiators to the death, either against each other or wild animals. The "last of all" compares with the idea of the Corinthians wanting to be 'first' (:8). Paul is saying that apostles like him were hardly worth following in a cultic sense; for they were indeed on the stage in front of all men, but were set to die a sad death, in shame and rejection. It would seem from 2 Tim. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:32 and 2 Cor. 1:10 that Paul was indeed thrown to the lions at Ephesus but was miraculously delivered. With typical spiritual culture, Paul only alludes to the incident indirectly, and in order to make points for the edification of others. Remember that Paul wrote this first letter from Ephesus. See on :11.

There is a sense in which the Angels have limited knowledge about our spiritual capacities; "We are made a spectacle... to Angels" implies that the Angels look on at

the sufferings God has brought on us through our guardian Angel, and intensely scrutinize how we are acting as if earnestly watching a theatre play (so the word "spectacle" implies). Thus they are anxiously looking for the outcome of their trials on us, not knowing the final result. The fact that only at the judgement will the names of the worthy be confessed to the Angels by Jesus (Rev. 3:5) makes it appear that the ultimate outcome of our probations is not known to our guardians, hence their eagerness in our lives to see how we react. It is not until the harvest that they are sent out to root out of the Kingdom all things that offend (Mt. 13:41).

4:10 *We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You have glory, but we have dishonour*- Wise, strong and honoured was how the Corinthians felt about themselves; although Paul observes that actually few of them were wealthy, wise and honourable (1 Cor. 1:26). But in their arrogance, they acted like this. Chapters 1 and 2 have explained that those who are fools, weak and not honoured are those through whom the Lord works. So Paul is not only criticizing them for their pretensions, but is pointing out that the way some of them despise him, consider him weak and foolish etc. is in fact placing him within the very categories which God accepts, and who are identified with the Lord Jesus. “We are despised” (1 Cor. 4:9,10; 2 Cor. 4:9,10) clearly alludes to “Him whom man despises” (Is. 49:7). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

4:11 *Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling-place*- Paul was writing from Ephesus, where he seems to have experienced some terrible trauma which he only indirectly alludes to. See on :9 *For I think...* . Hunger, thirst and lack of clothing are the very categories which the Lord says will typify the least of His brethren; and our attitudes to their needs and situations will be the basis for our final judgment. Paul was writing from "no certain dwelling place". He was no armchair theologian. His Divine inspiration notwithstanding, it is a reflection of his intense spiritual focus that he was able to compose such letters whilst confronted by such basic instability. Many would feel that they could only concentrate on spiritual matters once their basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter were met; but Paul's devotion and focus was far deeper than to require that. His mention of being "buffeted" uses the same word used of the Lord's sufferings in Mt. 26:67. "To this present hour" doesn't mean that all Paul's ministry was lived in this state; for there is evidence that at times he did have access to wealth, and he himself writes of how he had experienced both wealth and poverty throughout his ministry. Maintaining faith and focus despite these oscillations is a mark of how deep was his commitment to the Lord Jesus, and how little secular things mattered to him.

4:12 *We toil, working with our own hands*- To need to do manual work in order to survive was seen as the lowest level of existence in the ancient world. And Paul the one time wealthy intellectual was driven to this. The "we" referred to could possibly be Apollos and Paul. Paul was a tentmaker and lived with Aquilla and Priscilla because they too were tentmakers (Acts 18:3); and Apollos lived with Aquilla and Priscilla at one point, perhaps because he too was a tentmaker (Acts 18:24).

Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure- This is the language of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:10,11); such things were and are necessary for every believer. The Lord too was "reviled" (Jn. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:23). The source of this opposition was likely also from within the church at Corinth as well as at the hands of the local opposition in Ephesus from where Paul was writing. For Paul goes on to ask the Corinthians not to fellowship with those of their number who were revilers (1 Cor.

5:11; 6:10). The 'blessing' in view was perhaps that of forgiveness. Paul forgave these brethren but didn't want to associate with them. Forgiveness and trust / active association are different issues. It was the Lord who was "persecuted" (s.w. Jn. 5:16; 15:20). Paul saw his persecutions as a fellowshipping of the Lord's experience. But more pertinently, it was Paul who had persecuted the Lord Jesus (Acts 9:4) in that he had persecuted all those in Him (Acts 22:4; 26:11; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13,23). He uses the same word in speaking of his persecution of the Lord Jesus in Phil. 3:6 and straight away uses the same word in writing of his 'following after' [s.w. 'persecuting'] the Lord Jesus in devotion to Him (Phil. 3:12,14). The energy and zeal of persecution was redirected into devotion. And in this Paul sets secular man a huge challenge, with all our earlier passion and zeal for success and worldly advantage.

4:13 *Being defamed, we entreat*- The 'defamation' may well have included slander from the Corinthians; for the same word is used of how Paul was reviled or 'evil spoken of' by them (1 Cor. 10:30). The word is also frequently used of the Lord's sufferings, which Paul was fellowshipping both from the world and from his own brethren and converts.

We are made as the garbage of the world- The Greek *perikatharma* is a form of the Greek term *katharmata* which was used to describe how a victim was killed to expiate for the people. Paul felt that all his sufferings were for the sake of others' salvation. He was surely alluding to the Lord's sufferings for our salvation, and saw his own sufferings reflecting that. There's nothing worse than to suffer for no cause or end; and Christian suffering is the supreme form of achievement for others through personal suffering.

The scum of the earth, even until now- Paul described himself as the offscouring of all things- using the very language of condemned Israel (Lam. 3:45). He so wanted to see their salvation that he identified with them to this extent. By doing so he was reflecting in essence the way the Lord Jesus so identified Himself with us sinners, as our representative, "made sin" [whatever precisely this means] for the sake of saving us from that sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

4:14 *I do not write these things to shame you*- It is significant that when dealing with Corinth's belief of those who sought to totally black Paul's character, by accusing him of being weak, foolish and unworthy of honour (:10,11) he writes that he doesn't seek to shame them. Yet when dealing with their doctrinal apostacy, Paul does seek to shame them: "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:34). Shaming people is not always effective for their growth; but in other issues, shame is a valid form of discipline.

But to encourage you as my beloved children- Paul writes of Timothy as his beloved child (:17). The Corinthians were so immature, and yet because they were in Christ, Paul felt he stood related to them as intimately as he did to faithful Timothy. Appreciating what it means to consider others as "in Christ" will transform our relationships and feelings toward each other within the church. "Encourage" is better translated 'to warn', as is the same word used of how Paul in Ephesus [from where he was writing to the Corinthians] had warned them night and day with tears for three years (Acts 20:31). Warning others was a large theme in Paul's ministry; he sensed the gravity of the issues to which we stand related, the extreme reality of the future we may miss. The figure of the Corinthians and Timothy being his 'children' connects with his claim in :15 to be their 'father'. Yet he had not baptized Timothy nor most of the Corinthians. But his pastoral efforts with them had been so colossal that he felt they were his spiritual children; and he had been the one who had first introduced the

Gospel to Corinth. So those who may not have baptized anyone can still legitimately feel that they have spiritual children.

4:15 *For though you have ten thousand would be teachers in Christ*- Or "instructors". Paul began the letter by expressing concern that they were listening to human wisdom more than spiritual truth. These "instructors" refer to the teachers they had amassed to themselves. But he doesn't use the expected word for 'teacher'. Instead he says they were no more than a *paidogogos*, a slave who had to take the little children to school, where they would be taught by the teacher (cp. Jesus). This was Paul's *hope* for the Corinthians; and his hope for Corinth is a powerful exhortation to us. But I mentioned earlier on 3:10 that Paul seems to have in mind Matthew's account of the great commission; the basic Gospel was to be taught, people baptized into it, and then the converts instructed in all that the Lord had commanded them. Perhaps Paul is drawing a similar contrast here between him as their "father", and the instructors who came after him.

You have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus it was me who begat you through the gospel- See on :14 *But to encourage you.* Paul is not lamenting that they have "not many fathers" as if he wished they had more fathers than teachers; his point is that he is their singular father. Although he had not baptized many of them, he considered them his spiritual children. This would humanly speaking explain his endless patience and passionate care for them.

4:16 *I therefore urge you to be imitators of me*- Literally, 'mimic me'. This continues the imagery of Paul being their father. He has earlier warned against the danger of following leaders, including himself. But he balances this with the observation that he is their spiritual father and they should mimic him. His answer to the problem of following human leaders appears to be: 'Follow me as I am your spiritual father; but not in any cult like sense, and following me means being spiritually minded'. Paul constantly sets himself up as an example to his converts; and whenever he bids them ‘follow me’, it is in the context of his example as a preacher (Phil. 3:15-17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Cor. 4:16; 10:31-11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). He was their spiritual father, and he wants the converts to have his spiritual characteristics, which included preaching to others. This perhaps accounts for the otherwise surprising lack of specific encouragement to his converts to preach which we observe in Paul’s writings. He understood his role to be initiatory- he speaks of his preaching as planting (1 Cor. 3:6-9; 9:7,10,11), laying foundations (Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 3:10), giving birth (1 Cor. 4:15; Philemon 10) and betrothing (2 Cor. 11:2). His aim was for his converts to also preach and develop self-sustaining ecclesias. “Paul’s method of shaping a community was to gather converts around himself and by his own behaviour to demonstrate what he taught”, following a pattern practiced by the contemporary moral philosophers. Paul is set before us as "a Christ-appointed model" of the ideal believer. He himself seems to have sensed this happening when he so often invites us to follow his example (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Gal. 4:12; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:10; 2 Thess. 3:7,9). He does this quite self-consciously, for example: “I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved... let no man seek his own, but another’s [profit]” (1 Cor. 10:33,24). He even says that he doesn't do things which he could legitimately allow himself, *because* he knew he was being framed as their example (2 Thess. 3:7,9).

4:17- see on Acts 2:46.

For this cause have I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord- See on :14 *But to encourage you.*

Who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church- As noted on :16, Paul saw himself as their spiritual father and asked them to mimic him. He draws a parallel between "my ways" and what "I teach"; he felt that his example was as it were the word becoming flesh. And yet Paul felt keenly his sinfulness. It was this which perhaps gives even more edge to his invitation to mimic him. He sensed that he was a pattern for others, but this didn't make him blind to his own failures.

4:18 *Now some are inflated with pride, as though I were not going to come to you*- 2 Cor. 1:17-19 suggests Paul was being slandered as an indecisive man whose word was not his bond. The implication of how Paul writes here is that his literal presence in Corinth would reveal the 'puffed up' ones as being indeed just inflated and having no substance. This situation would only be possible surely if Paul had some Spirit gift of discernment and even judgment or punishment which he was not afraid to use. James 5 seems to envisage a situation where the Spirit did smite some in the first century churches with disease, and the Lord's letters in Rev. 2 and 3 imply likewise. We recall the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira.

4:19 *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power*- "Speech" is *logos* and "power" is *dunamis*. There were many words in Corinth, many claiming to be teachers, even thousands of them (:15). The Lord's preaching was with both *logos* and *dunamis* (Lk. 4:36). These teachers were spirit-less; they were all word but no spirit / power. Paul began by writing that the power of God is the *logos* of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18). They were not teaching that, instead they were using the words of human wisdom; and so their message was without spirit / power. Paul's preaching was the *logos* with *dunamis* (1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 6:7; 1 Thess. 1:5). The problem of words being preached without the spirit is not unknown to us today. Mere fact, mere words, will not of themselves save anyone without spirituality or an element of the Spirit. In :20 Paul will go on to argue that the things of the Gospel of the Kingdom are not [only] in *logos* but also in *dunamis*. There was a danger in the first century, as there is today, of a form of Godliness, a teaching of a correct form of words, which was lacking in "the power [*dunamis*] thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). We are kept by the *dunamis* of God unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). Simply imparting Biblical fact is not the same as spirituality. Theological truth can be held without the Spirit. Paul began in 1 Cor. 1 by pointing out this problem at Corinth; they had potentially been given the Spirit but they were Spirit-less (1 Cor. 3:1).

4:20 *For the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power*- See on :19. The Gospel of the Kingdom was in both *logos* ["talk"] and power; so we are to read this as 'not only in talk, but also in power'. The Gospel demands a response. The Greek word *euangelia* actually implies this, although the English translation 'good news' may mask it. There is an inscription from Priene in Asia Minor which reads: "The birthday of the god [=Augustus] was for the world the beginning of *good news* [*euangelia*] owing to him". The Gospel is not therefore just a proclamation of good news, e.g. an emperor's birthday. *Euangelia* meant the response to the good news; the good news and the response one must make to it are all bound up within the one word. "For the [Gospel of the] Kingdom of God is not [only] in *word*, but in *power*" - the Gospel isn't

just so many words and ideas, as a life lived. For in the previous verse Paul has argued: "I will know, not the *word* of them which are puffed up, but the *power*", i.e. what their lives show of the things they profess (1 Cor. 4:19,20 RV). And we must ask ourselves whether our personal Christianity is mere words, or the power of a life living out those words.

"Kingdom" means literally the dominion of the King. We are now in a limited sense beneath God's dominion, and thereby part of His "Kingdom". Those beneath His dominion are worked upon by Him, through His Spirit, through His Son. That influence of the Spirit is powerful. And this is why the ideas of "Kingdom" and "power" are so often placed in parallel (1 Chron. 29:11; Dan. 2:37; Rev. 12:10). Truly, "the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Being "in" or "under" God's Kingly dominion is not just a status, a matter of words. It means that He powerfully works in us, in our hearts, in our lives, through the Holy Spirit. And in turn, we "will speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk about Your power" (Ps. 145:11). Col. 1:13 contrasts unbelievers under the "power" of sin, and believers who by contrast are in the Kingdom of the Lord, i.e. under His power and influence: "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". This understanding may provide insight into the Lord's comment that "there are some standing here, who shall in no way taste death, before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mk. 9:1). This would then be a reference to the disciples living to see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

4:21 *What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*- This I suggest is better placed with the material in chapter 5. Paul is going to address the need to take concrete action regarding a major moral issue in the church. And he says he can take either a hard line with them, or appeal to them for love's sake in a gentle way. And he clearly takes the latter course, despite explaining in chapter 5 that he has received specific guidance and revelation from the Lord Jesus about how to judge this matter. But despite knowing he was in the right and they in the wrong, and in need of discipline, he doesn't let possession of truth or moral high ground lead him to take a dictatorial approach. He still appeals in love and gentleness- setting us a great example. The language of "rod" is that of a father disciplining his son (Prov. 13:24; 23:13,14). This is a metaphor pertinent to the context, for Paul has declared himself their spiritual father in :15. In this case, Paul is saying that he could legitimately take a hard line with them; but he chooses to take the path of love and gentleness.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 Note how Paul deals with ecclesial problems in places like Corinth. He doesn’t write to the elders and tell them to sort it out and clean up the ecclesia. He writes to every member of the ecclesia. He confronts the whole ecclesia with his concerns over pastoral issues- not just the pastors. He tells the whole ecclesia of his concern about how they have not dealt with flagrant sin amongst them (1 Cor. 5; 6:1-11). The Lord’s teaching in Mt. 18:15-18 doesn’t ask us to refer our concerns about others’ behaviour in the ecclesia to the elders. He asks us to personally take the matter up with the individual. His church was to be built on individuals who followed Him personally and closely.

It is actually reported- The Greek implies it was widely being spread about. Some were boasting about their liberality, as some do today. They were "puffed up" about the matter (:2). It was not a case of quietly accommodating a non-standard moral situation, but of boasting in it and claiming it was quite acceptable and even commendable.

That there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even among the Gentiles- This alludes to Old Testament condemnations of Israel for being actually worse than the surrounding Gentiles. And Paul is writing to Corinth, a city famed for its sexual immorality. Why is it that believers at times act far worse than unbelievers? The Corinthians were not living by the Spirit but rather by legalism; and obedience to a few laws leads people to fail spectacularly in other areas, because they feel justified. And as Paul explains in Romans 7, the knowledge of God's law provokes within human nature a desire to disobey it. The only way forward, then, is to recognize God's law but live in the Spirit. The legalistic spirit of the Corinthians is reflected in the way that they treated the man too harshly- for in 2 Cor. Paul has to urge them to receive him back lest he be psychologically and spiritually destroyed by their attitude. So, as legalists do, they went from one extreme to another rather than following the way of the Spirit.

That one of you has taken to himself his father's wife- The woman may not necessarily have been the mother of the offender. This case involved a man suffering wrong (2 Cor. 7:12), so we can assume that the woman was already married to the man's father, and he took her away from him. Hence "taken to himself...". The end of chapter 4 must be connected with chapter 5; Paul speaks of his choice of dealing with Corinth with a rod, or with the spirit of meekness, and he has in view the case he is now discussing. Adam Clarke provides some background which is likely relevant in this case: "This woman might have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion from heathenism; and the rabbins taught that proselytism annulled all former relationship, and that a woman was at liberty in such a case to depart from an unbelieving husband, and to marry even with a believing son, i.e., of her husband by some former wife". Jewish influence was at work within the Corinthian church, and they had Jews amongst them, both in society and in the church. It was presumably this ruling of Judaism which had been eagerly seized upon to justify immorality. Which is how Paul judged the case. Whereas it was doubtless presented under the garb of loving spirituality. This of course is just how marital affairs amongst believers are usually justified to this day. The man who suffered wrong in the case (2 Cor. 7:12) was therefore the woman's husband; he was perhaps a believer, but she declared him an unbeliever and his own son slandered him as an unbeliever. The emphasis upon the need to separate from the wicked individual male ["that wicked person", :13] would suggest that the man who had the affair with the woman had slandered his own father as an unbeliever to justify his father's wife separating from her husband and marrying him. Hence the man is called not only a fornicator, but an idolator and slanderer (:11). This scenario would explain why some in the church were "puffed up" in support of the man; they willingly believed the slander about the woman's husband, and justified what had happened as being a spritual act, "glorying" in it (:6). Unless there was some quasi-spiritual narrative being claimed, it is hard to imagine how naked lust could be so glorified. The words for "malice and wickedness" in :8 imply wicked plots and plans. The whole scenario was not therefore simply a case of unbridled lust, but of a wider planning. The hypocrisy was extreme, because according to :11, the man was in fact an idolator [not a super spiritually minded Christian, although he was called a brother]. He was also a manipulator, blackmailer and a thief (:11); presumably

because he got his father's wealth from his father's wife, who would have had to give something to her as part of the divorce settlement especially if the divorce involved slanderous accusations against him. This suggested scenario would explain how a man marrying his father's wife was also a slanderer, thief and blackmailer.

5:2 *Instead of grieving, you have become arrogant*- The moral failures of others should cause our grief, as Lot grieved for Sodom. The Greek can mean mourning at a funeral; they were to mourn the spiritual death of the individual, and not boast about it nor be angry with him. His loss was their loss. But as noted on :1, the Corinthians were boasting about this case. Dealing with the offender was therefore a far more nuanced question than simply removing someone from a church because they are immoral. The Lord in writing to the churches in Rev. 1 and 2 doesn't take this approach; so here in 1 Cor. 5 the question is far wider than simply the private misbehaviour of an individual.

Any such separations are brought forth from much sorrow; Corinth ecclesia were told that they should have mourned as they withdrew from one who had left the faith (1 Cor. 5:2). "The whole house of Israel" were commanded to "mourn" the necessary destruction of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:6). Samuel mourned and God repented when Saul was finally rejected (1 Sam. 15:35). Paul wept when he wrote about some in the ecclesia who had fallen away (Phil. 3:17-19). It must be said that 'block disfellowship'- the cutting off of hundreds of brethren and sisters because theoretically they fellowship a weak brother- hardly enables 'mourning' and pleading with each of those who are disfellowshipped.

Remove the one who has done this deed from among you- Paul explains his motivation for writing this in 2 Cor. 7:12: "So although I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong; but that your earnest care for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God". Paul was surely aware of many such non-standard moral cases in the churches, but he was making a test case of this one. He was not commanding the removal of the person solely for the sake of the offender, but for wider reasons. So it would be unwise to assume from this case that every immoral person in a church must be removed. There was clearly a wider context here.

5:3 *For I truly, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him that has done this thing*- There was a Spirit gift of knowledge which resulted in Paul being as it were virtually present; he was not therefore judging from a distance on the basis of gossip. Hence he can write in :4 that "when you are gathered together (and my spirit is present with you when you do)". And he alludes to the same phenomenon in 2 Cor. 13:2 "I tell you as if I were present". This ability to be virtually present is used supremely by the Lord, whose presence is to be found in our lives and where two or three are gathered together. If Paul knew this case by the Spirit and was spiritually present in their gatherings to discuss the matter; how much more the Lord Himself.

5:4- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

I command you that in the name of our Lord Jesus- This decision was confirmed by the Lord Jesus; for Paul commands it by the Spirit. But it's a dangerous path to assume that this is a pattern for all disfellowships, for we have not received an inspired word from the Lord to excommunicate specific named individuals.

When you are gathered together- The principles of Mt. 18:16,17 concerning dealing with personal offences are applied by Paul [writing on the specific command of the

Lord Jesus, which we do not have in the cases we deal with] to dealing with the moral and doctrinal problems at Corinth (= 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 5:4,5,9; 6:1-6). We are all priests, a community of them. This is why Paul writes to whole ecclesias rather than just the elders. 1 Cor. 5:4,5,11 make it clear that discipline was the responsibility of *all*, "the many" as Paul put it in 2 Cor., not just the elders. Even in Philippians, where bishops and deacons are specifically mentioned, Paul writes to "all the saints".

And my spirit is present with you when you do- See on :3.

With the power of our Lord Jesus- Paul was commanding this course of action with the specific authority of the Lord. We do not have this available to us today when considering specific individuals. Perhaps this is why Paul labours the point- that he is speaking in this case according to a specific Spirit revelation received.

5:5 *Deliver such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*- Who the Lord Jesus was is who He will be in the future; in the same way as who *we* are now, is who we will eternally be. For our spirit, our essential personality, will be *saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). "Flesh and blood" will not inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50); and yet the risen, glorified Lord Jesus was "flesh and bones" (Lk. 24:39). We will be who we essentially are today, but with Spirit instead of blood energizing us. It's a challenging thought, as we consider the state of our "spirit", the essential 'me' which will be preserved, having been stored in Heaven in the Father's memory until the day when it is united with the new body which we will be given at resurrection. For in all things the Lord is our pattern; and we will in that day be given a body like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21)- which is still describable as "flesh and bones" in appearance (Lk. 24:39).

The purpose of this delivering was in order "that the spirit may be saved". If Satan is intent on making people sin and alienated from God, why should what he does to them result in them being saved? It is by the experiences of life that God controls, that we are spiritually developed (Heb. 12:5–11). How could the church at Corinth deliver the fallen brother to Satan if no one knows where to locate him? "Destruction" can also imply "punishment" (e.g. 2 Thess.1:9). Are we to think that God would work in cooperation with an angel who is rebelling against Him? Notice that Satan is not described as eagerly entering the man, as we would expect if Satan is constantly trying to influence all men to sin and to turn believers away from God. The church (v. 4) is told to deliver the man to Satan.

We note that in 1 Cor. 3:16,17, where the warning is that *God* will destroy the sexually immoral. But here, the *satan* is the destroyer. God therefore is ultimately behind the satan; just as in the Old Testament parallel between God and a satan / adversary of God's people in 2 Sam. 24:1 cp. 1 Chron. 21:1. The allusion in 3:16,17 may in turn be to Josh. 7:25 LXX, where the need for destruction by the Lord is in order to preserve the community: "And Joshua said to Achan, why have you destroyed us? The Lord will destroy you as at this day". And the spiritual preservation of the community may well be an issue in the command to separate from this sinful man. But the purpose was "for the destruction of the flesh", not the body. Death is not in view, because we will later learn that the man repented and was to be received back into the church. The idea was to save the man from his flesh, that in the process of discipline leading to repentance, this aspect of the "flesh" would be destroyed. This is in fact the process which happens to us all as we respond to our connection with the Lord Jesus; baptism is so that "the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:5).

One of the big "Satans" – adversaries – to the early church was the Roman authority of the time, who, as the first century progressed, became increasingly opposed to Christianity. The Greek phrase "to deliver" is used elsewhere, very often in a legal sense, of delivering someone to a civil authority, e.g.:

– Someone can "deliver you to the judge" (Mt. 5:25).

– "They will deliver you up to the councils" (Mt. 10:17).

– The Jews "shall deliver (Jesus) to the Gentiles" (Mt. 20:19)

– "The Jews will... deliver (Paul) into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11).

– "Yet was I delivered prisoner" (Acts 28:17).

So is Paul advising them to hand over the sinful brother to the Roman authorities for punishment? The sin he had committed was incest, and this was punishable under the Roman law. Remember that "destruction" also implies "punishment". Leander Keck demonstrates that the behaviour of the incestuous man was "contrary to both Jewish and Roman law", rendering him liable to punishment by those authorities (Leander Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) p. 106).

"Satan" here may also refer to the man's evil desires. He had given way to them in committing the sin of incest, and Paul is perhaps suggesting that if the church separates from the man and leaves him to live a fleshly life for a time, maybe eventually he will come round to repentance so that ultimately his spirit would be saved at the judgment. This is exactly what happened to the prodigal son (Luke 15); living a life away from his spiritual family and totally following Satan – his evil desires – resulted in him eventually repenting. Jeremiah 2:19 sums this up: "Your own wickedness shall correct you and your backslidings shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter" (that they had done).

"The flesh" does not necessarily mean "the body". It may also refer to a way of life controlled by our evil desires, i.e. Satan. Believers "are not in the flesh, but in the spirit" (Rom. 8:9). This does not mean that they are without physical bodies, but that they are not living a fleshly life. Before conversion "we were in the flesh" (Rom. 7:5). Galatians 5:19 mentions sexual perversion, which the offender at Corinth was guilty of, as a "work of the flesh". 1 John 3:5 (cp. v. 8), defines sins as the "works of the Devil", thus equating the flesh and the Devil. Thus 1 Corinthians 5:5 could be understood as 'Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of Satan/the Devil', so that we have Satan destroying Satan. It is impossible to understand this if we hold to the popular belief regarding Satan. But if the first Satan is understood as the Roman authority and the second one as the flesh, or sinful expressions of our evil desires, then there is no problem.

We have seen in our notes on Luke 10:18 that Satan is sometimes used in the context of reminding us that physical illness is ultimately a result of our sin. It may be that the spirit – gifted apostles in the first century had the power of afflicting sinful believers with physical illness or death – e.g. Peter could order Ananias and Sapphira's death (Acts 5); some at Corinth were physically "weak and sickly" as a punishment for abusing the communion service (1 Cor. 11:30); Jesus could threaten the false teachers within the church at Thyatira with instant death unless they repented (Rev. 2:22–23) and James 5:14–16 implies that serious illness of some members of the church was due to their sins, and would be lifted if there was repentance. If the sickness mentioned here was an ordinary illness, it does not follow that if a Christian repents of sin he will automatically be healed, e.g. Job was afflicted with illness as a trial from God, not because he sinned. It was for the help and healing of repentant believers who had been smitten in this way, that "the gift of healing" was probably mainly used in the early church (1 Cor. 12:9). Thus Paul's delivering the incestuous

brother to Satan and also delivering “Hymaenaeus and Alexander... unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20), may have involved him smiting them with physical sickness due to their following of Satan – their evil desires. Some time later Paul noted how Alexander still “greatly withstood our words” (2 Tim. 4:14,15). The extent of his withstanding Paul’s preaching is made apparent if we understand that Alexander had been struck ill by Paul before he wrote the first letter to Timothy, but had still refused to learn his lesson by the time Paul wrote to Timothy again. Again, notice that Satan would try and teach Alexander “not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20). If Satan is an evil person who is a liar and blasphemer of God’s word, how can he teach a man not to blaspheme God?

The same verb for ‘delivering over’ occurs in the LXX of Job 2:6, where God ‘hands over’ Job to Satan, with the comment [in LXX]: “you are to protect his *psyche*, his spirit”. The connection between the passages would suggest to me that Job was in need of spiritual improvement, even though he was imputed as being righteous (Job 1:1). Whatever, the point surely is that God handed a person over to an adversary, for that person’s spiritual salvation. The orthodox idea of God and Satan being pitted in conflict just doesn’t cut it here. Biblically, God is portrayed as in charge of any ‘Satan’ / adversary, and using ‘satans’ at His will for the spiritual improvement of people, rather than their destruction. The story of Job is a classic example. Are we to really understand that there is a personal being called Satan who’s disobedient to God, out of His control, and bent on leading people to their spiritual destruction? No way, Jose. Not yet, Josette. 1 Cor. 5:5 and the record of Job teach the very dead opposite. And by all means bring on board here 2 Tim. 2:26, which speaks of people being caught in the Devil’s trap at God’s will / desire. This is the translation offered by H.A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2006) p. 119.

5:6 *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast raises the whole lump of dough?*- Paul is cleverly alluding to a common Jewish maxim that sinners must be removed from the community because just a little yeast affects the whole lump. But he is saying that the attitudes of those who were boasting about this matter were in fact the yeast. He has said that they were "puffed up" (:2 Gk. and AV). And here he continues the analogy. Their boasting had to be purged out- and so he urges them to purge out that yeast so that they might be "a new lump" (:7). Their boasting was the yeast. Whilst indeed the immoral personal had to be removed, their attitudes were no better. This is a very telling play on the idea of yeast, and is so true of the wrong attitudes which have accompanied so much excommunication. Those attitudes were as bad and as damaging as the behaviour of the individual being disciplined. Paul makes his point specifically in :8, where he asks them to remove the yeast of "malice and wickedness" and instead be sincere and truthful. He uses the same word for "malice" in describing how things were amongst the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:6; 13:5; 15:33; 14:20; 2 Cor. 13:7). The Greek word for "wickedness" is that used of "that wicked person" (:13). Their wickedness, which they had to purge out, was no better than his wickedness. As noted earlier, the command to remove the individual was not simply for his sake (2 Cor. 7:12); there were far wider issues here. The essence of his sin was to be found in those who were boasting of him, and who would later over harshly condemn him.

5:7 *Purge out the old yeast so that you may be a new lump*- See on :6. As a man or woman seriously contemplates the cross, they are inevitably led to a self-knowledge and self-examination which shakes them to the bone. We are to “purge out" the old leaven from us at the memorial meeting (1 Cor. 5:7). But the same Greek word for “purge" is found in passages which speak of how the blood of Christ purges

us: Jn. 15:2; Heb. 10:2. We purge ourselves because Christ has purged us. This is the connection between His death for us, and our self-examination.

Even as you actually are- They were full of yeast, and yet they were in another sense a new, unleavened loaf. The loaf represents the Lord Jesus. They were in Christ and by grace counted as in Him. But in reality they were leavened with malice, wickedness and boasting. This approach surely helped the spiritual Paul in coping with the unspiritual Corinthians. And it helps us in our struggles with all the moral weakness we see in our brethren. We are not to be naively blind to it, whilst on the other hand we are to perceive them as our brethren, justified in Christ.

For our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, even Christ- They were to live in the intensity of Passover night, awaiting the call to leave Egypt at the Angel's coming, just as we await the Lord's coming. The lamb had been slain; now they were to keep the feast with unleavened bread. The plagues on Egypt are the basis for the various latter day judgments described in Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. Perhaps we too will be shielded from the final ones, as Israel were. The lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread, and Paul urges them all to look to themselves in order to purge themselves within of yeast. He was concerned that the expulsion of a failed individual might lead them to not look within, when they were in essence as much at fault as him.

5:8 *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, neither with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread of sincerity and truth which has no yeast*- Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven, putting Moses' words in his own mouth (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

The word chosen for "wickedness" *[poneros]* clearly echoes that for fornication *[pornos],* indeed the two words are a simple anagram of each other. The hint may be that the fornication was occuring at the breaking of bread meeting. And that is quite possible, because the church in Corinth were clearly acting like the idol cults, where alcohol was consumed and cult prostitutes were slept with as part of the worship. The scene in 1 Cor. 11 seems to suggest this was happening, and I have commented on 1 Tim. 2 that a similar problem was going on at Ephesus. Jezebel taught the Lord's servants to commit fornication within the church (Rev. 2:20). This would explain why the man is accused of being an idolator (:10); but like Israel of old, he was mixing idolatry with an apparently hyper conservative spiritual argument, that his father was apostate and so he had disfellowshipped his father and married his father's wife, and was having sex with her publically in church as an expression of his supposed spirituality. This explains :3 Gk. "he that has perpetrated this deed in such a manner". And Paul goes right on in 1 Cor. 6:12-20 to warn the church to quit fornication with prostitutes, as if it were a widespread problem. He reasons that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her (6:16), whereas the breaking of bread service commemorates that we are one body with Christ. All 'being one' with anyone or anything else is thereby precluded.

We marvel that Paul does not teach disfellowship of the entire church, but rather a focus upon the removal of one individual who was openly teaching and exhibiting publically this kind of behaviour. And yet according to 2 Corinthians, the man repented and Paul was urgent that he should be restored, lest he be "consumed from overmuch sorrow", i.e. be psychologically shattered by realizing what he had done. We take the simple lesson that change really is possible even in the apparently hardest

cases. If that brother changed, and we look forward to seeing him in the Kingdom- then so can we. We also see that quoting this passage as an excuse to disfellowship brethren who differ on some matter of interpretation, or who failed morally in hot blood, is totally inappropriate. But we also must note that this extreme, public immorality is bracketed together with malice and wickedness. To have malice in your heart, to be covetous and argumentative (:11), is the same "leaven" or yeast which will spread to others. The searching for leaven (:7), as the Jews did at Passover, speaks of the searching of our own hearts. Especially at the breaking of bread.

In Dt. 16:3 the unleavened bread is called the "bread of affliction", whilst in 1 Cor. 5:8 it is called the "unleavened bread of sincerity and Truth", as if being sincere and true and not having malice and bitterness in our hearts is a result of much mental affliction and exercising of the mind. So to keep the feast we have to search our houses, our lives, for anything like leaven- anything that puffs us up, that distorts us from the true smallness and humility we should have, that corrupts our sincerity. By nature we have so much pride in us, so much that puffs us up. We should always find some leaven in us every time we examine ourselves. The Jews used to search their houses with candles, looking for any sign of leaven. So we too must look into every corner of our lives with the candle of the word. Similarly before the great Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah there was a searching for idols which were then thrown down. Note how Paul calls on the Corinthians to keep the feast "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," which he contrasts with "malice and evil" (1 Cor. 5:8). Truth is set up against evil- not against wrong interpretations of Bible passages.

5:9 *I wrote to you in my letter to have no association with fornicators*- Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians previously which has not been preserved. *Pornos* , "fornicators", doesn't really refer to a young unmarried couple who 'go too far', although that is also not spiritual behaviour. The word refers to prostitutes or those wilfully pushing immoral behaviour; we might translate 'pornographers'. The man who had taken his father's wife was therefore involved in a far wider scene of immorality. In 1 Cor. 5:9-13 Paul says that he doesn't intend the converts "to get out of the world" but rather to mix with the greedy, robbers and idolaters who are in the world. We know from later in this epistle that Christians in Corinth were free to use the pagan meat markets, and to accept invitations for meals in pagan homes. The Corinthians seemed to think that because they were self-consciously separate from the world, therefore it didn't matter how they lived within the community. It seems they had misunderstood Paul's previous letter about separation from sinful people as meaning they must be separate from the world. But Paul is saying that no, one must mix with the world, but separate from sin within our own lives. However, by the end of the 1st century, 'going out of the world' became the main preoccupation with some Christians, even though they themselves often developed low moral standards as a result of this. It was these ascetic groups who so over analysed some aspects of doctrine- for they had nothing better to do with their time- that they ended up with false doctrine. They converted only from within their groups, so the world was not witnessed to, the fire of love and compassion for humanity that was the hallmark of true Christianity was lost, and thus by the 2nd century the Truth both doctrinally and in practice had been lost.

5:10 *I did not mean with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters. For you must go out of the world to do this*- The implication is that the "world" of Corinth was totally full of these things, and to not mix with such people meant going out of the world, which is impossible. We have

here a window onto the deep immortality in Corinth. The Lord likewise mixed with sinful people and shared His table with them in order to bring them to Himself. He came *into* the world rather than going out of it to live on a mountain top. But this does not mean that within the community of Christ we can act just as the world does. It would seem that the Corinthians had misunderstood Paul's teaching; they were reasoning that they should not mix with unbelieving fornicators, but such fornication was therefore acceptable within the Christian community, and they were boasting about it. This is psychologically credible. Some of the most 'separated from the world' Christian communities today have been exposed as riddled with sexual immortality. "I did not mean..." suggests there had been an earlier communication from Paul about this matter (:8 "I wrote unto you in a letter..."). Nearly all misinterpretation is not simply a case of intellectual failure; there is a moral, psychological drive behind it, however subconscious. Later in this letter we will read of the Corinthians not believing in the resurrection, getting drunk at the breaking of bread, even using prostitutes within their church services. This was hardly misinterpretation, but rather a desire to justify unspiritual behaviour. And I suggest that all of the classic 'false doctrines' likewise have a subconscious element driving them- the parade example would be the refusal to accept the Lord Jesus had human nature. For that demands so much practically from we who share that same nature.

5:11 *I wrote to you not to keep association, if anyone that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. With such a one have no association, not even to eat*- When Peter baptized thousands of people as recorded in Acts, there is no indication that he as it were screened them for morality. Likewise the 'baptismal interview' of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 focused upon his faith in Christ rather than his personal morality. The spirit of grace which there is in Jesus leads us towards a tolerance of others, in order to patiently lead them towards repentance. The Lord Himself broke His bread with serious sinners- and was criticized for eating with them, seeing that 'eating' with someone was freighted with huge spiritual significance in 1st Century society. The apparent command here not to eat with sinners would appear at variance with the Lord's teaching and example, almost purposefully so. Paul writes here in the context of the breaking of bread (5:8), and in chapter 11, he criticizes the Corinthians for being drunk at the breaking of bread. We know from Rev. 2:20 that there was a female false teacher in at least one ecclesia, who was teaching Christ's brothers to engage in fornication and idol worship. Bearing this in mind, let's observe that the format of the breaking of bread service was in outline terms similar to the 'symposia' of the trade guilds and religious club gatherings of Corinth; a group of likeminded people sat down to a meal, heard an address from a member of their guild or religion about what was of common interest to them all, and then drank wine to the relevant gods. These meetings, however, were characterized by the presence of male and female prostitutes, drunkenness was common, and the commonality provided by the trade guild or religion was really an excuse for an evening of debauchery and idol worship. It would appear that there was a tendency in Corinth for the breaking of bread meeting to be turned into just such an event, featuring drunkenness and idolatry. The word used here in 1 Cor. 5:11 for "fornicator" is *pornos*, which specifically carries the meaning of a male prostitute- exactly the kind of person to be found at the 'symposia'. The Greek words translated "covetous", "railer" and "extortioner" all carry the idea of someone given over to utter debauchery. Such behaviour would be commonly associated with the drunken sexual debauchery which the symposia could turn into. It seems that the church at Corinth, and perhaps elsewhere, was slipping into

this kind of behaviour at the breaking of bread. Paul condemns it in the strongest terms. He's saying that if any brother is acting as a 'pornos', a male prostitute, a facilitator and thereby teacher and encourager of this kind of behaviour, he is not to be eaten with. The Greek construction is rather strange: "Any man that is called a brother... with such an one, no not to eat". The grammar could suggest that one specific individual is being spoken about- 'That person who calls himself a brother, yes, that's right, with that one, don't even eat'. And the earlier context of chapter 5 makes it quite clear who that person was- the individual who had taken his father's wife, whom Paul had just commanded they separate from (:5) during those times when they were "gathered together" at the breaking of bread meeting (:4). This individual was involved in leading the breaking of bread meeting into gross sexual misbehaviour, alcohol abuse and debauchery. Such a person should not be eaten with, he shouldn't be allowed at that meeting as he clearly had an unspeakably awful agenda. Read this way, this verse doesn't mean we shouldn't break bread with someone who e.g. struggles with an alcohol problem or who is at times "covetous". The question of whether or not such a person has repented is very difficult to decide. But we don't need to struggle with those questions, because this verse doesn't demand that of us. It asks the Corinthians to exclude an individual with the awful, publically advertised, wilfully perverted agenda described above, and we likewise of course should do the same. In our age any church comprised of new converts will have its share of immorally living folks; the question is whether this immorality is being paraded and gloried in, by them and others.

This approach is confirmed by reading on in :13: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person". A specific notorious individual was in view. Paul in chapter 11 will note that there were many in the ecclesia who were getting drunk. But he doesn't say they were to be disfellowshipped. So, the reference here to the "man" who is getting drunk is a special case, and cannot be extrapolated to mean that every man called a brother who gets drunk must be disfellowshipped. Getting this kind of interpretation right is important; because many comments on this thread are demonstrating the evil and permanent damage of disfellowship. By insisting that everyone who is covetous or alcoholic must be disfellowshipped, one would be doing huge damage to those for whom the Lord died.

5:12 *For what have I to do with judging those that are without? Do you not judge those that are within?*- They were already judging those within by having adopted a position on the individual in question. They were being asked to reassess that judgment. But bear in mind that judging can mean either to condemn, or to have *an opinion.* By not judging in the sense of condemning, pre-judging the Lord's final judgment, this doesn't mean that we have no moral position on anything.

5:13 *But them that are without God judges. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves*- As noted on :6, their "wickedness" is described with the same word as used for the "wicked man". They were in essence no better, and the command to remove him was not so much for his sake as for other reasons (2 Cor. 7:12). It was not that wicked people must be removed from the church; for as noted on :6, they too were "wicked". There was a wider agenda here, as noted throughout this chapter. This was not temporary hot blood failure, but a wilful way of life. Paul is quoting here from Dt. 17:7 LXX "And the hand of the witnesses shall be upon him among the first to put him to death, and the hand of the people at the last; *so shalt thou remove the evil one from among yourselves*". This was to be the punishment for the man who broke covenant and "should go and serve other gods, and worship them, the sun, or

the moon, or any of the host of heaven" (Dt. 17:2,3). Clearly Paul sees the behaviour of immorality, lying and boasting in it as the equivalent of idolatry under the new covenant. Hence the mention of idolatry in :10. The worship of sex and wealth in our age is clearly enough the equivalent of Old Testament idolatry.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbour, go to law before the unrighteous and not rather take it before the saints?*- It is likely that this issue is related to that discussed in chapter 5 about the immoral man. That chapter concluded with an appeal to judge those within the church, and this theme continues here. I noted throughout chapter 5 that the case of the immoral man was not simply a case of removing a sinner from the church; 2 Cor. 7:12 is clear about that. The issue was wider and more nuanced than that. It could be that the immoral man had even taken his father to court in order to take his wife from him; for Paul later writes about an individual who "suffered wrong" in the matter, who would surely refer to the man who had had his wife taken from him.

6:2 *Or do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you*- They were therefore "the saints", for this is paralleled with them 'judging angels' in the future age (:3). Paul shows that in terms of salvation, he sees no difference between the Corinthians and himself, despite their deep moral failings and spiritual misunderstandings. Once someone was in Christ, Paul accepted them as redeemed and in prospect saved. He assumed their final salvation- and this is a huge challenge to us, with all our frustrations at the moral and doctrinal delinquency of others in the church. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world" is referring back to Mt. 19:28, which promises all those who have followed Christ that they will sit on thrones of judgment. That this promise was not just to the disciples is evident from Lk. 22:30; 1:33 cp. Rev. 3:21. It's as if Paul is saying: 'Now come on, you ought to know this, it's in the Gospels'. He expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ.

Are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?- Paul often seems to quote snippets from the Corinthians' statements or even perhaps their correspondence. It seems they were arguing that they were not qualified to judge the moral behaviour of their brethren, and therefore they tolerated the situation which had developed, and even applauded it in the name of liberality.

6:3- see on Heb. 11:7.

Do you not know that we shall judge angels?- We have to assume our brethren will be in the Kingdom. Paul did this even with Corinth; he wrote of how "*we* shall judge angels" when we are all accepted in the Kingdom. And his way of writing to the Thessalonians about the resurrection and judgment assumes that all of his readers would be accepted ("so shall *we* ever be with the Lord… ye are *all* the children of light"). We too can do nothing else but see each other like that. The impact of this is colossal. We'd rather shy away from it. But meditate awhile upon it.

The Angels could refer to literal Angels who existed and sinned during some previous creation, but who will only be finally judged and destroyed when death itself is destroyed totally at the Lord's return. "The Angels which kept not their first estate...

He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day" (Jude 6)- clearly the judgement at the second coming. See on Jude 6; Heb. 9:23; Lk. 11:32.

Or the 'Angels' in view may simply be messengers or local representatives of the nations, whom we shall 'judge' at the time of the Kingdom's establishment. Under the Law, there was a referral system up to Moses, smaller cases being dealt with by the 70 elders and family heads. These 'elohim' must surely point forward to us, the King-priests of the future age. "We shall judge angels" may refer to each believer being in the position to pass judgment on a messenger or representative of, e.g., a town or village. This mention of angel-messengers implies that we will be geographically located in one place in a region, to where cases must be brought by a messenger.

Judging Angels doesn't have to mean that we will condemn them. We are to "judge" our brethren, not in condemning them but in discerning between them, in the same way as we will "judge Angels" in the future. Then, we will not condemn them, but perceive / discern the differences between them.

How much more, things that pertain to this life?- The Greek word only occurs in Lk. 21:34 about how the rejected at the last day have been obsessed with "the cares of this life".

6:4 *If then you have to judge things pertaining to this life*, set *them to judge who are of no account in the church*- Literally, seat them down in the judgment throne. The Greek for "no account" has been used in 1 Cor. 1:28 to describe how the Lord uses "things which are despised", in the total inversion of values which we see in the operation of the Spirit. Paul was thought by the Corinthians to be "of no account" (s.w. 2 Cor. 10:10). Here, Paul may therefore even have himself in view; he would be asking them to accept his judgment, which he offered to them concerning the immoral man in chapter 5.

It was usual for the head of the household to automatically be the leader of the religion which his household practised. But for the true Christians, this was not necessarily so to be; for the Lord had taught that it was the servant who was to lead, and here the least esteemed in the ecclesia were to judge matters. Elders of the household fellowships had to be chosen on the basis of their spiritual qualification, Paul taught. The radical nature of these teachings is so easily lost on us.

6:5 *I say this to move you to shame*- See on 4:14.

What! Is there not among you even one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brothers?- This is a reference back to 1 Cor. 1:19,20,25-27. The gift of wisdom was given to those "not esteemed" (1:28). Paul laments that despite having been given the Spirit, they were not spiritual (3:1) and therefore lacked wisdom. Paul had the Spirit, and he judged the situation about the immoral brother in chapter 5. But here he laments that there seems not one who has made use of the gift of spiritual wisdom. Christ had been made wisdom to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:30), but there was not a wise man amongst them. Just as they had been richly blessed with the Spirit, according to chapter 1, but were not spiritual (3:1). The Greek translated "decide" is used again in 1 Cor. 11:29 about not discerning the Lord's body, which is His church.

6:6 *But as it is with you at the moment, brother goes to law with brother- and that before unbelievers!*- In terms of 1 Cor. 1, they had turned to worldly wisdom and judgment rather than using the wisdom and judgment given by the Spirit. 'Going to law' translates *krino*; in :5 Paul lamented that they were not 'deciding' between their brothers, using *diakrino*. The same distinction is found in 1 Cor. 11:31- if we would

diakrino ["judge"] ourselves, we will not be judged [*krino*] in the sense of condemned. It is the Spirit which enables us to *diakrino* (s.w. 1 Cor. 14:29). But the Corinthians refused to make use of that gift.

6:7 *No, already there is totally a defect in you, that you have lawsuits with one another*- There was a 'lack', a deficit- of the Spirit. For despite having been given the Spirit, they were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1).

Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?- 2 Cor. 7:12 speaks of "he that suffered wrong", presumably the father of the immoral brother, whose wife had been taken from him. But it would appear that the father had launched legal action against his son for going off with his wife. "Defrauded" is used in a sexual sense (1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 4:6). The man is here being encouraged not to seek legal redress over the matter; and we note that Paul accuses them all of defrauding their brethren, as if they too were guilty of gross sexual misbehaviour. In the same way, he argued in chapter 5 that they had the same leaven within them which was as it were within the immoral brother.

Paul taught his hopeless Corinthians that they ought not to be taking each other to court in the world, but rather should get brethren to settle disputes between brethren. But then he offers the higher level: don't even do this, but "rather take wrong... rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded". This kind of concession to a lower level is something we will find throughout chapter 7.

6:8 *No, but you yourselves do wrong and defraud- and that your brothers*- As noted on :7, 'defraud' is used in a sexual context in 7:5 and 1 Thess. 4:6. The defrauded were defrauding- they had not allowed the Spirit of grace to break that endless cycle of bad behaviour in response to bad behaviour. The defrauding of brothers was in the form of taking brothers to law (:6).

6:9 *Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*- If they really believed that, they would not have searched for human justice and retribution. They 'knew' these things but not on the level of deep faith and relationship. Paul's reasoning about not going to law against those whom we consider to be in the wrong is based upon his reasoning that there will be a future judgment, and thieves, covetous persons, extortioners etc.- the very ones we might be tempted to take to law- will not inherit the Kingdom. If we take these types to law, Paul reasons, it's as if we don't know this basic first principle- that they will not be in the Kingdom. And this is surely judgment enough. They don't need our judgment now. Rather should we receive motivation to preach to others from the thought of judgment to come. He uses the "know ye not?" rubric several times in his writings (e.g. 6:19 in this context) to point the new converts back to the implications of the basic doctrines they had recently converted to. If we believe that there will be a righteous judgment, and those responsible who have sinned will suffer the awful experience of rejection… then why seek to judge them yourself, in this life? Why worry about the prosperity of the wicked within the ecclesia if you really believe that the wicked will not be in the Kingdom? That is such an awful thing that one need not worry about trying to judge them ourselves in this life. Take comfort in the fact that judgment is coming… that's Paul's message, built as it is on the implications of basic doctrines.

Be not deceived- Neither by their own internal reasoning, nor by false teachers who were claiming that sexual immorality was acceptable and even a condition for entering the Kingdom of God. Hence the emphasis may be that the unrighteous shall *not* inherit the Kingdom, as compared to the claim that they would certainly inherit the Kingdom.

Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men- Paul lists sins which will exclude from God's Kingdom; he focuses here on sexual sins, and some of the words he uses could imply prostitution. Clearly these were ongoing problems amongst the Corinthian Christians. They came from a background in which prostitution and sexual immorality were justified as part of religious services, and it is clear that they had imported such practices into the church. It is evident that he does not mean those who have committed one act of theft or adultery would be condemned at the last day (for this would, e.g., exclude David from God's Kingdom). He is evidently referring to those who continue in this way of life, justifying it as spiritually acceptable, and actually committing the prostitution rather than using it. And this was the problem at Corinth. The church is in embryo the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13), and therefore what will evidently be excluded from God's future political Kingdom must be excluded from the church now.

6:10 *Nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*- Along with the likes of prostitutes, we find greedy and slanderers listed. This continues the approach taken to the immoral man of chapter 5; Paul there made the point that the leaven in that man was within them all. It's possible that the theft, greed, drunkenness, slander and extortion are all specifically relevant to the case of the immoral brother, who it seems was in court with his father. The whole question was it seems far more nuanced than a man simply and solely having an illicit relationship with a married woman. It could be that the reference to drunkenness refers to some particular abuse of alcohol within the church, just as the reference to prostitution apparently does in :9. Abuse of alcohol was common in religious ritual, and it seems it had been imported into the Christian church at Corinth- hence the rebuke regarding abuse of alcohol at the time of the breaking of bread meeting in chapter 11. However it is possible that Paul does have in view 'just' alcoholism. But does this mean that no alcoholic who can't quit will be there? No. On what basis, then, will they be there? Because they are repentant. They have a state of mind that turns back time and again from what they have done. It's easy to point the finger at alcoholics. Theirs is a sin that is open and goes before them to judgment. But we are all, sadly, habitual sinners. We sin, repent, and do the same again.

The language of not inheriting the Kingdom alludes to how Israel in the wilderness were unable to enter the promised land. Their behaviours in the wilderness matched those of the Corinthian Christians, and Paul will develop this point in chapter 10.

6:11 *And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God*- References to washing, the name, Jesus, the Spirit, God... all inevitably make this an allusion to our baptism into the Name, thus connecting us with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because they had been justified, counted as sinless due to their baptism into Christ, therefore they should:

a) recognize their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit, and therefore to glorify God in spirit and body

b) realize that they are not their own, to live their lives just as they wish

c) act as if they are indeed joined to Christ

d) let the power of Christ's resurrection and new life work in them

Clearly enough, the Corinthians were *still* fornicating and getting drunk. Yet, Paul

says that this is how they used to be. Evidently he means that they have changed status- and they should live that out in practice. But Paul delves deeper into the psychology of sin's self-justification. They were saying that "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats" (:13). In other words, we have basic human desires and there are ways to satisfy them. Paul's response is basically that if we are in Christ, then we have vowed to put to death those desires, and to fulfil them is to act as if they are still alive and well. Further, in baptism we are counted to have died to them; and we seek to live the new life, empowered by the resurrection life which is now in the Lord, whose body we belong to. The comfort and challenge comes to Christian alcoholics today: You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, counted as righteous. Think back to your baptism. That's what happened then. Now, try to live out that life. Act, or at least try to act, how God perceives you. The alcoholic needs to remember, as the Romans also needed to, the colossal significance of the fact they have been baptized. They have a responsibility and also tremendous, boundless possibility because of this. Remind them of it. Leave some photos or reminders of their early days in the Lord around the house. Talk about it...

Paul writes here about believers being sanctified and justified, in that order, and by so doing he reflects his absorption of how his Lord had referred to the Father as firstly sanctified and then justified in Jn. 17:11,25?

Isaiah 30:1 condemns the Jews for seeking forgiveness their own way rather than by the gift of God's Spirit: they "cover with a covering (atonement), but not of my Spirit, that they may add (rather than subtract) sin to sin". Is. 44:3 describes the latter day forgiveness of Israel in similar terms: "I will pour... floods upon the dry ground (spiritually barren- Is. 53:2): I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring". The blessing of Abraham's seed is in their forgiveness through Christ (Acts 3:25,26)- which is here paralleled with the pouring out of the Spirit upon the Jews. This is clearly the language of Joel 2 and Acts 2. Gal. 3:14 puts all this in so many words: "That the blessing of Abraham (forgiveness) might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit". Thus 1 Cor. 6:11 speaks of being washed from our sins "by the spirit of our God". There is a parallelism in Romans between us receiving "grace... the atonement... the Spirit" (Rom. 1:5; 5:11; 8:15), showing the connection between the gift ("grace") of the Spirit and the forgiveness which leads to the atonement. It is hard to overstate how much the New Testament builds on the language and concepts of the Old Testament, especially in view of the large primarily Jewish readership the epistles would have had. Time and again in the Pentateuch and Joshua God promises to give the land to His people- "the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it" is a common phrase. The counterpart of the land under the new covenant is salvation; that is therefore the gift of God now in prospect, with its associated forgiveness of sins.

6:12 *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient*- Perhaps Paul is quoting a phrase used by the Corinthians- "all things are lawful for me". He runs with the idea, but shows that this is not the complete picture. "Expedient" is a favourite word of Paul's in the Corinthian correspondence. The idea is always of what is best for others or in the context of salvation (1 Cor. 7:35; 10:23,33; 12:7; 2 Cor. 8:10; 12:1). Paul will use the same phrase in 1 Cor. 10:23, in the context of not eating food offered idols. It was lawful, but it didn't 'gather together for advantage' (Gk.). The Corinthians lacked the Spirit and were therefore selfish, thinking of what felt good for them, rather than seeing their own actions and decisions within the wider context of what is good for others in the perspective of attaining the Kingdom, both for them and us as individuals. Again we have a principle which affects so many of the challenges

we face today. Whether or not something is admissable within our own consciences is not the complete picture.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any- This is a valid observation in the context of addictions, or permitting oneself things which may later lead to enslavement. Paul would not be brought under the *exousia* of any policy, dogma, political requirement or agreement- exactly because he was under the sole *exousia* of the Lord Jesus. His Lordship becomes the practical answer to so many quandries regarding which course to follow. We are under His authority or power, the power of the Spirit which we received at baptism. This must be the deciding issue rather than the power of group think, acting as others do, even within a church. Being under the Lord's *exousia* is in fact a call to radical individuality and perception in practice of the true meaning and value of the human person.

6:13 *Food for the belly and the belly for food, but God shall bring to nothing both it and them*- Again this seems to be a quotation from the Corinthian philosophy: "Food for the belly and the belly for food". Human behaviour was seen as simply fulfilling the quite legitimate needs of the body; if the body demanded sex or over eating or drinking, then [so they reasoned] it was legitimate and natural to permit this. But the case of the sexually immoral man who took his father's wife surely demonstrates for all time where this approach leads, when taken to its ultimate term. Again, the Corinthians were going wrong [as many do today] because they left the Spirit out of account, and acted as if there was no 'spiritual' aspect to life. The chasmic difference and tension between flesh and spirit is a major theme with Paul. The flesh with its passions is doomed to destruction, being 'brought to nothing' in human death and at the last day.

But the body is not for fornication- If the Spirit of God has possessed us, then our whole being, our bodies included, are for Him. The Corinthians had been given this Spirit, as explained in chapter 1; but they denied its power, and were in practice not spiritual (3:1). Therefore it is not for us to justify the usage of even our bodies for ourselves. The idea of our bodies belonging not to us but to our Lord / Master is lifted directly from the language of slavery. A slave was bought, and therefore every part of him or her belonged to their master, including their very bodies. Given the prevalence of slaves amongst the early Christian population, this was both a liberating and challenging idea. And it is no less radical or those whose souls are effectively bought be employers, the minimum wage culture or oppressive social and family structures.

But for the Lord- The message and demand of Christ in moral terms would have stood out starkly and attractively, despite all the first century objections to Christianity; and so it should be with us, living in identical circumstances. In the Graeco-Roman world, sexual immorality was just the done thing. The feeling was that the body is essentially evil, therefore what was done with the body wasn't that great a deal. The call of the Gospel was that the body is for the Lord- something totally unheard of. And Paul places sexual sins at the beginning of his list of works of the flesh in Gal. 5, labouring the point to the Corinthians that sin involving the body was in fact especially bad. This was radical stuff in a culture where prostitution and sexual immorality were seen as an almost necessary part of religion. Yet the Christian teaching of chastity was actually attractive to people precisely because of its radical difference. And yet we can be sure that this was also a barrier to the general mass of

humanity at the time. This is just one of many examples where Christianity consciously broke through deeply held boundaries and worldviews. The self-consciousness of how the Gospel did this was bound to make it obnoxious to the majority.

And the Lord for the body- It makes an interesting study to analyze the areas of Paul's writing where he makes most intense use of the title "Lord" for Jesus. One such passage is in 1 Cor. 6:13- 7:40, where Paul addresses issues relating to sexual self-control. Here the density of usage of the title "Lord" is higher than anywhere else in his writings. And he wasn't merely playing with words- the idea clearly is that the Lordship of Jesus is to have a gripping practical effect upon our lives.

6:14 *And God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up also through His power*- The Lord's resurrection is ours. The presence of His Spirit / power within us now is the guarantee that we shall be resurrected like Him. What happened to His body shall happen to ours. The resurrection of the body is thus clearly held to be the basis of the Christian hope (and not any idea of the redemption of an immortal soul). All this is the concept of baptism which has just been alluded to in :11. As in writing to the Romans, Paul seeks to remind them of the implications of their baptisms. To share a resurrection like His required them to have His Spirit actively within them. For the Lord's resurrection becomes ours, and His resurrection to eternal life was predicated on the fact He had the Spirit; he was "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16), raised according to His Spirit of holiness, His holy spirit (Rom. 1:4). Rom. 8:11 is explicit: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you".

6:15 *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*- We noted on :11 and :14 that baptism is in view here; for we are baptized into the mystical body of Christ. Paul in Rom. 6:13,19 likewise warns against the misuse of our "members" in immorality; because we are baptized into Christ, our members are His and not our own. In chapter 12 Paul will explain that our membership of the Lord's body calls us to practical service within that body- rather than using our members for our own gratification.

Therefore, Paul says, smashing through all Corinth's rationalizations of their sin, "know you not" (isn't it obvious to you?) that we should not become one body with a prostitute. This isn't just because *we* belong to the body of Christ and manifest Him; it is also because we are representative of us all who are in that body, and we wouldn't wish to bring His body, i.e. all the other believers, into such an inappropriate position. What you do, we all do. And the Lord Jesus has delegated His reputation in the eyes of this world to us, who are His body to them. The wonder of being baptized into His Name, entering the body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:14 matches our resurrection with that of the Lord) means that like our early brethren, we will rejoice to suffer shame for the sake of carrying that Name (Mt. 10:24,25). It will be "enough" for us that we know something of our Lord's sufferings. The more we reflectively read the Gospels, the more we will know the nature and extent of His sufferings, and the more we will see in our own something of His.

Pause for a moment to reflect that the Lord's resurrection is a pattern for our own. This is the whole meaning of baptism. "God has both raised the Lord and will raise us up through his power" (1 Cor. 6:13,14). Yet there were evident continuities between the Jesus who lived mortal life, and the Jesus who rose again. His mannerisms, body language, turns of phrase, were so human- even after His resurrection. And so who we

are now, as persons, is who we will eternally be. Because of the resurrection, our personalities in the sum of all their relationships and nuances, *have an eternal future*. But from whence do we acquire those nuances, body languages, etc? They arise partly from our parents, from our inter-relations with others etc; we are the sum of our relationships. And this is in fact a tremendous encouragement to us in our efforts for others; for the result of our parenting, our patient effort and grace towards others, will have an eternal effect upon others. Who we help them become is, in part, who they will eternally be. Job reflected that if a tree is cut down, it sprouts (Heb. *yaliph*) again as the same tree; and he believed that after his death he would likewise sprout again (*yaliph*) at the resurrection (Job 14:7-9,14,15). There will be a continuity between who we were in mortal life, and who we will eternally be- just as there is between the pruned tree and the new tree which grows again out of its stump.

Because He rose, *therefore* we stop committing sin (1 Cor. 6:14). We can't willfully sin if we believe in the forgiveness His resurrection has enabled. Men should repent not only because judgment day is coming, but because God has commended repentance to us, He has offered / inspired faith in His forgiveness *by the resurrection of Christ* (Acts 17:30,31 AV mg.). The empty tomb and all the Lord's glorification means for us should therefore inspire personal repentance; as well as of itself being an imperative to go and share this good news with a sinful world, appealing for them to repent and be baptized so that they too might share in the forgiveness enabled for them by the resurrection. Because the Lord was our representative, in His resurrection we see our own. We are therefore born again unto a living and abounding hope, by our identification with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). The Ethiopian eunuch read of his representative Saviour as also being childless, and being as he was, in the midst of a wilderness; and realizing this, he desired to be baptized into Him. Grasping the representational nature of the Lord's death inspires response in baptism, and yet the motivational power of this fact continues afterwards.

Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? God forbid- We need to read this carefully. Paul is not accusing them of simply using prostitutes. He is saying that they were the body members of Christ [by baptism], but they were acting as the body members of a prostitute. They are therefore accused not of *using* prostitutes, but *being* prostitutes. And this connects with our earlier thoughts in this chapter, that the cult of prostitution as practiced in the surrounding religions had been imported into the church at Corinth. They had 'taken' parts of Christ's body and used them in that way; the suggestion is surely that they had appointed some of their number to be ecclesial prostitutes. And this was likely what was going on at the breaking of bread. For this reason I have some sympathy with the reading of the sexual sins in :11 as specifically referring to prostitution of various kinds. Paul was not going to 'take' Christ's body parts, the believers, and use them as the body parts of a prostitute. Perhaps he had been invited to do so and was turning it down. It could be that Paul has in view a symbolic prostitute such as 'Babylon' but the context here is surely of literal sexual misbehaviour.

6:16 *Or do you not know that he that is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For the scripture says: The two shall become one flesh*- The implication of this reasoning is that the Genesis command that the two shall become one has a specific reference to the sexual act. And this was designed as part of the way God fuses man and woman together within the marriage context. By using the sexual act the Corinthians were declaring that they were married to the prostitute they were using.

Seeing their bodies belonged to Christ and were indwellt by His Spirit, they were therefore joining Christ to that prostitute. But the Corinthians didn't sense this indwelling of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit, and so they were unaware of the enormity of the implications of how they were using what was effectively *His* body.

6:17- see on Acts 18:18.

But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit- The act of intercourse makes husband and wife "one flesh". In the same way as there is "one *body*... one *flesh*" at this point, so "he that is joined unto the Lord is one *spirit*" (1 Cor. 6:16,17). Highlight, or underline, those phrases "one body" and "one flesh" in v.16, and also "one spirit" in v.17. Don't miss the point. We must "stand fast in *one spirit*, with one mind striving together..." (Phil. 1:27). We are to be one spirit with the Lord, as a man is one body and spirit with his wife (1 Cor. 6:16,17). But that same intense union is to be seen within the ecclesia. We become one spirit with the Lord Jesus by baptism (1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13); thus what we feel deep inside us in our spirit, in the spirit-man created within us, is automatically, instantly the feeling of the Lord Jesus. And because He is one with the Father in Spirit, He can therefore relay our spirit to Him. Rom. 8 is teaching that this is really what prayer is all about, and what we request verbally, not knowing what to pray for as we ought, is not really the essence of prayer. Yet the Corinthians were denying the operation of the Spirit, and therefore they failed to feel their personal relationship and connection with the Lord Jesus; and this led to them using their bodies in sinful connections with prostitutes. They failed to realize what Paul will now make explicit in this chapter- that possession of the Lord's spirit means we, our bodies, are His and not our own to use as we please. That principle goes far beyond sexual issues.

6:18 *Flee fornication*- Surely an allusion to Joseph literally fleeing from sexual temptation.

Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body- Whilst Paul does have in mind the use of the physical body, we must bear in mind that "the body" in Corinthians is usually used by Paul in the sense of the body of Christ. We also must answer the question as to how sexual sin is a sin against our own body. Sin is surely against God and against persons, rather than against the sack of water, calcium and complex chemicals which forms the human body. The Greek *eis* translated "against" is a very common word in the Greek New Testament, and usually carries the sense of "in" or "within". Within our bodies And the context of 1 Cor. 6 is about how our individual behaviour affects the body of Christ as a whole. Sin is sin not only because it is a technical infringement of Divine law, but because of what it does to others in practice. Sexual sin in particular rarely simply affects two persons. If a sister commits adultery in an ecclesia with a brother, there are many other parties affected, and ecclesias so often divide as the members take sides as to how to deal with the issue, and in their foolish human efforts to apportion blame- "She was more responsible... he was easily led... but her husband is abusive, you can understand how it happened... he has baptized kids and young grandchildren, you can't disfellowship him". The context of Corinthians is warning against turning the breaking of bread meeting into the kind of *symposium* common in Corinthian society, whereby a group of equals met together to hear a speech of common interest to them, relating to their trade guild or religion, and it turned into a time of drunken revellry and use was made of prostitutes. The command therefore to "flee fornication (Gk. *porneia)* (:18) doesn't so much speak of going too far with your

girlfriend (which is wrong but for other reasons), but is a warning against the systematic immorality (*porneia*) of using prostitutes. See on 5:11. Paul is arguing that what's wrong with this is that it's a sin against the body of Christ, against many others within the body, and thus against Christ personally, whose body we are part of and individually representative of. This would explain why he writes of "your ['you' plural] body" (:19).

6:19 *Or do you not know*- Paul says this several times. He is asking them to review their spiritual potential and use it. Chapter 1 opened with the encouragement that they had richly received the Spirit; but 3:1 then explains that they were not spiritual. Paul is asking them to live up to the huge spiritual potential and possibility which comes with being baptized into Christ.

That your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which you have from God- They were unaware that the Spirit was within them- and their behaviour reflected that. 1 Cor. 1 tells them that through being baptized into Christ, they have been given the Spirit; but 3:1 is clear that they were spirit-less. Paul asks them to be aware that because they have been redeemed, bought as the property and slaves of the Lord Jesus, He has filled them with His Spirit so that they might be wholly His. But they had to allow that process and to as it were buy in to it. The Spirit dwelt amongst Old Testament Israel in the wilderness, but they grieved the Spirit of God and were unresponsive to it.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the community of believers as it earlier dwelt in the tabernacle and temple in the form of an Angel and the shekinah glory. The "price" paid for "you" [plural] refers to the redemption of the body of believers by the blood of Christ (:20). By baptism into the body of Christ (which Paul emphasizes in 12:13, where again he speaks of how in body and spirit we are made one with the Lord by baptism) we are His body, and to lock Him into intercourse with a temple prostitute is therefore a statement to the world about Him personally (:15). Note how in :13 "for the Lord... the Lord for the body" is a poor translation in that "for" has been provided by the translators in a failed attempt to make better sense of the blunt original- "the body... [is] the Lord [Jesus]- the Lord [is] the body". The implications of baptism into His body are major indeed. He is us and we are Him. Whilst the word 'baptism' isn't found here in chapter 6, the idea is clearly alluded to in 6:11. Therefore just as surely as He was raised up, so will we be (:14). Sin therefore has implications for Christ personally, and for the wider body of Christ. We sin in [*eis*] our own body, which is the body of Christ. Therefore even if something is considered "lawful" by us personally, this doesn't mean we can therefore do it- because it has effects upon others (:12). And this is exactly the reasoning Paul uses later in his reasoning about the question of meats offered to idols. Paul has said the same about himself earlier in 4:4, where he comments that he has a good conscience, he knows nothing against himself, but this doesn't make him thereby acceptable to God. To some extent, the conscience of others must be factored into our own personal conscience. We will only find the strength and motivation to do so by appreciating that we are together with them in the same one body.

And you are not your own- To willingly describe oneself as a slave of Christ was totally against the grain of first century social norms- for to be a slave in any form took away a person's credibility and value. And yet Paul especially in the context of describing his witness, speaks of himself as a slave of Jesus. He urges the converts to see themselves as "not your own" because they have been bought as slaves by the blood of the cross (1 Cor. 6:19,20). People were trained to take their place amongst fixed categories within society- the whole idea of transformation, of taking ones' place

amidst the ecclesia of Christ, of being a saint, a called-out one, of being made free from how others' see us... was all so radical that even those who converted to Christianity likely never grasped the full extent of the ideas.

Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them. It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

The importance (the *eternal* importance) which attaches to our attitude to materialism is certainly stressed. All that we have is not our own. It's not '*my* money', it's not '*your* car', it's not even '*my* toe' which *you* accidentally trod on. Yet we all cling on to what little we have; we get offended and upset if we 'lose' it, or if we feel it is demanded of us. But not only is our material possession not 'ours'; "*ye* are not *your own*. For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19,20). This is said in the context of warning against abuse of our sexuality; it's not *our* body, so follow God's teaching concerning it. We ourselves, the very essential me, and you, have been bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. If I don't own even myself, I certainly don't own anything material. *Now*, I am not my own. I am a slave, bought by the Lord Jesus. The fact He is Lord *of all* means He is owner of absolutely everything to do with us (Acts 10:36). At the judgment, this fact will be brought home. The Lord will ask for "my money... mine own"; we will be asked what we have done with our Lord's money (Mt. 20:15; 25:27). All we have is God's; it is not our own. Therefore if we hold back in our giving, we are *robbing God*. Israel thought it was absurd to put it like this: But yes, God insisted through Malachi (3:8-12), you are *robbing me* if you don't give back, or even if you don't give your heart to Him in faith. *And will a man rob God?* Will a man...? We must give God what has His image stamped on it: and we, our bodies, are made in His image (Mt. 22:21); therefore we have a duty to give ourselves to Him. We are not our own: how much less is 'our' money or time our own! Like David, we need to realize now, *in this life*, before the judgment, that all our giving is only a giving back to God of what we have been given by Him: "Of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. 19:14). The danger of materialism is the assumption that we are ultimate owners of what we 'have'. See on Lk. 16:12.

6:20- see on Mt. 13:46.

For you were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore in your body and spirit, for they are God's- In the slave-master analogy, the Lord had bought them with His blood. They were therefore completely His, even their very bodies, and His Spirit was potentially within them. But they had to allow the action of the Spirit within their spirit; and use their bodies and minds appropriately.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

7:1 *Now concerning the things of which you wrote*- I have to say in preface to this section that what follows is how I understand this passage in all intellectual and expositional honesty. I as a married man can make no pretension to being able to live up to the high standard which Paul seems to be suggesting. As with much in this commentary, I offer the following exposition more to stimulate Bible-minded and

prayerful meditation, rather than as a prescriptive statement of how a believer must live.

Clearly the Corinthians had written to Paul; this explains why often in his reply he appears to quote terms and phrases from their correspondence. The Bible which we have bears the marks of the fact that it was written for a primary readership (as well as for us), and the language used is proof of that. Take a read through 1 Corinthians 7 to see what I mean. It is clear that Paul is answering some highly specific questions which the Corinthian believers had written to him. He begins his paragraphs: "*Now concerning* the things whereof ye wrote unto me… *now concerning* virgins… *now as touching* things offered unto idols…" (1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1). We can almost imagine him sitting there with their letter in front of him, answering the questions point by point. But we don't know what their questions were, and this fact makes the interpretation of Paul's words here difficult; although of course the study of them is beneficial to us. The fact is, some parts of the Bible which we have were written for its primary readership, and the language used reflects this (Dt. 3:9,11).

It is good for a man not to touch a woman- Paul's usage of the word "good" in this chapter must be understood as his clarification of what he means (:8,26). We marvel at how this group of believers on one hand were involved with serious sexual immorality, the use of prostitutes within the church (chapter 6) and boasting that one of them had taken his father's wife (chapter 5), and collectively they warranted the charge that they were lacking in the Spirit, unspiritual (3:1); and yet on the other hand, they were discussing issues such as remaining single for the sake of Christ, or married couples abstaining from sex in order to fast and pray. Perhaps there was a very wide range of spirituality within the church; and thereby we have a huge challenge to the exclusive mindset which many churches have operated, whereby the less spiritual or unspiritual or moral failures are excluded from the congregation. But it may equally be that we find here a reflection of the terrible duality which there is within religious people; extremes of spiritual devotion can beget extreme unspirituality and self-indulgence, justified by the idea that they have been so spiritual in other areas.

7:2 *But because there is so much immorality*- The Greek *porneia* refers to the use of prostitution, and in chapter 6 we saw that this sort of thing was going on within the Corinthian church. The context is not speaking about young couples 'going too far' and being advised to marry in order to avoid that temptation. Prostitution was common in religious practices in Corinth, and it seems likely there were some who wanted to justify practicing it in the church. An argument was being made that seeing human passions could be satisfied as much as physical desires for food (1 Cor. 6:13), the Christian should commit himself to the Lord's service as a single person, even breaking up marriage to do so, and use church prostitutes to satisfy sexual urges.

Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband- I suggest this not an appeal for single people to get married, but rather an encouragement to 'have' sexual relations with their *own* partners- rather than making use of the church prostitutes. This would be the force of the word "own". The next verses speak in this same context. I would doubt the reference is to getting married rather than being single because the majority of people in first century society were married. Singleness was not anywhere near as common as it is today, indeed New Testament Greek refers to either an underage girl, or a married woman. If my

approach is correct, then we would need to note that women were also tempted to use male prostitutes in the church, and this would explain the usage of words relating to male prostitution in chapter 6.

7:3 *Let the husband render to the wife her due and likewise also the wife to the husband*- As explained on :2, the problem in view appears to be the usage of religious prostitutes within a religious, Christian context. Paul is saying that sex should be confined to marriage, and both partners should accept this. Sex is a "due", a debt which is intrinsic to the marital agreement; and it should not be avoided on the basis of using prostitutes in the name of religious devotion.

7:4 *The wife has no power over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also the husband has no power over his own body, but the wife does*- The "power" is hard to interpret. The word really means 'authority' and is used rarely; but one of the other two usages is in 1 Cor. 6:12 where Paul says he will not be brought under the authority of any- perhaps, of anyone. It could be that some teachers in the church were claiming authority over others in these intimate matters. Or Paul may simply be pointing out that marriage is a surrendering of personal autonomy. It is a surrendering of the body to the partner. This kind of language is in fact appropriate to the sexual act itself, both physically and psychologically. Paul may therefore be saying that the sexual act is to be seen as a surrendering of autonomy to the authority of the partner- and that surrender is not to be made to a prostitute, nor to a religious leader, but solely to the marital partner.

7:5- see on Mt. 23:25; Rom. 5:12.

Do not deprive one another, unless it is for an agreed time, so that you may give yourselves to prayer and then come together again- "Deprive" is literally "defraud" and continues the metaphor of sex as debt which was introduced in :3. Paul says that sex might be foregone for an agreed period in order to enable total devotion to prayer and by implication, personal connection with the Lord Jesus. This is a very high standard to speak of. We must ask how long we spend each day in communion with the Lord Jesus, how many minutes we are in prayer for, and whether foregoing marital sex would enhance our prayer life. For many of us, the answer would have to be that such sexual 'fasting' would not enhance our contact with the Lord Jesus because we are just not on that spiritual level. But what is interesting is that Paul speaks of this high level of spiritual devotion in the same context as warning against the usage of prostitutes rather than marital partners, and has commented that the Corinthians were generally unspiritual (3:1) and lacking basic fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps Paul is here addressing a very spiritual minority within the church- in which case we are challenged by the way that they coexisted along with the less spiritual in the same church environment. Or it may be that there was a heady mix of the heights of spiritual devotion and the depths of moral failure which existed amongst the Corinthians. Such mixture would be typical of human nature and the kinds of juxtaposition and tension between flesh and spirit which we find within ourselves and see constantly in others. The spiritually minded alcoholic, the sister with a heart of gold who has affairs... these are all so frequently encountered within church life.

There is an allusion to Mt. 17:21. Give yourselves to prayer and fasting with the passion and intensity required to perform a miracle. Paul assumes that prayer will be such a major component in the lives of married believers that they may well chose to temporarily abstain from sexual relationships in order to find a greater intensity in prayer. This speaks of quite some emphasis on prayer; not just a few minutes at the end of each day saying often the same words.

That Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control- The temptation in view was that of desiring sexual expression, and that is a deeply internal process. The 'satan' or adversary would therefore refer to the lusts of the human mind. Paul speaks as if their lack of self-control is a given, it exists amongst them. He doesn't argue that they should have sexual marital relationships *in case* they might lack self-control and fall into sin. He states that they lack self-control- for they were lacking the Spirit (3:1). So we get the picture of believers who lacked self-control who were on the other hand very zealous to connect with the Lord Jesus in prayer and would even forego sex in order to focus upon their prayer life. This mixture of flesh and spirit is within each of us and within every church. But the lid is taken off here by Paul, we see the internal workings within the minds and church lives of the Corinthians- because in essence the same conflicts will be seen in all who have not totally surrendered to the ministry of the Spirit.

7:6 *But this I say by way of concession, not by commandment*- This must be linked with 1 Corinthians 7:12: "Now to the rest speak I, not the Lord (Jesus)". The implication is that verses 1-6 were not a repetition of Christ's direct teaching, neither were vv. 12 ff. But therefore we should read verses 7-11 as being 'the Lord Jesus speaking', i.e. Paul is repeating the spirit of Christ's teaching. The content of v. 7-11 concerns being single and not divorcing; it is significant that Paul says that what he said about marriage was him speaking "by permission" or concession, but what he says about singleness is from the Lord Jesus Himself. However, the translation "concession" is not helpful. The Greek word occurs only here, but it means literally 'common knowledge'; he may mean that he is sharing the implications of the Lord's direct teaching rather than His specific commandments- either in the Gospels, or as directly revealed by the Lord to Paul.

7:7 *Yet I would that all men were even as I myself*- The power of Paul's teaching about singleness is backed up by his personal situation. As a member of the Council who condemned Stephen, he would have had to be married. An unmarried Orthodox Jew would have been a contradiction in terms at that time. And yet he is evidently single in his Christian ministry. It seems fairly certain that his wife either died or left him at the time of his conversion, probably taking the children with her. If this is so, it gives extra poignancy to his comment that he had suffered the loss of all things for the sake of his conversion (Phil. 3:8). The chances are that he thought and wrote that with a difficult glance back to that Jerusalem girl, the toddlers he'd never seen again, the life and infinite possibilities of what might have been... And it gives another angle on his description of his converts as his children.

However each man has his own gift from God, one after this manner and another after that- Our life situation, married or unmarried, married to a reasonable or unreasonable person, believer or unbeliever; or whether we are wired with stronger or weaker self-control... all these things are a gift from God, and should be seen in that way, rather than ever seeking to change our situation or wishing that somehow we were in another situation. The word "own" links back to the exhortation to have relationships with our "own" partner- and not prostitutes.

7:8 *But I say to the unmarried and to widows*- The "But *I* say" may mean that Paul is now sharing what has directly been revealed to him, whereas his other teaching is a reflection of the Lord's 'saying' or teaching as recorded in the Gospels. It would seem from the context of *porneia* and the problem of church usage of prostitutes that the sexual needs of the unmarried and widows were being met by

prostitutes, and in this context Paul argues for marriage if they feel their sexual needs are beyond their self-control.

It is good for them if they live as I do- Adam alone was "not good". Adam and Eve together are described as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Paul seems to have this in mind when he says three times that "it is good" to be single (1 Corinthians 7:1,8,26). But what's the point of this paradox? Perhaps Paul's point is: 'In the old, natural creation, it wasn't good that a man should be alone. But now, in the new creation, it's good that a man does try to live a single life, because as Adam married Eve, so we are now married to Christ'. Or it may be that attention is being drawn to the fact that God's provision of Eve was the first of God's countless concessions to human need. It was God's intention, ideally, that Adam be single, therefore he was potentially "good" in his single state. But he couldn't handle it, therefore God made him a partner. And therefore Paul says that to live the single life is "good". But in the same way as God made a concession to Adam, so He does to believers now; "but if they cannot contain, let them marry". Whether we agree this makes marriage a concession to human need or not, the fact is that surely single believers should at least *consider* the single life. Likewise Paul's invitation to follow his example of being single in order to devote himself to his Lord must be taken as seriously as his other invitations to follow his example (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:33; 11:1). He knew that he was (in the words of Robert Roberts) "a Christ-appointed model"; the record of his life is framed to give the picture of the ideal believer.

According to :10, this verse 8 is part of Paul's repeating of the Lord's teaching about marriage. But where did He specifically speak about singleness? Surely it was when He spoke about men making themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom's sake (Mt. 19:12). The disciples' comment "It is not good to marry" is picked up by Paul when he says it is "good" to be single unto the Lord. The Lord's response to "It is not good to marry" was that "All men cannot receive this saying, saving they to whom it is given". The Lord Himself made concessions about marriage, and so Paul did the same.

The triple description of the single life as "good" (1 Corinthians 7:1,8,26) uses a Greek word which can mean 'beautiful'. Yet many a lonely, longing sister might not see anything 'beautiful' about her singleness; neither would she go along with 1 Corinthians 7:34, which says that the unmarried woman has the advantage that she can single-mindedly give herself to the things of the Lord Jesus. It may seem to her that she would serve the Lord much better if she were married. And probably so. This raises the possibility that by "the unmarried" Paul may not mean 'the single ones in the ecclesia'. He may be referring to those who had consciously decided to be single, but used the church prostitutes at times. Likewise "the widows" doesn't have to mean 'all those in the ecclesias who have lost partners'. It could mean those widows who had devoted themselves to the Lord Jesus rather than seeking another partner, after the pattern of widows devoting themselves to the temple (cp. Lk. 2:37). The fact he recommends some younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14) is proof enough that "widows" doesn't mean 'all widows'. It may be that single and widowed brethren and sisters made open statements of their decision to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus, and so he would be using "unmarried and widows" as technical terms for those who were proclaiming celibacy to the Lord Jesus, and yet it seems were tempted to use the church prostitutes at times. 1 Tim. 5:9 suggests there was a specific "number" of widows in the Ephesus ecclesia who were financially supported by the ecclesia.

"Live as I do" translates a word which better means to remain or abide. This would connect with the teaching in :20 "Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called".

7:9 *But if they do not have self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn*- There is a purposeful ambiguity in Paul's comment that it is better to marry than to burn due to unlawful passions (1 Cor. 7:9). Is he referring to the burning 'fire' of judgment (e.g. Mt. 13:40), or of burning in lust (cp. Rom. 1:27)? Surely he intends reference to both, in that burning in lust is effectively condemning yourself, kindling the fire of condemnation yourself. David burnt in lust, and was then smitten with a disease which he describes as his loins being filled with burning (Ps. 38:7 RV). Or consider the Jonah type. He was disobedient and left the presence of the Lord of his own volition, and was therefore cast forth from the ship to the dark waters- in this little type of judgment, he condemned himself. The rejected are told to depart, and yet in another sense they are cast away (Mt. 25:30,41). Sin is therefore its own judgment; in that sense, judgment is upon us right now, and "we make the answer now".

7:10- see on 1 Cor. 9:14; 15:10.

But to the married I give this instruction; not I, but the Lord- I take this to mean that Paul at this point is repeating the recorded teaching of the Lord Jesus, rather than sharing things separately revealed to him- he begins doing that at :12. We note his deep connection with the Lord Jesus and how saturated his thinking was by the Gospels; I have elsewhere listed all his allusions to the Gospel records, and in the whole Pauline corpus he is alluding to them at least once every three verses. But there is another option in interpretation here. Gal. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 15:10 show Paul using the phrase “yet not I but...” to differentiate between his natural and spiritual self. Perhaps he does the same in the only other occurrence of the phrase here in 1 Cor. 7:10: “And unto the married I command, *yet not I* [the natural Paul], but the Lord [the man Christ Jesus in the spiritual Paul], Let not the wife depart from her husband”. See on Acts 23:6.

That the wife should not leave her husband- The context so far has been of Paul warning the Corinthians against using church prostitutes and abandoning their marital partners under the guise of wanting to devote themselves completely to the Lord. We see here a window into how the flesh reasons- even marital breakup can be justified by the flesh as a path to greater spiritual service. "Leave" is the same word used by the Lord in teaching that man should not "put asunder" what God has joined together in marriage (Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9). The context of those passages clearly places the 'putting asunder' in parallel with divorce.

7:11 *But should she depart*- This is a classic case of an ideal being stated, but a less than ideal situation being accepted. This theme is found throughout Corinthians, and it is hard for legalistic or literalistic minds to accept. Although God joins together man and wife, He allows His work to be undone in that He concedes to separation, even when there has been no adultery (1 Cor. 7:11). Prov. 21:9; 25:24 almost seem to encourage it, by saying that it is better for a spiritual man to dwell in a corner of the housetop than to share a house in common (LKK *koinos*) with his contentious wife. The same word occurs in Mal. 2:14 LXX in describing a man’s wife as his “companion” (*koinonos*). Throughout the Spirit's teaching concerning marriage in 1 Cor. 7, there is constantly this feature of setting an ideal standard, but accepting a lower one. This is demonstrated by the several occurrences of the word "But..." in the passage:

- It is better not to marry: "*But and if* thou marry, thou hast not sinned" (v.28).
- The same "but and if" occurs in vv. 10,11: "Let not the wife depart from her

husband: *but and if* she depart...". Separation is, therefore, tolerated by God as a concession to human weakness, even though it is a way of life which inevitably involves an ongoing breach of commandments.
- It is better for widows not to remarry; but if they do, this is acceptable (1 Cor. 7:39,40; 1 Tim. 5:11)
- This same 'two standards' principle is seen elsewhere within 1 Cor. Meat offered to idols was just ordinary meat, but Paul. like God, makes concessions for those with a weak conscience concerning this (1 Cor. 8). See on 1 Cor. 9:12; 14:28; 12:31.

Let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband, *and the husband should not leave his wife*- To be an unmarried woman was very difficult in first century society. Paul is asking a lot here. The command to be "reconciled" indicates that Paul saw right through the argument being presented- that due to a desire to serve the Lord on a higher level, believers were refusing to have sex with their partners or even leaving or divorcing them. And, as is clear from chapter 6 and the talk of *porneia* in this chapter 7, they were using church prostitutes to meet their sexual needs. But Paul perceived that the real problem was the usual raft of human issues which come between marital partners, and their lack of reconciliation was their real reason for ending the relationship. The word for 'reconcile' is used almost exclusively in Corinthians, and Paul will later write of how "the ministry of reconciliation" is fundamental to the Gospel. We are reconciled to God in Christ, we must seek to reconcile others, and the Corinthians needed to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20). We can assume that their lack of reconciliation with God was underlying their lack of reconciliation with each other, both within their marriages and within the church as a whole. It is simply so that division is a work of the flesh. Division and lack of reconciliation, both between believers and within marriages, can be so easily spiritually justified- apparently; but Paul is insisting that reconciliation with God will have its fruit in reconciliation with each other, and will come to full term in "the unity of the Spirit". But they refused to allow the Spirit to work (3:1) and so they lacked that unity of the Spirit.

7:12 *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord*- See on :10. There are several indications that Paul expected his readers to understand that the majority of what he was saying was basically a reflection of the words of the Lord Jesus. He hasn't earlier said: 'Now I'm going to remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus'. He takes it as understood that as usual, his reasoning has been a reflection of the words of Jesus (in the context, 1 Cor. 7:11 = Mt. 5:32; Mk. 10:9; "put asunder" is s.w. "depart"). But now he says that he is going to go beyond Christ's words (as in 1 Cor. 7:25). This doesn't mean he wasn't inspired; it means that he is drawing their attention to the fact that he is doing something unusual for him, i.e. to give teaching which is not an allusion or repetition of that of the Lord Jesus. My point is that the implication of this is that he expected his readers to take as read that he normally was only repeating the thinking of Christ. Likewise in 2 Cor. 11:17: “That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord” (i.e. as I normally would). Every few verses, even according to our limited analysis, he was making a noticeable allusion to the Gospels. When he says that he is speaking to the Thessalonians "by (in) the word of the Lord" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15), this doesn't mean that what he was about to say was more inspired than anything else. What he meant was that he was specifically repeating the teaching of Christ (which he does through a series of extended allusions to Mt. 24 and 25). "To the rest" would be appropriate language to use if Paul were sitting down replying to a letter from Corinth which lists various categories and asks his opinion about them.

If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her- It is probably true that in every marriage, the thought arises as to what life would be like if it were to end. The problem was that believers in their low moments were justifying breaking up their relationships in the name of higher spiritual service. And Paul is most clearly arguing against all such reasoning. Most women in first century society automatically followed the religion of their husbands; but we see here an indication of the deeply personal nature of Christian commitment. It was far from automatic that marital partners would also accept the faith of their partners. "Leave her" translates a different Greek term to that used about the believing woman not 'leaving' her unbelieving partner in :13. Here in :12 we have a formal term for divorce. It would have been harder for a woman to divorce her husband, but she could leave or run away from him- and that is the term used in :13. Not being 'together', leaving each other, is therefore parallel to divorce. Documentary evidence for marital status is a concept only of recent times. And in any case, the essence of marriage is being together, not leaving each other but cleaving to each other.

7:13 *And the woman that has an unbelieving husband and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband*- As noted on :12, the stress of Christianity on *individual* conversion and responsibility meant that as Jesus had predicted, families were divided when one accepted Him. 1 Cor. 7 shows that there were times when a wife accepted Christianity but her husband didn't. Yet society expected her to treat him as her head in all religious matters. Plutarch taught that "it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tightly upon all queer rituals and superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour". These comments were very relevant to the many sisters who must have discreetly broken bread alone or in small groups. One can imagine all the social and domestic conflicts that Christianity created. This is why the movement was so slandered. And it explains the interpersonal conflicts and tensions caused by true Christian commitment today. See on :12 for the difference between 'leaving' and 'putting away'.

7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy*-

The allusion is to Lev. 21:15 GNB "Otherwise, his children, who ought to be holy, will be ritually unclean. I am the LORD and I have set him apart as the High Priest". The idea of children being clean or unclean is alluded to by Paul when he says that "The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). We noted on Lev. 21:13 another allusion to this section in 1 Cor. 7. Principles relevant to the High Priest are now applied to every believer; willful marriage to the unclean would not produce holy / clean children. Just as the tearing down of the veil into the most holy was a signal that all in Christ, and not just the High Priest, should now go in there just as the High Priest had done- and do his work, in essence. This was a high calling for those used to the Judaist system doing everything for them. In Christ they were called not just to priesthood, but to participate with and in Him who does the work of the High Priest.

Those who come to the Faith already married have their marriage "sanctified" by God- if God did not do this, their children would be "unclean; but now are they holy". This connects back to Paul's opening statements in 1 Cor. 1 that all in Christ are "sanctified"; but he has argued that the Corinthians were not appreciating nor acting

according to the status they had potentially been given. And here again, because they didn't really believe or feel their own sanctification, they failed to see that their marriages were also sanctified. Every part of their lives was sanctified- including in the case of marriage to unbelievers, and including their children. The implication is that God does not see marriage in the world in the same way as He sees marriage between His children. The implication of 1 Cor. 7:14 seems to be that if an unbeliever has a relationship with an unbeliever, the resulting children are "unclean", not sanctified, because the parent was not sanctified by being in Christ. "Now *are* they holy" is another example of Paul recognizing that they were in status sanctified before God, even if they failed to appreciate that as they should. Just as the Corinthians were sanctified by status but this was no guarantee of their salvation ultimately, so it would be unwise to argue that the children of believers are sanctified in the sense of being saved eternally. And in any case, surely having a believing parent doesn't mean that their children shall be saved in any case regardless of their personal faith. If we insist on seeing a parallel between sanctification and final salvation, surely we must draw a line at when "their children" are no longer covered by the believing parent when they come to maturity. But this question is not addressed here because quite simply the issue of salvation is not in view at all.

7:15 *Yet if the unbelieving departs, let him depart. The brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases*- The 'letting' presumably speaks of agreeing to the separation and not trying to stop it. The metaphor of "bondage" means just that- it is the language of slavery. It may not really refer to the 'marriage bond'; that is just a similarity in the English words for 'bond' and 'bondage'. The believing woman is not to accept effective religious and psychological slavery to an unbelieving husband.

But God has called us to peace- "Peace" is elsewhere translated 'to set at one again' (Acts 7:26) and connects with the call to 'be reconciled' in :11. We have been called to live at one with others around us, believers or unbelievers. The woman should not automatically agree with the departure of her unbelieving partner but should realize that God's calling or intention is for reconciliation. But if that is not possible, then He doesn't want us to live in slavery to a situation which is spiritually untenable. Again we see here the acceptance of a less than ideal situation. God has called the believing woman to peace with her unbelieving partner, but if due to the positions of another that is just not going to happen, then the Lord understands that. The only other reference to being called to peace is in Col. 3:15: "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts- to this you were also called in one body; and be thankful". The idea may therefore be that throughout all the trauma of marital break up, the sister was to remember that the peace of Christ was to rule in her heart, for this is the psychological position she has been called to.

7:16 *For how do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you shall save your wife?*- The thought seems to be that by hanging in there and seeking reconciliation (see on :15), the believing partner has the chance to save their partner. We note that salvation is partially predicated upon third parties. We can save others, we can cause their stumbling also. We also see here a balance regarding the interpretation of Eph. 5:23 where the husband is presented as the saviour of the wife. This is true, but it can also be that the wife saves the husband.

7:17 *Only as the Lord has distributed to each man, as God has called each, so let him walk*- Paul's argument is that it would be wrong to justify ending a marital relationship under the excuse that one is seeking a higher spiritual experience, and all

the more wrong to then use church prostitutes. The immediate context here speaks of accepting our marital situation where possible and seeking to reconcile and live at peace with the partner, whether they are believers or unbelievers. The distribution or calling in view therefore refers both to marital status, and to the nature of our marriage. Those situations which the Corinthians were tempted to wriggle out of were in fact gifts from God- each therefore has "his own gift from God" (:7). This is not the same as saying that our situation must be glumly accepted at all costs; rather is it an elevation of 'the ties that bind' and seeing them as gifts from God. Paul began in chapter 1 by saying that every believer has been given gifts at the point of baptism. Here he is saying that those gifts may not necessarily only refer to talents or characteristics, but also to life situations. He uses the same word to speak of the gift to him of a ministry to preach to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 10:13). He uses a related word in speaking of how each believer is a different part of the Lord's body (1 Cor. 12:27). We are to run with what we were given- to walk according to our calling, as he puts it here. The 'calling' again is that spoken of in chapter 1; it is not simply a calling to the Kingdom, but a calling to a unique path to that end, which includes marital situation and the nature of the marriages we have.

And so ordain I in all the churches- Understanding Corinth ecclesia as a series of house churches explains Paul's comment to the Corinthians that he ordained his guidelines to be practiced in all the ecclesias- i.e. the house churches that comprised the body of Christ in Corinth. He gives some guidelines for behaviour that appear to contradict each other until we perceive the difference between the commands to house groups, and commands about the 'gathering together' for special breaking of bread services. The role of women is a classic example. 1 Cor. 14:34 says that women should keep silent 'in ecclesia' [AV "churches" is a mistranslation]- i.e. a sister shouldn't teach at those special breaking of bread meetings when the house churches 'came together' (1 Cor. 11:17,18,20). And yet within the house groups, it's apparent from other New Testament accounts and from what Paul himself writes, that sisters did teach there (1 Cor. 11:5). Thus in the house church of Philip, there were four women who 'prophesied', i.e. spoke forth the word of God to others (Acts 21:8,9). This to me is the only way to make sense of Corinthians- otherwise Paul appears to be contradicting himself.

7:18 *Was anyone called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has any been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised*- It was not possible for the circumcised to become uncircumcised. But Paul uses this example in order to underline the extent to which he so strongly feels that we should retain the position we were in when baptized. He sees that position, whether it be our marital status or the nature of our marriage, or our social situation as slaves, as all part of the gift of the Spirit we received. Those things are gifts, intended for us to use in our path towards eternal life at the end of the process. "Every man hath his proper (Gk. *idios*, his very personal) gift of God...". The ideas are again linked in Rom. 11:29: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance". This idea of us each being given a gift at the time of our conversion goes back to the parable of Lk. 19:13, where each of us, Christ's servants, are given a gift to work with. The goods of the Father are divided between the sons, for them to use as they think best (Lk. 15:12). "The Kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who *called* his own servants, and *delivered* unto them his goods" (Mt. 25:14). Note how the *calling* of the servants and the giving them the gifts / goods are connected. The idea of called servants is alluded to later, in 1 Corinthians 7:22. We have each been given "gifts" at our conversion. Our 'calling' is related to our situation at the time of our conversion. There is a parallel

between God distributing gifts to each of us, and Him calling us (1 Corinthians 7:17). This is to be expected from the allusion back to the parables; the gifts are given to each of us at our conversion or 'calling'.

7:19 *Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing- but the keeping of the commandments of God is all important*- Paul is clearly attacking a Judaist influence at Corinth. As we noted in expounding Titus, Jewish legalism was actually attractive to immoral Gentile Christians- because they felt freed up to commit immorality because they were legalistically obedient to some Jewish laws. The argument was that circumcision was a commandment of God and so it should be kept. Paul is drawing a sharp contrast between circumcision and keeping commandments. The real essence of keeping all Divine commandments was to believe in Jesus as Lord, and to live in love (1 Jn. 3:23). This would preclude breaking up marital relationships and the usage of prostitutes.

7:20 *Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called*- As noted on :18, our calling is personal and individually tailored to each of us. The position we were in baptism was God's purpose for us and part of the intended journey and spiritual process ahead for us.

So Paul wrote that slaves should abide in the callings they had when called, and not unduly seek freedom. This has huge implications when we consider the plight of female slaves, amongst whom the Gospel spread so significantly in the first century. They were the sexual property of their owners, who would personally use them and sub-let them as he wished. This was all part and parcel of being a female slave. For those women / sisters, the moral demands of the New Testament were even harder to follow then they are now. Yet nowhere do we read of Paul insisting that those women refuse their ‘duties’; he teaches that they should abide in that position, and try as best they can to live by Christian principles. That appears to me to be a concession to weakness and to the huge difficulty those women faced. If God has so repeatedly made concessions to human weakness, allowing us to live below the Biblical ideal of marriage, then we must in some way respond to this in our dealings with our brethren. Somehow we must do this without infringing the need to uphold the Truth of God's commandments.

7:21 *Were you called while a slave? Do not worry, but if you can become free, do so*- Gk. 'use it'. Our marital status at the time of conversion is being spoken of as our calling, as what we were given, one of the talents given to us, in the language of the parable. This thought alone should make whatever situation we are in seem less of a burden; it's part of the gifts, the talents, we were given at baptism. It's for us to work with it. And the same applies, Paul reasons, if you were called to the Truth as a slave. Don't fret about it, it's one of those precious talents of the parable; although naturally in that context, "if thou mayest be made free, *use it*" (7:21 AV)- note the allusion to *using* the talents in the parable. We are inevitably tied down with the things of this life; but if we can be made free, to serve God directly, as usefully as possible, then surely we should seek to do this. Take early retirement. You can chose to remain at work, and of course, you can glorify God. But you can devote your life and free time to the work of the Gospel, and bring dozens to the knowledge of Christ who wouldn’t otherwise have had it. I’d say, and I interpret Paul to say likewise: “If you may be made free, then use it rather”.

We can imagine a group of believing women eagerly listening to Paul’s latest letter being read out in the house church. They heard of how they had been bought with the price of Christ’s blood, that now they were slaves of the Father and Son, that their bodies were truly not their own but *His*. And they would’ve heard how Paul

advised them not to be like other slaves, always dreaming of somehow getting free, but to be content with their situation in which they had been called, to live for the daily joy of being Christ's slave. They were no longer part of the 'household' of their master.

7:22 *For he that was called in the Lord being a slave, is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's slave*- This would have been so liberating for the slaves whose very bodies belonged to their masters. They had been set free. Such freedom or manumission required a large price to be paid, or an extraordinary grace to be shown. And these are all appropriate to the grand metaphor of 'redemption' which is such a major Biblical theme. Many today feel in slavery to family situations, minimum wage employment, or employers who buy the souls of their employees- the school teacher who marks books up to midnight every evening. But we will only feel the freedom if we see life from a spiritual perspective, perceiving the exalted status we have in Christ. And this was what the Corinthians were failing to perceive, as Paul explains in his opening chapters to them.

Although the majority of Corinth ecclesia were poor, there were still some in good standing enough to be invited out to banquets in the course of their business obligations (1 Cor. 8:10; 10:27); and here in chapter 7 we see that some were wealthy enough to consider the economic luxury of divorce. The slave at conversion becomes "the Lord's freedman" and "the free person Christ's slave" (1 Cor. 7:22). Thus this extraordinary unity between social classes was made possible through being "in Christ".

It is unfortunate that most English (and other) translations mask the real force of the Greek words translated 'servant'; for they really mean 'bond-slave', a slave totally owned by his master, totally obedient, totally dedicated to his service. This is the logic brought out in Rom. 6: that before baptism, we were slaves of sin and self. After baptism, we changed masters. We didn't become free, but we became slaves of the Lord Jesus. "He that is called, being free, is the Lord's servant / bond slave" (1 Cor. 7:22). We cannot serve two masters; we are solely His. We are not only slaves, we are slaves whom the Master has come to know as His friends (Jn. 15:15,20). It is a great NT theme that we are the bond slaves of the Lord Jesus.

7:23 *You were bought with a price. Become not slaves of men*- The price paid to buy us out of slavery was the blood of the Lord Jesus. To become slaves again afterwards is therefore an awful ingratitude to Him. We can become slaves by entering into relationships or employment situations which effectively rob us of our mental freedom to serve Him. The metaphor suggests we were bought out of one slavery in order to become freewill slaves of Him who bought us out of our hopeless situation. Paul surely had this metaphor in view earlier in the chapter when he speaks of a believer not being 'in bondage' (:15), not remaining with an unbelieving partner who wants to end the relationship just because they may provide financial security etc. The same argument was deployed in 6:20: "For you were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore in your body and spirit, for they are God's". Here in chapter 7 Paul is demonstrating some practical outworkings of this- in not becoming slaves of men, and managing our personal relationships in a way that enables us to remain God's slaves.

7:24 *Brothers, let each man, wherein he was called, therein stay with God*- This appears to be a repeat of the teaching in :20. But Paul here appears to specifically address males, whereas in this whole section he is careful to address the needs of both

genders. Perhaps he is here alluding to one of the specific questions the Corinthians had written to him (:1).

7:25 *Now concerning virgins*- "Virgins" is clearly a technical term referring to some specific group in the church which we cannot conclusively define. But verses 26-28 appear to be directed specifically to the needs of male believers, as is the preceding :24 (see note there). Perhaps this advice is therefore being given to the fathers of the virgins they intended to marry; although this interpretation becomes problematic in :37 where a man is to not marry his virgin if he himself feels no "necessity". Likewise :28 speaks of a "virgin" woman having the choice to marry or not. However I have argued throughout (especially on chapter 6) that the practices of the surrounding religions had entered the church, and the use of religious prostitutes had done likewise. The virgins in view may refer to the church prostitutes, called "virgins" in the religious cults. Paul encountered the same situation in the church at Ephesus- see my notes on 1 Timothy. He is seeking to reform the situation, and there he advised that those women marry; and he is saying here in Corinth that they should either be celibate, or marry. But he notes that if these virgins marry, the marriage will have "trouble in the flesh" (:28). A woman who had slept with many of the male members of the church was not going to have an easy marriage if she married one of them and remained in the church. This makes to me the best sense of saying that marrying a 'virgin' will bring "trouble in the flesh"; for marriage does not automatically bring trouble in the flesh but in fact very often it results in blessing in the flesh.

I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy- The Lord Jesus had not revealed anything specific to Paul in answer to the question, but He had delegated to Paul the freedom to use his own spiritual reasoning to come up with an answer, and to confirm that opinion as being His. The fact the answer is recorded here as inspired scripture is an indicator that the Lord accepted Paul's opinion as correct and therefore inspired by His Spirit.

7:26 *I think therefore that it is good by reason of the present distress that is upon us, that a man should remain as he is*- "It is good by reason of the present distress" uses the same word as in Lk. 21:23 concerning the distress of the last days. Some of us have no hesitation in proclaiming that the time of "distress" of Lk. 21 is upon us. But if it is, then we need to adjust our marriage attitudes accordingly. But the distress may not refer to Paul's sense that they were living in the last days and would soon face persecution. It could also refer to the distress of the particular situation in the Corinthian church, with brethren using some women in the church as prostitutes. The Greek for "distress" means necessity, and the same word is used in :37 about the man who feels no "necessity" to marry. The present necessity may therefore refer here as it does in :37 to the necessity felt for sexual relations and marriage. Paul would then be saying that despite the necessity that is felt by us all, it is better for a man to remain in the marital situation he is in. And it indeed could be that Paul has in view the expectation of persecution and the imminent return of the Lord.

7:27 *Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife*- The metaphor of binding connects back to how a woman is spoken of as being in bondage to her husband (:15). Paul is indeed emphasizing the existence of 'ties that bind', and is addressing the natural human desire to break free of them. That basic human tendency was being justified in Corinth on the basis of supposed spiritual devotion, with the use of church prostitutes if required- and Paul is arguing strongly against that. The reference to binding and loosing recalls the Lord's

repeated teaching that what we bind or loose on earth is likewise bound or loosed in Heaven (Mt. 16:19; 18:18). It may be that the connection is to warn [and also encourage] that whatever decisions we take about relationships is as it were accepted by God- and we therefore have the greater responsibility. And we are to bear in mind Paul's observation that a woman is bound by law to her husband until death (Rom. 7:2); as well as the clear allusion to the idea of God joining or binding together two people in marriage. To loose that connection, that binding, is to go against God's intention and as it were undo His work.

7:28 *But should you marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh, and I would spare you*- See the discussion of "virgins" on :25. The only one of the alternatives there suggested which consistently makes sense throughout this section on "virgins" is the idea that this is a technical term referring to cult prostitutes, in fact, church prostitutes. I noted on 1 Timothy 3-6 that such were known in the Ephesian church, and we must give full weight to the Lord's reference to a woman in the Thyatiran church teaching others to commit prostitution in that church (Rev. 2:20). As noted on :25, Paul is calling these sisters to repentance, and the brothers who were using them. He is suggesting they do not marry, but if they do then they can, but he suspects that a former prostitute marrying one of her clients is going to be a troublesome relationship in the flesh. Which seems a fair enough practical observation on a psychological and sociological level.

7:29 *But this I say brothers, because the time is shortened, that from this time forward both those that have wives may be as though they had none*- The reference to the shortness of the time suggests that Paul reasoned as if the Lord's coming was imminent. His teaching about singleness could therefore be understood as for one place and at one time; although we are to indeed live our whole lives as if the Lord's coming is imminent. I discussed on :26 the possibility that "the present distress" has a similar reference. Paul has just been arguing that the married state should be continued; but on the other hand, he is now going on to point out that what goes along with married life and domestic issues can easily become an obsession that blunts our awareness that we are to be living as if the Lord's coming is imminent. Our personal relationship with the Lord and eagerness for His coming is to take emotional and psychological precedence in our hearts above literally all else, including our marital status.

The Olivet prophecy spoke of the time being shortened for the elect's sake. And it seems this happened- for 1 Cor. 7:29 says that "the time is shortened". Perhaps this is why it was intended that there be 40 years from AD33 [the crucifixion] to the destruction of the temple; but this period was "shortened" by at least 3 years "for the elect's sake". And the situation in the 1st century is evidently typical of ours today in these last days. They were to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath or in the Winter, i.e. that the abomination that made desolate would not be set up at those times (Mt. 24:20). Clearly prayer affected the exact chronology of events and thereby the fulfilment of prophecy.

"As though they had none" may be alluding to Abraham and Isaac in time of persecution.

7:30 *Those that weep, as though they wept not, those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy, as though they possessed not*- The weeping may refer in this marital context to those weeping during the process of bereavement, marital breakup or in desperation at their single state; the rejoicing may refer to those rejoicing in marriage, and the buying to paying a bride price. If indeed the talk about

'giving virgins' refers to fathers giving their daughters away in marriage, then 'buying' would be appropriate to men getting married. But buying, selling and giving in marriage is the Lord's language for the world of Noah's day who represented the world's state on the eve of the Lord's return (Mt. 24:38,39). There was nothing intrinsically immoral in anything they were doing; the issue was that they became obsessed with these matters of daily life and ignored their relationship with God.

In the context of writing about the approaching end of the age, Paul commented that because “the form of this world is passing away”, therefore those who buy anything should “be as though they had no goods, and those who deal with this world as though they had no dealings with it”. This was taught millennia ago by the Mosaic law of Jubilee- that whatever land you bought wasn’t really yours, because the land is God’s. And again, we are not to be “anxious”, because “the Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5). And there’s nothing like managing our “wealth”, however small it may be, to make us “anxious”. Paul’s not saying we shouldn’t buy, sell or ‘deal with this world’. He’s saying we should do so *as if* we’re not really doing so, as if this is all an act, a sleepwalk, something we do but our heart isn’t in it. See on James 5:3. We should consider what we buy as not really being possessed by us. Paul practiced what he preached: although he evidently had some financial resources (Acts 24:26), he acted and felt as if he possessed absolutely nothing (2 Cor. 6:10).

7:31- see on 1 Cor. 9:18.

And those that use the world, as not using it to the full. For the fashion of this world passes away- Marriage and all that goes with it is a using of the world. But we are not to be obsessed with these matters of human existence, learning the lesson from the world of Noah's day. We are not to use the Lord's concessions to our humanity "to the full" in becoming obsessed with them. "The fashion of this world", the external condition [Gk.], shall pass away. Whilst essential relationships between persons shall eternally remain, all else, including marriage, shall pass away. And we are to set our hearts on those things which are eternal. The present tense "is passing away" reflects Paul's sense of the closeness of the Lord's coming; and John uses the same words in saying that this world with all its desires, including for marital relationships, passes away (1 Jn. 2:17). The world and all in it has the semblance of permanence; but this too shall pass. Truly the things that are seen are temporal, and only the unseen things are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

The GNB is powerful here: "What I mean, my friends, is this: there is not much time left, and from now on married people should live as though they were not married; those who weep, as though they were not sad; those who laugh, as though they were not happy; those who buy, as though they did not own what they bought; those who deal in material goods, as though they were not fully occupied with them" (1 Cor. 7:29-31). The Greek word for "fashion" 'passing away' is the language of the theatre, 'the scenery', whereby scenes and stage props and background are changed to presents a totally different appearance. This world is just a stage at the theatre, with the props and scenery just passing away and not the actual reality that they represent. Paul has the same image in 1 Cor. 4:9 "we are made a spectacle [on a stage] to the world, both to angels and men". The idea is as in Ps. 73:20 GNB "They are like a dream that goes away in the morning; when you rouse yourself, O Lord, they disappear". "The morning" is the day when the Lord Jesus shall arise as the dawn (Mal. 4:2). All of human experience will then be revealed as a momentary dream, their "image" (AV) will change. We must realize that our current experience, of unfairness and injustice, is in fact not reality. It is a dream, a fantasy world. The reality is life with God and His eternal Kingdom. Ps. 39:6 has the same idea: "Surely

every man walks like a shadow", like an image that is not the reality. The call of true Christianity is to be a radical realist, to live life as it truly is and as it will eternally be.

7:32 *But I would have you to be free of worries*- Using the same word as in the parable of the sower, which warns that "cares of this world" choke spiritual growth (Mt. 13:22); and we note Paul has just spoken of marriage as being one of the things of "this world". The same word is used several times by the Lord in urging us to live a life free of care- and Paul saw the danger of domestic life becoming an obsession which led us to disobey that keynote teaching of Christianity.

He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord- This is not true for all unmarried people, indeed most young single people are 'careful' for the things related to finding a partner. So I suggest that as with "virgins", Paul is using a technical term, in this case for those who have vowed to remain single for the Lord's service and who therefore don't concern themselves with domestic and romantic matters. And this seems to be what Paul wishes for them. But they are not achieve it through using church prostitutes to relieve their human desires.

7:33 *But he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may please his wife*- Paul seems to be stating the exaggerated case to make a point; for not literally all married believers are divided between their partner and the Lord. This surely is the whole point of Christian marriage; to love and relate to our partners as service and love towards the Lord. So perhaps as in 14:1-4 and elsewhere, Paul is not making a global statement but is rather describing how things are in practice on the ground in the Corinthian church. The married were divided between care for their partners, and devotion to the Lord Jesus. But that was not how things should have been. Paul understood 'pleasing' in two senses. On one hand, he did not please men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4); on another hand, he pleased all men in all things in his efforts to bring them to Christ (1 Cor. 10:33). The same word is used. We can do what is spiritually nice / good / pleasurable for others- but without seeking to please them "in the flesh", as men pleasers. So here in 1 Cor. 7:33 he seems to mean that the married were pleasing their partners "in the flesh", rather than in the Spirit. And this was the whole problem at Corinth, as introduced in the very first chapter; they were of the flesh and not the spirit. I would therefore conclude that this verse 33 is a lament over how things were in their Corinthian marriages, rather than a global statement about the nature of marriage.

7:34 *And is divided*- As noted on :33, such division is not inevitable for the married believer, and I gave reasons to think that Paul is lamenting the situation in Corinth rather than making global statements about how all married believers are in their hearts.

Also the woman that is unmarried or betrothed is anxious about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit- The Greek translated "betrothed" is the word for "virgin" used earlier. Paul is saying that this is how a "virgin" should be if indeed she had undertaken not to marry; but instead, the "virgins" at Corinth as in Ephesus (see notes on 1 Tim. 3) had indeed promised to remain single, as did the cultic virgins of the shrines, but they were being used as church prostitutes. Genuine devotion to the Lord required a holiness of body and spirit which a prostitute could not have. It was in this very context of church prostitution that Paul had appealed for a glorifying of God in body and spirit, seeing they were the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:20). This is a strong connection, and it confirms us in understanding the unmarried and "virgin" as technical terms referring to those functioning as church prostitutes.

He encourages these particular unmarried women to stay single so that they can devote themselves to spiritual matters. In the surrounding Jewish culture, the unmarried woman was seen as a reproach. In the local Greco-Roman culture, the unmarried woman would have been perceived as an immoral woman, or one morally disgraced. Regardless of the surrounding perceptions, Paul spoke forth the Spirit's guidance.

But she that is married is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband- Again, this is far from a global description of every married woman. It is rather a description of how things were in Corinth. See on 'pleasing' on :33.

7:35 *And this I say for your own profit*- Gk. 'coming together'. The way to helpful unity within the church was to take Paul's advice. Using some sisters as church prostitutes, walking away from marital intimacy etc., was all sure to provoke a situation where the church was not functioning as intended.

Not that I may cast a snare upon you, but so you may do what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction- There is an allusion here to Mary and Martha. "Serve" literally means 'to sit beside'; it isn't the usual word for 'service'. The allusion would be to Mary sitting at the Lord's feet. And "distraction" translates the word which is only found elsewhere in the NT in Lk. 10:40, where Martha is cumbered or distracted with her domestic matters. Martha's distraction by domestic matters is being held up as a warning; there was nothing wrong in preparing food, it was the obsessive focus upon it which was wrong. We note in passing how saturated Paul was with the Gospel records. We who live in an age of such convenient access to them ought to be likewise if we are truly Christ-centred.

7:36 *But if anyone thinks that he behaves himself inappropriately toward his betrothed, if she be past the flower of her age, and if need so requires, let him do what he will. He sins not. Let them marry*- I have suggested earlier that the "virgin" (NEV "betrothed"- which is an interpretation rather than translation] refers to church prostitutes. But "his" virgin would suggest that the Corinthians were asking about male believers who regularly used the same woman, and she was now ageing. Paul considers that it would not be wrong for the brother to marry the woman in this case. The grammar here makes it very difficult to read the male in view as the father of the "virgin"; for he is to marry her.

7:37 *But he that stands steadfast in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desires under control, and has determined this in his heart, to remain betrothed; he shall do well*- "To remain betrothed" is literally as in AV "to keep his virgin". "Keep" can mean to financially keep. Perhaps the brother in view considered that despite having used the sister as a church prostitute repeatedly over a period of time, he would not marry her but would financially support her in her old age. The idea of remaining perpetually betrothed doesn't really make sense nor does it seem appropriate. And if we read this as referring to the father of an unmarried young virgin refusing to give her in marriage, then it would not be appropriate to write that his decision was because of his personal control of his sexual desires. The idea that the "virgin" refers to a believing woman who had formerly been used as a church prostitute seems to me the only approach which is workable in all the references to "virgin" here in this passage.

7:38 *So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better*- By speaking of marriage as 'doing well', Paul clearly is not against marriage. But he sees different levels of response to Divine principles- one choice may be "better" than another. And this is how things are with so many issues

of spiritual life; and if we love the Lord we will seek to serve Him on the highest level we can. The choice of levels is surely to elicit in us the desire at least to serve on the highest level.

7:39 *A wife is bound for as long as her husband lives; but if the husband dies she is free to be married to whoever she chooses*- Paul in this chapter has spoken of marriage in the same language as slavery, because he sees both of those institutions as examples of the 'ties that bind' which a believer finds themselves in, or not in, at baptism. And the status is to be seen as a gift from God. This verse is it seems another answer to a specific question about widows. "Whoever she chooses" was a radical thing to say in first century society, where marriage was thought appropriate only between those of the same ethnic or social background. But the new community in Christ featured radical bonding between all groups. There was also doubtless the expectation that elderly widows should remain single in respect to their deceased husbands, and again Paul cuts right across such traditions.

Paul's teaching that remarriage could only take place after the death of the first partner (1 Cor.7:39; Rom.7:1-8) actually elevated the status of women compared to what it was in the local culture. He can hardly be accused of being a woman hater, in the light of this; nor is he giving commandments regarding the place of women which only fitted in with the local culture. Immorality, particularly in terms of temple prostitution, was so widespread that it is hard for us to appreciate the radicalness of Paul's insistence on absolute faithfulness to one's partner.

But only in the Lord- This is alluding back to the command to Zelophehad's daughters to marry "whom they think best", but only "in" their tribe, otherwise they would lose the inheritance (Num. 36:6,7). The implication is that those who do not marry "in the Lord" will likewise lose their promised inheritance. And this rather strange allusion indicates one more thing: the extent of the seriousness of marriage out of the Faith is only evident to those who search Scripture deeply. As man and woman within Israel were joint heirs of the inheritance, so man and wife are joint heirs of the inheritance of the Kingdom (1 Pet. 3:7).

7:40 *But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I am certain that I also have the Spirit of God*- We noted earlier that Paul says that his judgment was confirmed by the Spirit. He was free to make his judgment on matters that were without direct guidance from the Lord's own recorded teaching; but his judgment was confirmed by the Lord.

That Paul should encourage single converts to remain single unto the Lord Jesus may seem a tall order, especially as he is making this challenge to a church who were so seriously immature. But consider the expectations on the early converts:
- Converts joyfully selling all their lands and property, pooling the money, and dividing it among the poorer members. Yet we can scarcely raise the money to pay for poorer brethren to attend a Bible School.
- Husbands and wives regularly abstaining from sex so they could the more intensely pray and fast for a period of several days. Surveys of Christian prayer habits reveal that on average we spend around 10 minutes / day praying. And scarcely any fast.
- Elders who spent so much time in prayer that they had to ask others to do some practical work for them so they could continue to give the same amount of time to prayer (Acts 6:2-4).
- Young brethren, "the messenger of the churches", who spent their lives full time running errands in dangerous situations throughout the known world.

- Over zealous brethren (in Thessalonica) who packed up their jobs because they were so sure the second coming was imminent.
- The expectation that the Gospel of Mark (at least) was to be memorized by all converts. Most Christians can scarcely quote more than 50 Bible verses- after generations of Bible study in our community.
- The assumption that all believers would make converts (1 Cor. 3:10-15).
- Believers were regularly persecuted, tortured, imprisoned and forced to migrate long distances unless they made what some today would consider only a tokenistic denial of their faith.

We have somehow hived off the first century church in our mind, as if to say to ourselves: 'Well, that was them, but we're in a totally different spiritual environment'. The same mind-set occurs when we consider the zeal of earlier believers. There is no doubt that the more we read the New Testament, the more we will see that the level of intended commitment required was high indeed. The fact many failed to rise up to it doesn't affect this. That single converts were expected to remain single would not therefore have appeared so strange, once the spiritual context of the New Testament church is perceived.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

8:1 *Now concerning things sacrificed to idols. We know that we all have knowledge; yet knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*- Paul's whole position about meat offered to idols reflects the fact that he recognised that there would be some believers who still could not escape the sense that the idol is really something to be feared, that in some sense it is alive and accepting the sacrifice offered to it, even though the believer in the other half of his brain knew full well that idols are nothing and there is only one true God. We *all know this*, Paul reasons, and yet some still can't escape their sense that the idol is there, and that if they eat meat offered to it they are fellowshipping with it, even though it doesn't exist. Our tendency would be to be hard on such a person, insisting that they cannot worship the true God and yet also have this sense of the idol. And yet Paul knew that there is a dualism within each of us; we can still have a sense of the false even whilst we believe the true. And the Lord is more gracious than many of us seem to be to this feature of our nature.

It is hard to piece together what was really going on in the politics of the early church, because Paul seems to have submitted to their wishes apart from where essential principle was concerned. Luke in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 make the record sound so positive- as if the conference in Jerusalem solved all the problems, even though it is clear that it didn't, and the Gentile believers were still classed as second rate. It was after this that Paul wrote here: "As touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (AV). This sounds like an allusion to the agreements hammered out at Jerusalem-'we all know what was agreed', Paul seems to be saying. There was nothing wrong in itself with the compromises agreed. But it was love that edifies, not a legalistic use of those decrees as 'knowledge'. It all sounds as if there was joy at the conversion of the Gentiles, even though there was "much disputing" about it. And yet it is observable that the whole Acts record doesn't reflect the spirit of controversy and struggle against apostasy which the epistles so insistently reflect. Paul didn't protest being told not to teach Jews by his brethren- but he got on and did so. It was not knowledge of intellectual truth alone which justifies a person- for we know so pitifully little anyway

(:2). It is doing what is best for the building up of others, in the spirit of love. Those who so love the idea of 'saving truth' need to remember this; for truth, no matter how pure, will not save of itself. As Fred Pearce remarked many years ago, "It is not an inspired Bible which will save you, but faith in the blood of Christ and God's grace".

8:2 *If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he does not know anything as he ought to know*- This sounds like another of the allusions to Job (here to 26:14) in the New Testament- particularly once it is realized that 1 Corinthians has several other Job allusions. "Thinks" is literally to show, to account, to have reputation. We *all* have knowledge (:1)- not just some would be leader who says he has it. And anyway, it's not about knowledge- it's about whether God knows *us* in that we are in relationship with Him because we love Him (:3). This is the *knowledge* required., and it was this knowledge which was lacking in those who thought that their academic knowledge was what ought to make them be held in high repute. This is the force of the person thinking / showing / reputing that he 'had knowledge'. "As he ought to know" is an aorist really meaning 'as he ought to come to know'. It is the knowing of relationship which is in view, the process of knowing- and this is developed in the next verse. Their knowledge was just facts; Is. 28:13 speaks exactly to this problem by rebuking Israel for having no relationship with God but rather just treating His word as "line upon line, here a little and there a little... precept [concept] upon concept". And this is how so much Bible study has been for many. They have glorified it in itself, and have apparently not come to spiritual relationship with God.

8:3 *But if anyone loves God*- This alludes to the first commandment, to love God; and the Lord assures us that this still stands for His people today. The idea of loving God was used in a similar context earlier, in 1 Cor. 2:9, in arguing that human knowledge and learning will not lead us to real faith and relationship with God; but the spiritually minded "love God" and so have His Son revealed to them by the Spirit.

The same is known by Him- See on :2. Here we have the same tension between love and knowledge which was introduced in :1. But there is a nuance; for God to know *us* means that He is in relationship with us, and we on our part love Him. It is for us to love Him; it is for Him to know us. This stands as a caveat to our rightful emphasis upon the need to correctly know doctrine about God. Isaac Newton remarked that he was only gathering pebbles on the shore of the ocean of truth. Truly "How little a portion is heard of Him" (Job 26:14). In other words, we will never know God to perfection in this life; but what we can be sure of and rejoice in is that *He knows us*. Paul almost implies that we can easily forget this wondrous fact, because of our obsession with wanting to fully know about *Him*. It was this emphasis upon relationship with God which had been missed by the Corinthians, for they did not have the Spirit (3:1) and were therefore left with only technical knowledge of Him. And that can be so with those who pride themselves on being 'Bible students' and yet resist the entrance and leading of the Spirit, and despise the idea of 'relationship with God' as being nebulous and not really what they think their religion is all about.

Paul will later remark that the Corinthians are living in sin because they do not have the knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34). "The knowledge of God" is an ambiguous genitive, meaning both 'our knowing about God' and 'God's knowing of us'. It is mutual relationship which is the intention of Christianity and the person of the Lord Jesus, through whom this "knowledge of God" is mediated.

8:4 *Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol has real existence and there is no God but one*- "We know" must be read in the context of what has been noted on 'knowledge' in :1-3. The technical knowledge was

that there is one God and therefore idols have no real existence as gods. But Paul is going to go on to reason about how that knowledge should be used in love in practice. 'Idol' and 'God' are placed in antithesis because idols were seen as the representations of living gods behind them, somewhere out in the cosmos. The implications of there being one God is that such beings have no real existence. Note that Paul has just alluded to the commandment to love God (:3), and here he alludes to the commandment that "God is one". The Lord Jesus likewise quoted those two commandments as being effectively one commandment (Mk. 12:31). Paul had truly meditated upon the Lord's teaching and absorbed it to such an extent that it is everywhere part of his own reasoning and logical process. In this alone he sets us a great example. Eating was understood in first century religious terms as an act of fellowship with others. Hence the anger with the Lord for breaking His bread and sharing His table with anyone whom He could urge to sit down with Him. To eat food sacrificed to idols was felt to be a sign of fellowship with the god whom that idol represented. The food was freighted with such significance in the eyes of those who lived in that worldview. But belief in one God meant that this was not to be the mindset of Christians.

8:5 *For though there are those called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords many*- As noted on :4, the idols were "those called gods" in that they represented them. The location of the supposed gods represented varied- some were thought to be on earth, others "in heaven". Those entities supposed to be represented by the idols were 'gods' and 'lords'. These were two different categories; and the difference is reflected in the next verse, which states that we have only one God, the Father, and one Lord- Jesus.

8:6 *To us there is only one God*- See on :5. The denarius of Tiberius which Jesus used bore the words: *Tiberius CAESAR DIVI AUGusti Filius AUGUSTUS Pontifex Maximus*. Caesar was to be seen as the Son of God. The Lord Jesus was the *only, and begotten* Son of God. The implication is that no other 'son of God' was *begotten* as Jesus was- He was the *real* Son of God, the one and only (Jn. 1:14,18; 3:16,18). Caesar was to be worshipped as God (see L.R. Taylor, *The Divinity Of The Roman Emperor*). Julius Caesar was known as Divus Julius after his death; indeed, many of the Caesars were held to have 'resurrected' to heaven and been granted Divine status. "To *us* [and this is the emphasis] there is only one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:4-6) takes on a vital radicality in the light of this. As does NT teaching about His resurrection and subsequent Divine glorification.

The Father, of whom are all things and we are everything to Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, for the sake of whom are all things, and we exist for His sake- "All things" have one source; whereas the pagans considered that the various gods were each responsible for different aspects of life. Earlier in this section, Paul has spoken of how we know God and He knows us. This idea of relationship is continued here; we are for His sake, and He is for our sake. All things are of Him, and we are all things ["everything"] to Him. His focus upon us His people is challenging indeed. All things are for our sakes (2 Cor. 4:15). We are all things to Him. This gives a window onto the question of other creations, both now and within infinite time and space. Even the Angels are for our sakes, and are in that sense inferior to us in ultimate terms, according to the reasoning of Hebrews 1 and 2. The focus of the Father is in His only begotten Son, and thereby upon all who are in Him.

8:7 *However there is not in all men that knowledge, but some being used until now to the idol, eat things sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled*- This is a description of how things were in reality within the "all men" of the

Corinthian church. Not all had the knowledge; yet in :1 Paul says that they did all have knowledge. He is again playing on the difference between theoretical knowledge, and the spiritual knowing of relationship. Indeed he opened the letter in chapter 1 by doing the same; likewise, they all had the Spirit, and yet they were not spiritual (3:1). They knew God on one hand, but on another they had not the knowledge of God in real spiritual terms (15:34). It was because of this lack of knowledge as it was meant to be, that their conscience was defiled. They thought the gods really existed, because their 'knowledge' that God is one didn't translate into knowledge as knowledge is meant to be. When they ate the food offered to idols, they did so as a real act of fellowship with those supposed gods; the act of eating their food was understood by them in their conscience as meaning that those gods existed, and they were in fellowship with them. Despite this 'weakness', Paul speaks so often of the need to care for the "weak" (s.w.) and retain them within the Lord's body, and to become weak that we might save these weak ones (1 Cor. 9:22; 11:30; 12:22). Without doubt, Paul's approach was to preach the Gospel, get people baptized into Christ whether by his hands or others, and then tolerate their weakness of understanding and moral behaviour whilst making every effort to teach them further and correct them. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of many today.

When dealing with the problem of fornication, Paul doesn't directly appeal to any legal code, not even the ten commandments, nor the agreement at the Council of Jerusalem, because he was appealing for life to be lived according to the spirit rather than any law. Likewise when writing about meat offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8, he could so easily have appealed to the agreements made at the Council as recorded in Acts 15. But he doesn't. For love's sake he appeals. He asks them "judge ye what I say", he seeks for them to live a way of life, rather than obey isolated commandments as a burden to be borne. It is simply so that brethren and sisters, men and women, prefer simple yes / no commandments rather than an appeal to a way of life. In those communities and fellowships where everything is reduced to a mere allowed / not allowed, there tends to be less internal division than if it is taught that life must be lived by principles. Paul was smart enough to know this, especially with his background in legalism. And yet he chose not to lay the law down with Corinth; instead he appealed to a spirit of life, even though he must have foreseen the strife that would come of it.

8:8 *But food will not commend us to God. Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. Nor, if we eat, are we the better*- The earlier section in this chapter has spoken of how the critical issue is relationship with God and not technical knowledge. Attitudes to food likewise will not commend us to God. The issue is not about whether to eat idol food or not- Paul will go on to explain that the question is all about love. He introduced the whole section by contrasting knowledge which puffs up with the love which builds up (8:1); and that building up is of others through our sensitivities to them and their weaknesses. Note how Paul uses the same word for "commend" in saying that we shall be 'presented' without fault to God at the last day (2 Cor. 4:14; 11:2; Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22). That spotless presentation is by grace; it's nothing to do with whether we were ritually defiled or not by food. That itself is a mere technicality.

8:9 *But take heed, lest by any means this freedom of yours becomes a stumblingblock to the weak*- It wasn't a question of who was technically right or wrong on the issue of idol food. It was a question of having the love which builds up others, by not being a stumbling block to them; rather than who had the technical knowledge. This is one of several passages which warn us not to make the weak to

stumble. But none of those passages actually says that we can know *who* is weak. What they are saying is that in God's eyes, there are weak members amongst every group of believers, and therefore we should watch our behaviour, because it will have an effect upon whoever is weak. But this doesn't mean that *we* actually know who the weak ones are. Because we don't know who is especially weak we must always be careful in our behaviour, *whoever* we are with. Indeed we have to adopt the perspective that in a sense we are *all* weak. To understand 1 Cor. 8:9, we must understand what it means to be weak. The Greek word translated "weak" here usually means one of two things: physical illness, or spiritual weakness. Sometimes these two senses are combined (e.g. when James speaks of praying for the "sick" brother, or when Jesus talks of how pleased he was that brethren had visited the "sick" brother in Mt. 25:36). Paul often uses the word in his letters to Corinth. He says that we are *all* weak because of our natures (1 Cor. 15:43), and that Christ died on account of the fact that we are weak (2 Cor. 13:4 Gk.). Because of this, Paul reasons, we're all weak, because Christ died for every one of us. He therefore says that to sin against a weak brother is to sin against Christ; because Christ has associated himself with our spiritual weakness, in order to save us from it (1 Cor. 8:12). Thus he says that when we visit a weak brother (spiritually? it's the same word), we visit *Him*. He so closely associates himself with the weak brother. Christ on the cross carried the sins of "the weak" (i.e. all of us), and thereby left us an example of how we should behave towards the "weak". In this context, Paul says that we should likewise love our neighbour (in the ecclesia; Rom. 15:1-4). What he seems to be saying is that we should understand that we are *all* weak, and therefore try to help each other, in the same spirit as Christ died for the weakness of each of us. If we recognize that we are *all* weak, we'll avoid two common mistakes: 1) Thinking that some brethren aren't weak and should therefore be followed blindly; and 2) Thinking that some believers are "weak" whilst the rest of us are "strong". Paul didn't want the Corinth ecclesia to think he was wagging the finger at them and implying: 'You lot are so weak, but I'm strong'. Several times he speaks of his own weakness, and he glories in the fact that although he is so (spiritually) weak, God works through him so mightily; indeed, he comes to the conclusion that God's strength is perfectly expressed through his spiritual weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5,9,10). He says that he preached to Corinth in the first place in (spiritual) "weakness" (1 Cor. 2:3)- because it seems that when he first got to Corinth, he wasn't spiritually strong enough to grasp the nettle of witnessing to the city as he should have done (Acts 18:9,10). Having admitted to Corinth that he himself was weak, he can say that whenever one of them is weak, he feels weak too; in other words he's saying that he can totally empathize (not just sympathize) with a weak brother's feelings (2 Cor. 11:29).

8:10- see on 1 Cor. 8:9; 11:3.

For if a man sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be encouraged to eat things sacrificed to idols?- Paul may mean this as a hypothetical case; the believer who knows for sure there is only one God could sit and eat at an idol sacrifice, seeing the food as just food and nothing else; and do nothing technically wrong. But by doing so, he would encourage the weaker brother to eat just the same food but as an act of fellowship with the false gods of paganism. But it might also be that the Corinthians were so weak that despite their knowledge of the one God and rejection of the existence of other gods, they still ate in the idol's temple. Interestingly, Paul doesn't criticize them for doing this itself; rather he reasons more subtly that by doing so, they were leading weaker Christians into sin. Later on he will argue that one cannot eat at the Lord's table and at the table of idols:

"You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21). But at this point in 8:10, Paul is saying that one can literally eat food there, if this is not a participation, an active fellowshipping, with the idol. But externally, eating food at the idol's table looked as if they were partaking with the idol / demon. Paul recognized that two men can do the same thing externally and yet understand it quite differently in their hearts. But the problem is that the external behaviour can lead the weaker brother into sin in their heart, or as Paul has put it, "their conscience is defiled".

Our example- and let's not forget, we all set an example of one sort or another- will either edify others towards righteousness, or "encourage" [AV "embolden"] our weaker brother to sin (1 Cor. 8:1,10). We 'edify' others in only one of two directions; this is the point behind Paul using the same Greek word in both verses.

8:11 *For through your knowledge he that is weak perishes, the brother for whose sake Christ died*- This has been the whole theme of the section- knowledge as knowledge alone puffs up, but love builds up. Indeed, possession of knowledge, of 'truth' in this sense, can actually destroy others when that truth is used irresponsibly. And we likewise have all seen this kind of thing happen in conservative church life. We can build others up and we can also cause them to "perish", and thus the death of Christ is made in vain for that brother- thanks to our selfish attitude to the truths we possess by grace. Knowledge or truth of itself cannot just be insisted upon in a vacuum. We are not to shrug and say that "Well that's their fault, his problem, her lack of faith" because an individual weaker in faith and understanding is made to stumble by our indulgence in "truth". This is like the weak Corinthians who believed in 'gods out there' behind the idols being led to worship them- all by observing their 'stronger' brethren flaunting the truth / knowledge they held, in their freedom to eat idol food.

8:12- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

And thus, sinning against the believers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ- Christ is His body; to persecute His brethren is to persecute Him, to sin against them is to sin against Him. Paul had learnt this principle through reflection on his own sins against Christ insofar as He sinned against His brethren by persecuting them. Even the very weakest, those who still felt the gods existed, are called "believers" and are seen as members of the body of Christ, and as members to whom the Lord Jesus is particularly sensitive. Clearly the scope of acceptance into the body of Christ [which is achieved by baptism] is far wider than many think. Likewise the tolerance is far broader; for our inclination would be to tell those who believe in pagan gods to get out of the church. But Paul doesn't take that approach, indeed in chapter 12 he will argue that the presence of these "weak" within the body is the more necessary for us who consider ourselves strong. The word for "wounding" is used about the servant "beating" the fellow servant (Mt. 24:49; Lk. 12:45). This 'beating' can be done through selfishly indulging in our own truth and knowledge in a way which spiritually damages others. This is the way God looks upon the commonly held idea that "It's OK in *my* conscience". That is not quite the point, as Paul will later develop in chapter 10. The parable of the fellow servant refers specifically to the situation at the Lord's coming. Paul's vision of the latter day ecclesia was therefore that materialistic elders would act with no thought as to their effect on the consciences of the flock, and thereby many would stumble.

8:13 *Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh again, so that I do not cause my brother to stumble*- The eating of food referred to is specifically eating food offered to idols, perhaps even more specifically- eating it in

the idol temple itself (:10). Paul is obviously aware here of the Lord's strict words for those who make their brother stumble. They shall be treated as Babylon, and cast into the depths of the sea. To not make others stumble must therefore be a paramount consideration. A closed table approach, ever censuring others for their failures and barring them from the Lord's table, seems to me a sure way to make others stumble- and it has done so in so many cases. We must give more weight to the Lord's words and to Paul's teaching here. It's not about me, my conscience, my knowledge, my truth. It's all about attitudes to the weak and not making them stumble.

The AV and some MSS add that Paul would not eat food "while the world standeth"- This could be hyperbole concerning how serious he was, or he could be saying he would not eat such food until the Jewish Law, which was intrinsically part of the Jewish world, was fully done away with in AD70. Col. 2:22 says that the using of the (Mosaic) laws "are to perish" - in the future, i.e. AD70.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

9:1 *Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my works in the Lord?*- The preceding chapter has spoken of how although we are 'free' to eat idol food, we should not do so for the sake of the weaker others. Now Paul starts to appropriate those principles to himself on a more personal level. Just as their liberty / freedom could cause others to stumble (8:9), so Paul too is "free" but he doesn't use that freedom, nor his authority, in a way which might make them stumble. He had authority / power over them- he had seen Jesus, been commissioned by Him as an apostle, and although he had not baptized many of them, they were his spiritual children and the result of his work for them. But he likewise would not use that power in a way which was harmful for them spiritually- as he has been expounding in chapter 8. This principle of not abusing power, knowledge and truth needs to be programmatic in our lives.

9:2 *If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord*- Paul repeatedly speaks of his authority over the Corinthians because he has been the source of their conversion to Christ. He claims to be their spiritual father, and they were his "work" in the Lord (:1) and the proof in fact that he is an apostle to them. And yet he is clear in chapter 1 that he baptized very few of them. We could infer from this that he had preached to them and taught them, but had been careful to get others to perform the baptisms. We could also infer that since he had left Corinth, there had been relatively few baptisms by anyone else; unless we are to understand the entire correspondence as being addressed only to those within the church whom he counted as 'his work'. But that seems unlikely and there is no hint of that being the case. The "others" who didn't count Paul as an apostle would presumably be other purportedly Christian teachers who had visited Corinth and sought to poison them against Paul by claiming he was not in fact an apostle. This would presumably refer to the Jewish satan, an organized attempt to undo and discredit Paul's work in every church he founded. And this would explain the hints we have that Corinth had been troubled by Judaizers. Paul claims the very fact the Corinthians were his converts was evidence enough that he had been 'sent' to them and was indeed therefore their 'sent one' or apostle. Whilst we are not apostles in the sense that Paul specifically was, it remains true that those who bring others to Christ have some authority over them and should be afforded appropriate respect throughout their spiritual journey.

9:3 *My defence to them that examine me is this*- This is language from the courtroom. The Corinthians had written to Paul and he is replying; and they had included the criticisms which had been made of Paul. Yet Paul almost revels in such legal language elserwhere, especially in his letter to the Romans. His idea is that because we have appeared before God's throne and been justified, leaving no outstanding accusation against us, we are free from accusation altogether. And yet he here does make a response to the criticisms. Whether or not to respond to criticism is always a hard choice. Paul's major argument was quite simply that he had brought the Corinthians to Christ. To argue about whether he had been sent to them as an apostle was academic. We likewise should seek to answer criticism by appealing to mega principles, rather than arguing about details. The fruit of a person's life work in the Lord is what is important, and not carping criticisms rooted in personality issues.

It was the Jews and their "false brethren" who infiltrated the ecclesias (Gal. 2:4), and who were responsible for the deaths of many of the first century apostles and prophets. This suggests that the circumcision party within the ecclesias was linked with the Roman and Jewish authorities, and therefore 'satan' is a term used for them all. It got beyond dirty politics in the church. This would explain why Paul uses legal language in describing his conflicts with the Judaizing element in Corinth: "My defence [*apologia*, a technical legal term] to those [in the ecclesia] who examine me [another legal term, *anakrinein*]…" (1 Cor. 9:3). The false teachers were taking the likes of Paul before the civil authorities- they were hand in glove. Rev. 17 and 18 describes 'Babylon' as the system which was responsible for these deaths. Whatever other interpretation we may give these chapters (and I would agree there is a strong similarity with the evils of the Roman Catholic church), it cannot be denied that they are full of reference to Old Testament passages concerning Jerusalem, the Jews, and the temple, which became a spiritual Babylon. I suggest that it was from within the Jerusalem ecclesia, linked up as it was with the temple system and Roman authorities, that there came much of the persecution of the early church. And this is why 'Babylon' in its first century application refers to these things.

9:4 *Have we no right to eat and to drink?*- Paul had authority to ask the Corinthians to provide him with food and drink, basic sustenance. But "we did not use this right" (:12). He had the right- but didn't use it. It seems he was put in a position where he had to be wrong; if he didn't claim basic sustenance, then apparently he was not an apostle, because in first century terms, a teacher had authority to require his keep from his converts. And if he didn't ask for it- then he was not really a legitimate teacher. And yet if Paul had made use of this right, he would have been accused of profiteering. This idea of having the possibility of using concessions but choosing not to is of course exactly what he has just been talking about in the context of marriage and eating idol meat.

9:5 *Have we no right to lead a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*- Singleness was not respected in first century society. A religious leader ought to be married- As with the matter of asking for material support, whatever Paul did in the marital area was likewise going to be criticized. He has explained in chapter 7 that marriage is permissible, but he invites single converts to try following his own example of singleness in order to do the Lord's work. But religious leaders were expected to be married. We can quite imagine the likely gossip this created- that perhaps Paul was gay, or a womanizer with multiple casual relationships. If indeed as a Sanhedrin member, Paul had once been married, we can imagine how that fact would be distorted. He indeed had the "right" to be married to a believer, and to lead her with him around his missionary circuits.

As, he says, Peter and the other apostles did. We note he mentions Peter separately, a reflection of the huge respect he had for him. Indeed in the commentary on Acts I have suggested Paul was almost obsessed with Peter and pretended to him. The respect of the intellectual Jerusalem rabbi for illiterate fisherman Peter is quite the lesson in respect within the body of Christ. We note too that the Lord's brothers, who were once so against Him, became leading missionaries in the early church. Paul had a "right" or "power" (*exousia*) to be married; but he did not use that power / right, just as he has been explaining in previous chapters that we are not to use power or knowledge just because we have it, but should seek above all the building up of others to God's glory. And that is the principle we are to take away from this.

"To lead a wife" is literally, to lead around. See on Acts 9:43. It is perhaps significant, given the theme of 'following' in the records of Peter, that he became well known for 'leading about' his wife, as if she followed him everywhere. Peter translated the principles of following Christ into domestic life. There was a time when he may well have 'forsaken' his wife in order to follow Christ (Mt. 19:27-29). But further down that path of following he came to see that as he was to follow his Lord to the end, so he was to be as the self-crucifying Christ to her, and lead her in her following of him that she might follow Christ.

9:6 *Or are Barnabas and I the only ones who have a right not to have to work for a living?*- Paul likewise did not *have* to work as a tentmaker. But he did; he chose a higher level for the sake of others. The point was that other apostles made use of such a concession; but the fact Paul didn't laid him open to criticism. But whichever way, he was going to be condemned by his critics.

9:7 *What soldier ever serves at his own expense?*- Paul used the metaphor of soldiery in explaining to Timothy the discipline required in missionary work. He saw his work for the converts as having fought for them, risking his life to liberate them in Christ. He could be implying that he in his case had done this work "t his own expense"; for clearly Paul at times did have access to funds. He lived in his own hired house in Rome, and was thought wealthy enough to possibly pay a bribe for his early release from prison in Jerusalem. And yet perhaps Paul is overstating his case here, as he does at times; for in 2 Cor. 11:8 he admits he took material help from other churches whilst ministering at Corinth, so as not to ask them for money.

Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who feeds a flock and does not drink the milk of the flock?- Although he had not baptized many of them, Paul saw the Corinthian church as a vineyard he had planted. They were a flock he had fed; and so he could have legitimately asked for something material from them in return. The One who planted a vineyard and got no fruit alludes to the parable of the wicked husbandmen. God's hopefulness and fruitless care for Israel was reflected in Paul's for the Corinthians. The metaphor of drinking milk from a flock is slightly strange in that it suggests the Corinthians were a flock of cows or possibly goats- and not sheep. For a shepherd doesn't drink milk from his sheep.

9:8 *Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Or did not the law say the same?*
- See on Dt. 25:4. At first blush it might seem strange to appeal to the immoral, Gentile Corinthians on the basis of an argument from the Jewish law. But I have mentioned elsewhere that there was a Judaistic element at work in Corinth; as noted on Titus, immoral Gentile Christians were attracted to the Judaistic arguments because they felt legalistic obedience to a few laws justified their immorality in other areas. To this day, this is the outcome of legalism in the churches.

9:9 *For it is written in the law of Moses: You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God cares*- In another figure, Paul likens himself to a lowly ox treading out corn, and being allowed to eat a bit of it. The argument seems to be that this commandment was not given because God cares for oxen, but for the sake of teaching us a principle. But often Paul uses a grammatical device whereby he argues 'Not [so much] A, but B'. Such a device is common in several other languages. God is clearly not insensitive to animals, as so many cases in the Old Testament demonstrate. So surely we are to read this as meaning that this command about not muzzling the ox was not primarily for the sake of the oxen, but even more importantly for the sake of teaching us a lesson. The treading out of corn connects with the metaphor of judgment day in Mt. 3:12, where we read that the "floor", literally 'the treading place' will be winnowed by the Lord Jesus in judgment. The fruit of Paul's labours for Corinth would be tested by the winnowing of what he had trodden out. He saw his work as preparing them for judgment, making them true grain, separating them from the husks.

9:10 *Or did He say it entirely for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written. Because he that ploughs ought to plough in hope, and he that threshes, hopes to partake in the harvest*- The context of this argument, both in :11 and the preceding verses, is that Paul would be justified in receiving material compensation for his work. But he elevates that argument to a higher level here. He says that the benefit he ultimately hopes to get out of this is that if his treading out leads to their acceptance at the day of judgment, then he will share in the harvest. He too will as it were eat the trodden out corn. Elsewhere Paul says the same- that his reward in the Kingdom will be a function of whether his brethren are there too.

"He that ploughs" doesn't refer to a ploughman, as some paraphrase Bible versions wrongly claim. The allusion continues to the ox, who ploughs. "He that threshes" likewise refers to the ox, because the same word is used in :9 about the ox treading out the corn. Paul saw all his missionary activity with the Corinthians as the work of the humble ox, up and down the fields, back and forth threshing out the corn. The repetitious nature of teaching Biblical principles so familiar to us, patiently bearing with the same questions- all this humble work is what will lead folks to the life eternal. The parallel likes to imagine that the ox ploughs up the fields looking forward to the time when the crop sown will bear grain which he shall thresh, and get a few mouthfuls of that harvest by God's grace in allowing him an unmuzzled mouth. Breaking up the fields to receive the seed of God's word is indeed hard and thankless work. Paul was far from the modern 'evangelist' doing acrobatics from a stage to impress an audience. Such work is hard, and will only have any reward or true recognition when the harvest has been winnowed at the Lord's return.

9:11 *If we sowed to you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your material things?*- Paul slightly changes the metaphor here, likening himself to the sower. Clearly the sower parable was in his mind, with its purposeful ambiguity as to whether the sower is the Lord Jesus personally, or all those in Him who sow His word. According to Paul's principle of Gal. 6:8, sowing to the spirit will lead to a spiritual harvest; and a material or fleshly harvest from sowing to the flesh. But here he seems to be saying that he does indeed sow to the spirit and hopes for a spiritual harvest, but seeing the flesh / material is far less than the spiritual, he sees no reason why before that spiritual harvest comes, he shouldn't receive some material harvest from them too.

9:12 *If others have this rightful claim over you, do we not have more?*- Clearly the Corinthians were under the influence of other teachers, probably Judaists, who

claimed the right to material support from the Corinthians. Or it could be that the "others" refer to the other apostles who had visited Corinth (:5) and who had asked for material support. But as the one who had led them to Christ, Paul felt he had more rightful claim than anyone else.

Nevertheless we did not use this right, but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ- Paul will soon use the very same phrase "bear all things" in saying that love bears all things (1 Cor. 13:7). Love is therefore no mere emotion or passing clutch at the heart. Love involved a carefully thought out policy, looking ahead to how asking for money would hinder the Gospel in this case. The idea of 'hindrance' is fairly common in the NT, and it is individuals who are hindered, or the spread of the Gospel. So we must interpret "the Gospel of Christ" here as referring to the spiritual progress of those who had accepted it; or to the spreading of that Gospel. For the Gospel is in itself an imperative to spread it. And Paul saw here, in contrast to many evangelists today, that asking for money can in some ways and contexts actually hinder the Gospel's work. Clearly enough, the spread and progress of the Gospel, both to unbelievers and within those who have accepted it, depends upon us to some degree. We, or other people and attitudes, can hinder it. God will not just brush past our dysfunctions. So much has been delegated to us, and we are to act appropriately.

It seems that "the Gospel" is put by a figure for 'the spirituality which the doctrines of the Gospel brings forth, so close is the link between the Gospel and the inculcation of spirituality. We must walk worthy of that pure doctrine, in the abstract sense of doctrine, which we have received (Eph. 4:4-6). The purpose of keeping our understanding of the basic principles clear is that this will lead to true love and faith (1 Tim. 1:3-5).

Paul says he could have asked Corinth ecclesia to support him financially, but he chose not to. Thus he chose the higher of two options. See on 1 Cor. 7:11.

9:13 *Do you not know that they that labour in the temple get their food from the temple, and they that serve at the altar have their portion from that which is sacrificed on the altar?*- This argument from Jewish law might seem inappropriate for Gentile, immoral Christians in Corinth. But Paul's appeal to Jewish argument is likely because of the presence of Judaist influence, encouraging the Gentiles in their immorality by kidding them that obedience to some Jewish laws could of itself assure their salvation. The New Testament is very insistent that the true temple of God is the body of Christian believers (1 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 3:12; 11:1,2; 1 Tim. 3:15). This string of passages is quite some emphasis. Yet the Lord Jesus was the temple; He spoke of the temple of His body (Jn. 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22). For this reason, the Gospels seem to stress the connection between Him and the temple (Mk. 11:11,15,16,27; 12:35; 13:1,3; 14:49; Lk. 2:46; 21:38). Christ's body was the temple of God. By being in Christ, we too are the temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21), *our* body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). Paul therefore saw his work for others in the church as being like a priest labouring in the temple. He saw himself as a temple servant, a Levite, able to take literally the food required to sustain life- a far cry from pastors demanding 10% of everyone's cash.

9:14 *Even so the Lord ordained that they that proclaim the gospel should live from the gospel*- Paul's almost rabbinic respect for every word of his Lord indicates how deeply he had them in his heart as the law of his life. He speaks of how "The Lord [Jesus] *commanded* that those who preach the Gospel should get their living by the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14 RSV). The Lord Jesus didn't command this in so many

words- but it's the implication of His teaching in Lk. 9:1-5; 10:1-12, especially of Lk. 10:4 "The workman deserves his food / keep" (Gk.). But those words of the Lord to the disciples were understood by Paul as a *command*- so clearly did he appreciate that those men following Jesus around Galilee are really *us*, and every word of the Lord to them is in some form a command to us. Another example would be the way Paul states that the Lord 'commanded' that the wife is not to separate from her husband (1 Cor. 7:10). The Lord didn't actually state that in so many words- but He implied it quite clearly. And so that for Paul was a command. He didn't reduce the teachings of Jesus to a set of yes / no statements; rather he saw, as we should, even every *implication* of the words of Jesus as a command to us. You will notice that in both these examples from 1 Corinthians, Paul doesn't explicitly quote the Lord Jesus in the format in which we expect a citation- e.g. 'I'm saying this, because it is known and written that Jesus said, XYZ'. I submit that this wasn't simply because the Gospels weren't in wide circulation when Paul was writing. Rather I think that the indirectness of Paul's allusions and quotations from the words of Jesus reflect how his mind was *so* full of the Lord's words that he doesn't quote from them in a formal sense, as one usually would quote from literature or the known words of a respected person. Rather did Jesus so *live* within Paul's consciousness, His words were so widely and deeply within the texture of his thinking, that the allusions and quotations are made less self-consciously. 9:16,17- see on Acts 18:4,5.

Yet despite this provision, Paul chose to disobey what he calls a 'command' from the Lord- because he figured that the purposes of the Gospel would be served better long term if he in his case didn't obey that command. Paul was no legalist- for legalism would reason that a command is there to be obeyed; but Paul perceived a higher principle than legalistic obedience. Not only does all this give an insight into the nature of a man's relationship with his Lord when he knows Christ well enough; but it indicates the huge priority placed by Paul upon the spreading of the Gospel. He would even relegate a 'command' from the Lord Jesus beneath the overall aim of spreading the Gospel. This is a line of reasoning which is of course dangerous for *us* to adopt; but it indicates the priority given to preaching. Actually one sees other examples of this in Paul- he observed Torah amongst the Jews, but broke it amongst the Gentiles; he thus relativized obedience to Divine law for the sake of the spreading of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:22). In fact all Paul's decisions in controversial matters seem to have been made based around the ultimate question: 'What would be best for spreading the Gospel?'. Perhaps the Lord was making the same point when He told His preachers to stay in their converts' homes and eat whatever was out before them (Lk. 10:8), i.e. without insisting on eating kosher food. For the Pharisees insisted that an observant Jew could *not* do what the Lord said- i.e. eat 'whatever' was set before them. But the Lord waived that commandment- for the sake of spreading the Gospel. And we do well to get into his spirit as we face the many calls we do in church life.

9:15 *But I have used none of these things, and I do not write these things that it may be so done in my case*- Paul is covering himself against the likely twist of this words, to the effect that he was hinting at wanting money from the Corinthians. We need to think ahead to the likely impact our words and positions are going to have, and the possibility of misinterpretation.

For it is better for me to die, than that anyone should make my boasting void- Paul goes on to say that he has nothing to glory / boast of regarding his Gospel work, for he is only doing his job (:16). So what glory of his does he fear might be made void? He has argued that his whole approach to these issues is because he wants to see

them saved, and their salvation will be part of his salvation- for will partake in the same hope, the same acceptance of the Corinthians into immortality. If they were to be accepted into God's Kingdom, then they would be his glory. Thus he states in 2 Cor. 1:14 that the Corinthians accepted into God's Kingdom would be his glory [s.w.]. Likewise he would glory in the day of Christ if the Philippian converts were accepted (Phil. 2:16). Paul had constantly in mind this picture of his rejoicing / boast / glory on their behalf at judgment day; and therefore even in this life, he boasted / gloried about them (2 Cor. 7:14; 9;2), and the Thessalonians too (2 Thess. 1:4). The accepted Thessalonians at the last day would be Paul's glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:20). This future glorying which Paul ever had in mind would, however, be made void if the Corinthians turned away from the faith. And by asking them for money, Paul feared he might make them stumble out of the path to the Kingdom, and thus his future glorying in their salvation by grace would be voided. Throughout Corinthians, Paul speaks of his fear that his labour would be void, or "in vain", if they turned away from Christ (1 Cor. 15:14,58; 2 Cor. 6:1). Likewise if the Philippians and Thessalonians turned away, then his labour also would be in vain / voided (Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 3:15). Paul felt that he would prefer to die rather than see their salvation lost and his glory in them voided. His whole life and reason for being was the salvation of others; and this must be our pattern. This explains his extreme concern for his brethren's path, rather than shrugging his shoulders. His desire to die if they were not saved is clearly alluding to Moses, who asked that his name be taken out of the book of the living so that Israel might be saved, and Paul in Romans 9 applies this spirit to himself. This desire to die if they were not going to be saved reflected how he felt he had nothing to live for apart from the salvation of others- a powerful challenge to our cluttered lives. It provides help in understanding his comment that he did have a desire to die, but to remain alive in the flesh was more necessary for his converts (Phil. 1:23).

9:16- see on Acts 20:26.

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about. For necessity is laid upon me- We may need to read in an ellipsis here: 'If I preach the Gospel [from a sense of necessity]. The necessity, in the context, would be the necessity of preaching because he was a paid preacher and needed an income in order to survive. But he goes on to explain that because he is not preaching from the necessity of getting an income, his necessity is of a more spiritual kind. Again we see the contrast between the way of the flesh and that of the Spirit. The necessity he had was one laid upon him by God and the Lord Jesus; and not because of his material needs. "Necessity" is the same word translated "compel" in Lk. 14:23- "compel them to come in" and sit in their places at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The compulsion is laid upon us by the tragedy of human rejection of the places Christ prepared for them, and the wonderful, so easy possibility to be there. Significantly, this same Greek word is used elsewhere about the 'necessities' which are part of our ministry of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:4; 12:10). The urgency of our task will lead us into many an urgent situation, with all the compelling needs which accompany them. But that compulsion, in this context, was from spiritual reasons and not because we want financial gain in this life.

For woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel- The "woe" was because he would not be discharging his need before God to preach. It may be that in these words Paul is alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel). Whatever the predestined and foreknown purpose of God with Paul as a preacher may have been, the fact still stands that the

record emphasizes the quite natural spirit of compulsion to preach which arose within him. Paul was under no financial necessity to preach- indeed he himself admits a tendency not to preach, to hold back from giving his all to fulfil that commission he had received to testify of the Gospel of God's grace (1 Cor. 9:16). He asks his brethren to pray that he would be able to "make it manifest" more than he did (Col. 4:4 cp. Eph. 6:20). He voluntarily, and not for financial motive, made himself a slave to all, selling himself as it were into slavery, in order to save them (:19).

9:17 *For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if against my own will, then I have clearly had a stewardship entrusted to me*- The "reward" referred to the financial motives which Paul has just denied having. The fact that true preaching is a carrying of the cross explains why Paul felt that the fact that to preach what he did went right against his natural grain, it was not at all what he wanted to do, and this was the proof that indeed a "dispensation of the Gospel" had been given to him. Likewise Jeremiah complained that the visions which he had to preach, about violence and judgment, were quite against the grain of his sensitive soul (Jer. 46:5 RV; 47:6). There is therefore no such person as a natural preacher in the ultimate sense. This is a job one would not do for money, not any amount of it.

It seems strange to think that Paul had to *make* himself preach, that he did it against his natural will. But remember his poor eyesight, ugly physical appearance, his embarrassing early life spent persecuting and torturing Christians - no wonder public preaching of Christ was something he had to make himself do. It may be that the reason he went to the wilderness of Arabia after his conversion was that he was running away from the command to preach publicly (Gal. 1:17,18). Several times he speaks of how he fears he will lose his nerve to preach, and thereby lose his salvation; he even asks others to pray for him that he will preach more boldly. It also needs to be remembered that Paul was a passionate Jew; he loved his people. It seems that he "preached circumcision" (Gal. 5:11) in the sense of being involved in actively trying to proselytize Gentiles. But it was Paul the Hebrew of the Hebrews who was called to be the apostle *to the Gentiles*. It might have sounded more appropriate if preaching to the Jews was his specialism, and fisherman Peter from half-Gentile Galilee went to the Gentiles. But no. Each man was sent against his grain. And more than this. It seems that the Lord set up Peter, James and John as some kind of replacement to the Scribes and rabbis. And let's not forget Amos, too. He defended his prophetic ministry, as Paul defended his, by saying that it was something he had been called to quite against his nature. He was not a prophet nor a prophet's son, and yet he was taking from following his flock of sheep to be a prophet to Israel- quite against his will and inclination (Am. 7:14,15).

9:18 *What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel without charge*- This was the question the cynical Corinthians wanted answering. Why was Paul preaching, if indeed it was not for money or personal gain? Paul's decision not to take money from Corinth was due to his deep, deep meditation on the principle contained in Mt. 10:8 "freely you have received, freely give"; although there were other passages in the Gospels, even two verses later in Matthew 10, which he knew implied that it was Christ's will that the missionary should be paid (1 Cor. 9:14 = Mt. 10:10). This issue of payment shows how Paul based his life decisions on his understanding of the principles of the Gospels. He did far more than learn those Gospels parrot-fashion. They were in his heart, and influenced the direction of his life.

So as not to use to the full my right in the gospel- Paul could have taken wages from

the Corinthians for his service. But on that occasion he chose “not to use to the full my right in the gospel”; and he uses the same word in 1 Cor. 7:31, in teaching that although we have to ‘use this world’ we are to ‘use it to the full’ (RVmg.). As God operates with us on different levels, accepting non-ideal situations, so we are to deal with each other. Paul could have used his power in the Gospel more sharply than he actually did with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:10)- and note how he earlier uses those two words "power" and "use" in saying that he could have demanded financial support from them, but he chose not to use that power / authority which he had (1 Cor. 9:12).

9:19- see on Mt. 20:27 and 1 Cor. 9:16 *Woe to me.*

For though I was free from all, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more- Far from seeking personal financial gain from preaching, Paul had as it were sold himself into slavery so that he might save others. But he "was free from all" in that he did not take money for preaching. The idea of gaining or winning *people* rather than money [as he was falsely accused of] alludes to the Lord's words about winning men (Mt. 18:15). When Paul speaks of how he has "made myself a slave unto all" in his preaching (1 Cor. 9:19), there is an evident connection with his reasoning in Phil. 2:7 about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus likewise *made* Himself a servant to all. For Paul, preaching was and is to be a sharing in the cross of Christ. In his preaching of the Gospel, Paul could say that "I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (1 Cor. 9:19). Yet elsewhere, Paul uses the idea of the "servant unto all" as descriptive of Christ's attitude upon the cross (Phil. 2:7). The connection of thought reflects how Paul understood that in seeking to gain others for Christ, we make ourselves their servants, and in this sense our witness to them is a living out of the principles of the cross. Being such a "servant unto all" hardly squares well with the image of arrogant platform preachers dazzling their audiences. That isn't the preaching which truly 'gains' people for Christ.

If we can at least grasp the spirit of taking up Christ's cross, there will be a deep sense of fellowship with others who have reached the same realization; and a deep joy and calmness in confidence of sharing His resurrection. *The cross is attainable*. It’s not just an awful thing that happened in a few hours of history so long ago, the details of which we flinch from, excusing ourselves that it’s just too terrible. Look how Paul alludes to it, and arose to the point where he could truly claim to us that he was living the crucified life. The Lord predicted in Mk. 10.44,45: "and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be *slave of all*. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and *to give His life a ransom for many*". And Paul alludes to this in 1 Cor. 9.19: "I have made myself *a slave to all*..."; and later in 1 Cor. 10.33: "Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but *the profit of the many, that they may be saved*". Through his sharing in the cross of the Lord Jesus, he, the very human Paul, became an agent in the salvation of all men. He too became a ‘slave of all’ after the pattern of the Lord in His time of dying. We may make excuses about Jesus not being exactly in our position, because God was His Father etc. Valid or not, those excuses disappear when we are faced with Paul’s challenge.

9:20- see on 2 Cor. 11:24.

And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, I became as one under the law- Acts is full of examples of this. Indeed, Paul's arrest in Jerusalem which led to his journey to imprisonment in Rome was all due to trying to be as a Jew to the Jews, entering the temple and paying for sacrifices. To become something else to others must be done for the sake of connection with

them, with their salvation in view- there is a fine line at times between this and the natural desire we have to be as others would like us to be, apparently adopting their positions for the sake of peace and acceptance. The Lord Jesus was by nature one of us, but Phil. 2:5-9 speak as if He 'became' as us- in that He wilfully entered fully into our human situations. And this came to ultimate term in the death of the cross.

Though I am not under the law- One of the simplest and thereby most powerful statements that the Law of Moses is not now operative nor required for Christians. Elsewhere Paul has clearly argued that we are not under the law (Rom. 6:14,15 "you are not under law, but under grace"; Gal. 3:23; 4:5,21; 5:18 "if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law"). But Christian maturity means that we do not just baldly insist upon what we know to be "truth", but rather we accommodate ourselves to those who do not yet believe that truth. In order to win them. Love builds up, but knowledge alone puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1). At times, love is not just insisting upon truth at first encounter. Paul's attitude to meat offered to idols was the same. He argued that meat and food laws were irrelevant to the mature Christian; but he would not eat meat offered to idols lest it caused the immature to stumble. We think likewise of the Lord speaking in terms of believing in demon possession and a paganic 'satan', when He didn't believe in those things.

That I might gain those that are under the law- Paul is writing this in answer to the aspersion that he was in the preaching business for personal or financial "gain". He is saying that the gain he sought was for the Lord and for his converts- that they should be gained for Christ and the life eternal. Yet again, He is alluding to the Lord's teaching, which uses the same Greek word for "gain". The Lord taught against seeking personal gain, even gaining the whole world (Mt. 16:26)- instead we should seek to gain our brother (Mt. 18:15, cp. 1 Pet. 3:1). Paul could say that he had 'lost' all the secular things which he once counted "gain" (Phil. 3:7).

9:21 *To them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law*- Whilst Paul was "not under the [Jewish] law" (:20), he clarifies that this does not mean that he is in total "without law to God". God's law is now not the law of Moses, but the law of Christ. The law of Christ is to bear each others' burdens (Gal. 6:2). This was what Paul was doing by trying to relate to others in the burdens they carried, even if those burdens were a self-imposed attempt to keep the Jewish law. He has used the slavery metaphor in :19, saying that he was a slave to all men's salvation; but that is the same as being under the law of Christ, whose passion is the salvation of all men.

9:22 *To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some*- The "weak" in NT usage are the spiritually weak. He "became weak" without being spiritually "weak". The "weak" in the Corinthian context were those who still thought that the pagan gods behind the idols actually existed (1 Cor. 8:7,10), those who were smitten with weakness because of their gross sins (1 Cor. 11:30), the weak parts of the body of Christ that need extra care (1 Cor. 12:22). Perhaps Paul has in mind the 'weak' as being those who were taken in by Judaism, who were still "under the law"; for the same word is used about the weakness of the Law of Moses (Heb. 7:18). It is a tribute to the Lord Jesus that someone of His spirituality could be naturally attractive to sinners such as tax collectors and prostitutes. Paul likewise sought to connect with the spiritually weak- the total opposite of his earlier Rabbinic mindset, which sought to distance oneself from the spiritually weak. He desired by all means to "save some"- but the Greek appears to mean "somebody". To save just one person was worth it all. As Paul

reflected upon how many had turned away, this must have become an every stronger credo for him- to save at least one person is so wonderful that all the grief is worth it. I have had those thoughts at the funerals of those I feel I brought to Christ. By all means I saved somebody, in bringing them to Christ the Saviour. We note that Paul felt that he could play a role in another's salvation. The Lord's saving work has been delegated to us to the extent that we can save some, and also cause others to stumble from salvation.

Minucius records that opposition to the Christian faith was because the believers so closely identified themselves with the crucified Christ that His death and shame were seen as theirs: "They are said to be a man who was punished with death as a criminal and the fatal wood of his cross, thus providing suitable liturgy for the depraved friends". Thus we see how deep was their appreciation of the doctrine of representation: they saw the Lord in His time of dying as representative of themselves. Time and again the words and actions of Paul show that both consciously and unconsciously he was aware that he was experiencing in himself the experiences of his Lord. In his preaching he *made himself* a *slave of all*, *weak* that he might gain the weak (1 Cor. 9:19,22). This is language he elsewhere understands as appropriate to the Lord in His death (2 Cor. 13:4; Phil. 2:7 cp. Mk. 9:35).

9:23 *And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker of it*- Here again we may need to read in an ellipsis with regard to "the Gospel's sake". As explained on :10, Paul's hope was that he would be a "partaker" in the final salvation of his converts, just like the ox who ploughs and threshes in the hope he will get a mouthful of the corn finally produced. As it stands here in :23, the "joint partaker" has no reference- joint with what or whom? The sake of the Gospel therefore refers, I suggest, to "the sake of your response to the Gospel". The "all things" which he "did" refer in the context to being all things to all men in order to save them. He did these things for the sake of their response to the Gospel, so that he might be a joint partaker with them of the hope of the Gospel.

9:24 *Do you not know that they that run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run like this, so that you may attain the prize*- There is only one who so ran that He received the prize thanks to His own efforts- and that was the Lord Jesus. But we are in Him, and should run like Him. But we must read this emphasis upon one receiving the prize as an intended contrast to what Paul has just written- that salvation was a matter of being "a *joint* partaker" of the hope contained in the Gospel. We are to run *as if* in a race where only one gets the prize- even though that prize is in another sense a matter of 'joint partaking', a prize received jointly. For Paul felt that the nature of his eternity was tied up in the salvation of his converts. He doesn't want them to think that this idea of joint partaking meant that they were not to run well themselves. They were to run, as he himself did (:26), as if it was a very personal race with an individual, unique prize at the end of the course. And yet in another sense, that prize is a collective matter, a 'joint partaking'.

9:25- see on Lk. 13:24.

And every man that strives in the games exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible- Paul lifts the arguments about receiving material advantage from preaching to an altogether higher plane. We are aiming to receive an eternal, incorruptible victory wreath. Even the highest personal achievements and possessions in secular life are not worthy to be compared with that. The crown is both personal and collective; Paul speaks of the

Philippians and Thessalonians as being his eternal crown- if they entered God's Kingdom (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19). Paul's striving [literally, 'agonizing'] was not just for his own crown, but for they to be accepted at the last day. The contrast between corruptible and incorruptible will be developed later in 1 Cor. 15:52; our corruptible body will be made incorruptible at the resurrection of the body at the Lord's return. The crown is therefore to be understood as the change of our bodies, both of Paul and the Corinthians, at the last day. The crown will therefore be very personal and intimate to ourselves- it is in the form of our eternal bodies. And those bodies, that being, shall reflect our efforts for others. If those we work with are saved as a function of our efforts for them, then they shall be part of our crown. Paul's self control was motivated by a desire for others' salvation as well as his own. And this surely is one of the factors explaining the Lord's amazing achievement of perfection within human nature; the motivation came from a desire to save us. For He died primarily "for us". If we are motivated solely by a desire to save ourselves, to get eternity for our personal body, then we will likely fail. We are too dysfunctional to be deeply motivated by that. But enduring for the sake of others' salvation is a more powerful motivator.

9:26 *I therefore run, but not with uncertainty. So fight I, but not as a shadow boxer*- Later we will find Paul answering the aspersions that he is indecisive and not serious (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:17). He was deadly serious, totally focused, because the issues before him affected not only his eternal destiny but that of many others. He uses the same word to urge that the trumpet not give an uncertain sound (1 Cor. 14:8). Various images are used in the Bible to bring home to us our sense of purpose. We are to see ourselves as soldiers disciplining ourselves for action, fighting in the only ultimately worthy cause with victory in sight; as slaves of a great Master; as athletes running a race. Paul saw himself as very much in reality, and not just shadowing boxing. Why does he bother saying this- that he boxes not as one who merely beats the air? Surely because he perceived that many people don't grasp the 'reality' of life, and he stood accused of being one of them. They think it's all some virtual game, online rather than real life. But Paul saw the real issues of eternal life and eternal death very clearly. Those who responded to his preaching and teaching really would live forever; those who rejected it or fell away from it would ultimately remain eternally dead. Paul perceived that we are dealing with the ultimate of all realities: the love of God, His feelings for us, His mission and purpose for us, how every moment the King of the Cosmos is yearning for us, the life eternal, the sense of the future men might miss. And so Paul fought for it all, not uncertainly, and not as one who feels only half in reality. It was his life.

9:27- see on 2 Cor. 12:10.

But like an athlete I discipline my body and make it my slave; lest by any means, after I have preached to others- The Greek for "body" is also translated "slave". Paul speaks here not only of the extent of his self-mastery; he is continuing the metaphor of enslavement with which he opened this section in :19. He made himself a slave to all men in order to save them, empathizing with their sensitivities and weaknesses in order to save them. And so continues the theme being developed here; that although he would be a joint partaker with his converts of the same hoped for salvation, yet he ran the race, as they should, as if only he personally was going to get the prize. His salvation, as ours, was personal; and yet on another hand, it was bound up in the salvation of the others in his life. He beat his body (NEV "discipline"), directing the boxing of :26 at himself, in order to enslave himself- but that enslavement was for the salvation of others (:19). If he did not do this, then having preached to others he

would himself be rejected. So his argument is that he would be rejected from salvation if he did not enslave himself to the salvation of others. Serving them and their foibles and needs was a necessary part of his own path to salvation. This is a wide ranging principle. If we consider that we shall reach salvation by simply focusing upon our own faith, sitting behind a screen hitting the right buttons, but making no effort for the salvation of others- then we may well find that in the longer term, we shall ourselves miss salvation. This is the danger of the 'out of church Christian' movement.

I myself should be disqualified- A castaway, reprobate, rejected. The threat of Lk. 9:23-25 rung in his mind (also in 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Cor. 7:9; Phil. 3:8): If a man gains the world for Christ but does not take up the cross, or is ashamed of Christ's words and principles in this world, he will be *cast away*. Especially does Paul allude to these words here in 1 Cor. 9:27: "Lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (AV). Paul recognized his temptation: to think that his zeal for preaching excused him from taking up the cross. In essence, we must all see our own likely temptations: to focus on one area of spirituality, with the hope that it will excuse us from the cross.

The real possibility of rejection at judgment day was evidently a motivator in Paul's life, and he used "the terror" of the coming day of judgment to persuade men in his teaching of the ecclesias (2 Cor. 5:11), and also in his preaching to the world (e.g. Acts 17:31). Paul's exposition of judgment to come caused Felix to tremble (Acts 24:25). I don't suppose Felix would if he walked into many churches today. The fact is, many will be rejected. The unforgiving believer will be delivered to the tormentors to pay what is due (Mt. 18:34); God is preparing torture instruments for the punishment of the rejected (Ps. 7:13). These are awesome descriptions of the self-inflicted mental agony in which the rejected will writhe. The matchless grace of God and His eagerness for our salvation should not be allowed to blunt the impact of these warnings- of what we can do to ourselves, more than God doing to us. Almost certainly, some of those you know today will go through the terrible rejection process which we are going to explore now. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the Son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Our response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in effect be our judgment.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

10:1 *Brothers, I would not have you ignorant*- Paul told the Corinthians that he didn’t want them to be “ignorant” of the powerful implications of the fact that they had been baptized into the Son of God, and were on their way to His Kingdom, being in an exactly analogous situation to Israel as they walked through the wilderness. He uses a word which is the Greek word ‘agnostic’. He didn’t want them to be agnostic, to be indifferent, to shrug their shoulders, at the bitingly insistent relevance of the type to them. And that type of Israel in the wilderness is most applicable to us, “upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (:11) than to any other generation. Indifference seems to have been a problem in Corinth as it is for us. By contrast, God is provoked

to jealousy by our indifference to Him (1 Cor. 10:22), seeing every self-reliant act as an implicit statement that we are "stronger than he". He would not have us "ignorant" or agnostic about the implications of the basic doctrines we believe (1 Thess. 4:13; Rom. 1:13; 2:4; 7:1; 11:25; 1 Cor. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13), nor 'agnostic' to the fact we have been baptized and risen with Christ (Rom. 6:3). These are all things that we are almost too familiar with; and yet he urges us, down through the centuries, to never be indifferent and agnostic to these things.

That our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea- Israel left Egypt, passed through the baptism of the Red Sea, and then walked through the wilderness- all in enacted parable of our spiritual experience. They then passed through the Jordan, and set foot in the land of promise (cp. our entry to the Kingdom at the judgment seat). But they had not been circumcised in the wilderness- possibly suggesting that the new Israel will not have cut off the flesh as they should have done in their wilderness walk. It is stressed at least five times in Joshua 5 that Joshua himself personally circumcised each of them, and then they kept the Passover. This would seem to tellingly point forward to our coming to the end of the wilderness walk of this life, and then entering into the Kingdom; to have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus (cp. Joshua), who performs the intensely personal operation of rolling back and cutting off the flesh, and then we sit down together and keep the Passover, as the Lord clearly intimated we would (Mt. 26:29). This is how personal relationships in the Kingdom of God will be.

Israel crossing the Red Sea is one of the most well-known types of baptism / the new creation. They were being chased by the Egyptians, and were trapped against the sea. The only way of escape was for that water to open and allow them to go through it. If any Israelite had refused to go through, there would have been no salvation. Going further, it is evident that the people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea:

Israel	Abib	Jesus
Ate Passover (Ex. 12:6)	14th	Died on the cross as Passover lambs slain
Left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3)	15th	
Journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27)	15th-17th	Jesus three days in the tomb
Came through the Red Sea	17th	Resurrected

As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours. Israel were slaves in Egypt, and then after the Red Sea baptism became slaves of God. Ps. 68:18 pictures them as a train of captives being led out of Egypt, merging into the image of a train of a captivity led into a

different captivity. Romans 6 powerfully brings home the point: we were slaves of sin, but now are become slaves of righteousness.

The cloud above them was water, and the water of the Red Sea on each side of them, giving them as it were a complete immersion without getting wet. But there's a sense in which baptism is ongoing, and it was for them. They are described as being "under the cloud" throughout the journey to the promised land (Ps. 105:39; Num. 14:14). We are to die for and in Christ and experience His resurrection life breaking through into our mortal lives as an ongoing process (2 Cor. 4:10,11).

Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers"- even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves. Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed. This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

10:2 *And were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*- In a sense, Israel's baptism was an ongoing experience, in that the cloud [of water?] continued over them throughout the wilderness wanderings. The ongoing nature of the act of baptism was outlined in baptism's greatest prototype: the passage of Israel through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2). They were baptized into that pillar of cloud (cp. the water of baptism), but in fact the cloud and fire which overshadowed them at their Red Sea baptism continued throughout their wilderness journey to the Kingdom. They went "*through* fire and *through* water" (Ps. 66:12) throughout their wilderness years, until they entered the promised rest (cp. the Kingdom). Likewise, the great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence *repeated* throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that *bringeth you up* out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16). See on Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:6.

Bullinger comments that "they were all baptized into Moses" can be literally rendered 'they baptized themselves'. The same verb form occurs in Luke 2:5, where Joseph went "to be taxed", literally 'to enrol himself'. Self baptism is quite valid although not advisable in most cases. And yet the language of 'being baptized' suggests that it is God and the Lord, through the Spirit, who baptize us. And yet we take the step ourselves. Baptism is therefore a fusion of our freewill and God's action.

10:3 *They did all eat the same spiritual food*- This was the manna, which the Lord in John 6 interprets as Him and His word. Perhaps the emphasis is upon "the

same"- for the Corinthians were under the influence of false teachers, and there was only one food which would get them through the wilderness journey. Unless we too feed on the Lord Jesus, we shall perish in the journey to the Kingdom. Daily reading of the word, especially of the Gospel records, seems to me to be critical in our age. The food was "spiritual" but the Corinthians were not "spiritual" (3:1), even though chapter 1 begins by saying they had been given the Spirit. Unless we feed the Spirit, we too shall not be spiritual.

10:4- see on Rom. 5:12.

And did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock represented Christ- "That rock was Christ". However, Dt. 32 seems to imply that the rock was an Angel. "I will publish the name of the Lord (a reference to the Angel declaring the name in Ex. 34)... He is the rock... He found (Israel) in a desert land... He led him" (vv. 3,4,10). This is all describing the activities of the Angel. Israel rebelled against the Angel (Is. 63:10), "lightly esteemed the rock... of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful" (Dt. 32:15,18). Another link between the rock and the Angel is in Gen. 49:24: "The mighty God of Jacob (an Angel)... the shepherd (the Angel, Is. 63:9-11)... the stone... of Israel". Note that Jesus is clearly the shepherd, the stone and the rock (of offence). The language of 1 Cor. 10 invites us not to interpret "the rock" just as the physical rock. It can be shown that the Comforter was an Angel representing Christ, in fact the same Angel as in Is. 63 which led Israel through the wilderness. It is therefore fitting that "the rock", the same Angel, should be chosen by Paul in 1 Cor. 10 as a type of Christ. What came from the rock was "spiritual drink"- showing that the Rock Angel spiritually as well as physically fed them. Christ's interpretation of the manna as representing the word in John 6 would support this idea of the Angels spiritually strengthening Israel on their journey. Ex. 29:42 implies this happened daily; the Angel stood at the door of the tabernacle each day to speak with them. Perhaps the same is true today for those who through Angelic help feed daily on the manna of the Word. It is possible that Israel tempting Christ in 1 Cor. 10:9 is meant to refer back to 1 Cor. 10:4 "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ". Tempting Christ was therefore tempting the rock to produce water. The rock was a title of the Angel that was with them, and it was he, representing Christ, whom they tempted. See on Is. 51:9; Rev. 3:22.

Paul is alluding to a Jewish tradition that the rock followed Israel through the wilderness, always giving water. Some traditions suggest Miriam carried it; the supposed “Rock of Moses” is a piece of rock which could have been carried. Paul emphasizes that the point of his allusion is that the water which they drank of represented “Christ”, the strength which comes from Him as the smitten rock; he alludes to the tradition just as he quotes pagan poets and makes a point out of their words (Acts 17:28). The Bible often features this kind of thing; and God isn’t so paranoiac and apologetic that He as it were has to footnote such things with a comment that “of course, this isn’t true”.

It should be evident enough that the rock which Moses smote in the desert was simply a rock; it wasn't Christ personally. The Jewish book of Wisdom claimed that "the rock was Wisdom" (Wisdom 11). Paul, as he so often does, is picking up this phrase and saying that more essentially, the rock represented Jesus personally, and not

'Wisdom' in the Jewish misunderstanding of this figure. It "was" Him in the sense that it represented Him. Likewise He said about the communion wine: "This is my blood". It wasn't literally His blood; it was and is His blood only in that it represents His blood. Paul is describing the experience of Israel in the wilderness because he saw in it some similarities with the walk of the Corinthian believers towards God's kingdom. The whole of 1 Cor. 10 is full of such reference. And this is why he should speak about the rock which Moses smote as a symbol of Christ. The Israelites had been baptized into Moses, just as Corinth had been baptized into Christ; and both Israel and Corinth ate "the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink". "Spiritual food... spiritual drink" shows that Paul saw the manna they ate and the water they drank as spiritually symbolic- just as He saw the rock as symbolic. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 10:16,17 to write of how Corinth also ate and drank of Christ in the breaking of bread, and in chapter 11 he brings home the point: like Israel, we can eat and drink those symbols, "the same spiritual meat... the same spiritual drink", having been baptized into Christ as they were into Moses, and think that thereby we are justified to do as we like in our private lives. This is the point and power of all this allusion. The picture of their carcasses rotting in the wilderness is exhortation enough. Baptism and observing the 'breaking of bread' weren't enough to save Israel.

The Lord Jesus Himself had explained in John 6 how the manna represented His words and His sacrifice. He spoke of how out of Him would come "living water", not still well water, but bubbling water fresh from a fountain (Jn. 4:11; 7:38). And He invites His people to drink of it. It was this kind of water that bubbled out of the smitten rock. Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21 describe it with a variety of words: gushing, bursting, water running down like a high mountain stream, "flowed abundantly".....as if the fountains of deep hidden water had burst to the surface ("as out of the great depths", Ps. 78:15). So the Lord was saying that He was the rock, and we like Israel drinking of what came out of Him.

The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called "the running water"(Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten"(Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God"(Is. 53:4).

It was in a sense God who "clave the rock" so that the waters gushed out (Ps. 78:15; Is. 48:21). "Clave" implies that the rock was literally broken open; and in this we see a dim foreshadowing of the gaping hole in the Lord's side after the spear thrust, as well as a more figurative image of how His life and mind were broken apart in His final sacrifice. Yahweh, presumably represented by an Angel, stood upon [or 'above'] the rock when Moses, on Yahweh's behalf, struck the rock. Here we see a glimpse into the nature of the Father's relationship with the Son on the cross. He was both with the Son, identified with Him just as the Angel stood on the rock or hovered above it as Moses struck it... and yet He also was the one who clave that rock, which was Christ. As Abraham with Isaac was a symbol of both the Father and also the slayer, so in our far smaller experience, the Father gives us the trials which He stands squarely with us through. And within the wonder of His self-revelation, Yahweh

repeatedly reveals Himself as "the rock"- especially in Deuteronomy. And yet that smitten rock "was [a symbol of] Christ". On the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". There He was the most intensely manifested in His beloved Son. There God was spat upon, His love rejected. There we see the utter humility and self-abnegation of the Father. And we His children must follow the same path, for the salvation of others.

The rock "followed [better, 'accompanied'] them" (1). We must understand this as a metonymy, whereby "the rock" is put for what came out of it, i.e. the fountain of living water. It seems that this stream went with them on their journey. The statement that "they drank" of the rock is in the imperfect tense, denoting continuous action- they *kept on* drinking of that water, it wasn't a one time event, it continued throughout the wilderness journey. A careful reading of Ex. 17:5,6 reveals that at Rephidim, Moses was told to "Go on before the people", to Horeb. There he struck the rock, and yet the people drank the water in Rephidim. The water flowed a long way that day, and there is no reason to think that it didn't flow with them all the time. The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is. 48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through the wilderness (2). It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock tasted as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time.

In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain forgiveness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life. The cross is in that sense ongoing; He dies and lives again for every one who comes to Him. And yet at the end of their wilderness journey, Moses reflected that Israel had forgotten the rock that had given them birth. The water had become such a regular feature of their lives that they forgot the rock in Horeb that it flowed from. They forgot that 'Horeb' means 'a desolate place', and yet they had thankfully drunk of the water the first time in Rephidim, 'the place of comfort'.

We too have done the same, but the length of time we have done so can lead us to forget the smitten rock, back there in the loneliness and desolation of Calvary. Not only did his disciples forsake him and his mother finally go away home, but He even felt that the Father had forsaken Him. As Abraham left alone in the Messianic "horror of great darkness", as Isaac alone with only his Father, leaving the other men behind...so the Lord on the cross was as a single green root grown up out of a parched desert. Let us never forget that 'Horeb'; and let's not let the abundant new life and

blessing which there is in Christ become something ordinary. God forbid that we like Corinth, like Israel, should drink of that sparkling water each week in our 'place of comfort' and go forth to do just as we please.

Notes

(1) Marvin Vincent [*Vincent's Word Studies*] comments: "Paul appears to recall a rabbinic tradition that there was a well formed out of the spring in Horeb, which gathered itself up into a rock like a swarm of bees, and followed the people for forty years; sometimes rolling itself, sometimes carried by Miriam, and always addressed by the elders, when they encamped, with the words, “Spring up, O well!” (Num. 21:17)". Whether this is true or not, Paul is alluding to this idea- hence the rather awkward idiom to non-Jewish readers.

(2) There is repeated emphasis in the records that the water came from the [singular] rock. However Ps. 78:16 speaks of God cleaving the rocks. I suggest this is an intensive plural- the sense is 'the one great rock'. The next verses (17,20) go on to speak of how the water came from a singular rock.

10:5 *However with most of them God*- The majority of them (Gk.) were strewn down along the way (Gk.). Faced with the apostasy at Corinth, Paul was pointing out that as the majority of Israel failed to make it, so the new Israel should not be over confident that this feature of the type doesn't apply to them too.

Was not well pleased- Repeatedly this phrase is used in the Gospels to describe how God was “well pleased” in Christ (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). The implication may be that it is through being “in Christ” that God will count us acceptable, rather than by our keeping our nose clean of the more public sins of fornication and idolatry.

For their dead bodies were scattered over the wilderness- The Greek means to lay prostrate- the very language of idol worship. Old Testament passages like Ezekiel 20 are clear that Israel worshipped idols in the wilderness, having smuggled them with them through the Red Sea. And this was their death. Clearly idol worship was an issue at Corinth, with some of them still believing that idols represented pagan gods who had actual existence (8:7-12). The same image of the carcasses of Israel laying unburied in the wilderness is found in Heb. 3:17. Ps. 91:5-8 speaks as if the condemned generation were struck down one by one, by day and night, and the faithful Joshua was strengthened not to be fearful as he regularly experienced men falling dead literally at his side (Ps. 91:7) and saw carcases, sometimes in the thousands, laying in the wilderness. The frightened people simply hurried on, with no time to bury the bodies. The journey must’ve been a fearful and depressing experience, with sudden death a daily reality. They were after all experiencing condemnation; it was a death march. Perhaps the destruction of the rejected will be the same at the last day. And yet that death march of the condemned generation is clearly used as a type of our journey from baptism to the Kingdom. In a sense we are living out our condemnation now, so that we will be ultimately saved (1 Cor. 11:29-31). It does us no harm to reflect upon the reality of condemnation, so that we may sense more keenly the extent of God’s grace in saving us from wrath through Christ. As soon as we start to think that surely all this can’t mean that the majority of those baptized into Christ may also fail to make it, we must bear in mind the reasoning of Hebrews and Romans which warns us against feeling like that. On the other hand, God’s grace is such that we can have every confidence that very many will reach the Kingdom, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. But the possibility of failure, the sense of the future we might miss, must be deeply felt by us. We *cannot* assume that as a community of believers we are any better than natural Israel. Reflecting for a

moment on the possibility that the majority of those we know who are baptized will not make it, we are left with sober introspection- "Lord, is it I?". This thought alone inspires an intensity in seeking to abide in Christ.

10:6 *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted*- Literally, they were 'types of us'. 8:7-12 shows that some in Corinth believed in idols and worshipped them, along with the true God. This was exactly analogous to Israel in the wilderness, and they were to take a warning from this. Hebrews however makes the point that Israel's rejection in the wilderness was solely because they did not have faith. The idol worship mitigated against total faith in the true God- and that was and is the essential problem with idol worship, in whatever form. Gal. 5:17 criticizes some believers for being in a position where the flesh lusted [s.w.] against the Spirit, and the nail biting conflict was too much for weak willed human nature, which fails to have within it the steel will required to resist the flesh. Paul argues there that the Galatians should give themselves over to the Spirit, so that such conflict is not experienced, knowing it will inevitably end in failure. This is a theme of Corinthians- they were not spiritual (3:1), they did not feed the Spirit (:3) they had been given at baptism (chapter 1). And so they lusted after the flesh, and easily gave in.

10:7 *Neither be you idolaters, as some of them were*- Some of them were idolaters as well as Christians (8:7-12). Paul accepted that was how it was, and urged those who were stronger not to make these weaker ones stumble. He never advocates solving the issue by casting them out of the church, and his repeated silence about this needs to be carefully weighed by those who believe in excommunicating weak members from the church.

As it is written: The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play- Sitting down to eat and drink is used in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 with reference to the breaking of bread service. Israel ate and drunk and then rose up to commit sexual sin in the name of idol worship and religious devotion to the golden calf. It seems from chapters 6 and 7 that the believers at Corinth were sing church prostitutes- and we can deduce from this allusion to the eating and drinking that this was being done at the memorial meeting. They were practicing the communion service just as the surrounding cults had special meals to worship their idols, at which they slept with prostitutes. The golden calf incident happened whilst Moses was absent, and he returned to them in judgment. Paul's threats to come to Corinth and judge their apostasy may suggest he saw himself as their Moses.

10:8 *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed*- The fornication in view here isn't going too far with one's unmarried partner, but the fornication associated with idol worship; indeed, this is the context of most of the NT warnings against "fornication", and the implication is that fornication was practiced at the breaking of bread, and taught by "Jezebel", because that service had been mixed with idol worship. Hence Paul has to make the point that feasting and drunkenness shouldn't be practiced at the memorial meeting- clearly they had turned it into the kind of feast which accompanied idol worship.

The reference is apparently to the worship of Baal Peor and sleeping with the Moabite religious prostitutes (although see later on this verse). We note that Israel were led into that sin by their leaders (Num. 25:4), and perhaps that was the same in the Corinthian church.

And so in one day twenty three thousand died- Num. 25:9 gives a figure of 24,000. Perhaps the key to understanding the difference is the phrase "in one day". Num. 25:9 says that 24,000 died as a result of a plague sent to punish them- but it is not recorded how quickly they died from the plague. We can assume that a "plague" took some time period to kill them. But Num. 25:4,5 records that immediately, that day, the judges of Israel were commanded to kill by the sword those who had committed the fornication, and Phinehas arose in response. Those deaths by the sword were different to those from the plague- perhaps 23,000 died that day from these executions, and then 24,000 died from the plague subsequently. Another option is to note that there were 23,000 Levites (Num. 26:62). If each Levite killed a man (which Num. 25:5 "Let every one kill his man" might imply, cp. Ex. 32:27), this would mean 23,000 died in that one day, and if 1,000 died subsequently from the plague, we then have the 24,000 of Num. 25:9. Or it may be that 1 Cor. 10:8 is actually continuing to refer to the golden calf incident mentioned in :7; for Ex. 32:28 LXX says that 23,000 died at that time. The Masoretic text says 3,000. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Ex. 32:28 specifically states that this slaughter happened in one day.

10:9- see on 1 Cor. 10:4.

Neither let us put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and perished by the serpents- The usual assumption is that this refers to Israel's complaining about their "light bread" in Num. 21:5, as this is the only recorded incident where they were punished by serpents. But their complaint at that point hardly sounds like putting the Lord to the test. The more obvious reference is to the incident at the place subsequently named Massah, 'testing', when they put the Lord to the test by asking "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). The Bible doesn't record that they were then punished by serpents, but this was so in Jewish tradition; and we saw on :4 that Paul is unafraid to allude to such traditions and take lessons from them. Suffering from "fiery serpents" was Israel's common experience in the wilderness (Dt. 8:15). This incident is more pertinent to the Corinthian situation. For in chapter 1, Paul has assured them that the Lord was indeed amongst them by His Spirit; but they were not spiritual (3:1), they refused to perceive His activity amongst them through the Spirit. The miraculous signs of the Spirit had been worked amongst them (2 Cor. 12:12). Christ crucified had been revealed amongst Paul's converts by the ministry of the Spirit (Gal. 3:1,5). And yet the Corinthians were effectively saying, along with the Galatians: 'Where is the promise of the Spirit amongst us which Paul keeps claiming?'.

10:10- see on Ex. 12:23; Ps. 78:49; Rom. 5:12.

Neither let us grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the Destroyer angel-

The reference is to the murmuring of Korah's rebellion against Moses (Num. 16:41,49). Paul is positioning himself as their Moses; for he spends much of Corinthians answering their various murmurings against him. Likewise the grumbling about the manna (Ex. 16:8,10) was against Moses.

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. This would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did Israel eat the Passover? My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would

kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes;* this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”.

Paul's warning in 1 Cor. 10:10 not to "murmur as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (i. e. the destroying Angel) implies that the unworthy among the "Israel of God" will also be destroyed by Angelic means if we make the same mistakes Israel of old made. The same Angel that destroyed the Egyptians would destroy God's Israel; they would be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). The fact that the Angels will personally minister the condemnation of the unworthy (Mt. 13:49 "the Angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire") when in their lives those Angels gave their charges every chance to repent and to grow spiritually, preserving them from physical danger, is surely a heart rending thought; and a motivation to respond acceptably to the trials God brings into our lives through His Angels.

10:11- see on Gal. 1:4.

Now these things happened to them as an example- They were 'types of us'. Israel's sin was their fault, and the judgments for it were called forth by their behaviour. And yet as with all sin, God works through it. The whole process of their failures and judgments for that failure was for our sakes. We must sense the real possibility of spiritual failure, of the eternal future we may miss.

The ecclesia in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) were tempted to commit the same sins in principle as we are tempted to (1 Cor.10:1-10). Twice Paul hammers home the point: "These things were our examples... now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written (i.e. the process of inspiration became operative) for our admonition" (v.6,11). Paul seems to read the minds of many Gentile Christians as they quietly reason 'But that was Israel- we Gentiles have been called because we shall do better'; he warns that such an attitude places us in grave spiritual danger: "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (v.12,13). This could be paraphrased as follows: 'The Jews ("man") had the same human nature as you; if you think that you can stand up to it better than they, then such spiritual arrogance will lead you to fall'. Such reasoning goes against the grain of what we would naturally like to hear, which is that we will certainly reach salvation just as we are, with no conditions, and without having to have any conflict with our sinful nature. Paul therefore concludes by saying that only the spiritually wise will grasp his line of argument here: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (v.14).

I have noted that "example" is the Gk. *tupos*, types. The New Testament writers present things like the crossing of the Red Sea and the events in the wilderness as real historical events which were types of the work of Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4; Hebrews 3 etc.). But by the second century, there was a shift away from reading these events as types, but rather they were seen as allegories- no longer were the events so importantly *real*, rather the characters and events were seen as allegorical. It was against this background of ever increasing abstraction that Christians likewise started to move away from the real Christ. Origen in the third century argued strongly that the historical sections of the Bible were to be taken as allegory and not as literally accurate history. He spoke of there being in the Bible "spiritual truth in historical

falsehood", and went on to use this as an excuse to explain why the Lord Jesus is presented as human rather than Divine in the Gospels. And so, as so often, an incorrect base attitude to God's word led to seriously misunderstanding it.

And they were written about for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come- We are to imagine the inspired Moses [or whoever] writing these things down, with God having us in mind, hoping we would take instruction from them. As these things happened at the beginning of the Jewish age, they had particular relevance to those living at the end of that age. J. Milik argues that Paul's language here is alluding to Apocryphal Jewish writings, which speak of the "ages" as coming to an end in Satan's destruction at the last day. Paul's reasoning is that Christ's death has brought about the termination of the "ages" as the Jews understood them. Satan and his hordes – in the way the Jews understood them – are right *now* rendered powerless and non-existent. As ever, Paul's approach seems to be not to baldly state that a personal Satan doesn't exist, but rather to show that even if he once did, he is now powerless and dead. The way the Lord Jesus dealt with the demons issue is identical. Once we understand this background, we see Paul's writings are packed with allusions to the Jewish ideas about the "ages" ending in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan. Paul was correcting their interpretations – by saying that the "ages" had ended in Christ's death, and the things the Jewish writings claimed for the future Messianic Kingdom were in fact already possible for those in Christ. Thus when 1 Enoch 5:7,8 speaks of 'freedom from sin' coming then, Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* (Rom. 6:18–22; 8:2).

10:12 *Therefore let him that thinks he stands be careful lest he fall*- I have noted on the previous verses that Paul is at pains to point out that we are not to think that the record of Israel's failure is merely dry history. There is a very real possibility that the Christian community could be no better than Israel after the flesh; and only a minority of those who pass through the baptismal water will therefore be saved. Which should make us look closely at ourselves. Paul's only other usage of the standing / falling image is in Rom. 14:4: "To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be made to stand up. For the Lord has power to make him stand". Thinking we stand therefore refers to an assumption that we shall in our own strength stand acceptable before the judgment seat. We shall only be made to stand by the Lord's grace; for in the same passage Paul writes of how every knee shall bow.

10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man*- Paul so often sees to the reasoning we indulge deep within our hearts in the times of testing. 'This is unique, without precedent, so I am justified in responding in a sinful way; my unique temptation, which nobody else can understand, justifies my unusual, outside the book response'. But that is not the case. Every temptation has been shared by others, not least *the* Man, the Lord Jesus. "Overtaken" recalls a similar word used in Gal. 6:1 about being overtaken in sin; so perhaps Paul is asking them to reconsider their previous falls into temptation and sin, and reflect that actually those situations were not without precedent; they were no more and no less than human, and therefore those tests were actually common to all men, and others had successfully resisted.

God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability- What a comfort to know that God is aware of our spiritual limitations and point beyond which we would sin. I suppose that is why so few of us have been tortured for our faith. He allows us to be tested actually beyond that point- but provides a way of escape. In considering others, we need to be aware that what may be a bearable temptation for

one is not so for another believer. Sensitivity is required rather than legalistic rules, especially about forbidding any remarriage after divorce to all and every believer.

But with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it- Truly "the sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil" (Ps. 125:3). Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac leaves us all shaking our heads and feeling that we simply wouldn't have risen up to that level of sacrifice. For not only was Isaac the son Abraham had so longed for, but he was the longed for fulfilment of the promises which had been the very core of Abraham's life. Yet 1 Cor. 10:13 appears to allude to God's provision of another sacrifice and thereby a way out of Abraham's temptation / testing- and this passage implies that each one of us are in Abraham's shoes: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted / tested (=Gen. 22:1) beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also *provide* the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it". No longer can Abraham be seen as a Sunday School figure of faith to be merely admired. For we are in his shoes, and the same God will likewise work with us in *our* weaknesses, both testing and providing the ways of escape.

We tend to think that our temptations / tests are so unique that they are somehow unusual, when in fact all that we experience has been and is in essence experienced by other men. It is in fellowship with others, in real connection with them over coffee, as it were, that we come to realize that we are not alone. 2 Cor. 1 reasons that whatever we experience is so that we can strengthen others who are going through the same; but that only becomes real and functional if we have meaningful contact with others and share with them. Each test has *the* (Gk.) specific way of escape. Whether or not we take it or perceive it, God has designed so much potentially in the daily lives of each of us. We need to ask what the intended way of escape is in each case. But the "escape" doesn't necessarily mean the end of the temptation, it means rather a way to bear or endure it.

Cain, in typifying all the rejected, felt that his condemnation was something greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13). This is alluded to in a telling way in 1 Cor. 10:13: for the righteous, they will never be tested more than they can bear, but a way of escape will always be made possible. But for the rejected, there will be no escape. It will be something too great to bear, and somehow they have to go on existing in that state. Thus the rejected will seek death and not find it (Rev. 9:6), after the pattern of Judas bungling his own suicide after realizing his condemnation [thus his bowels gushed, although he was attempting to hang himself]; they will also seek the Lord, all too late, and not find Him either (Prov. 1:28; Jn. 7:34). Israel will seek their lovers / idols and not find them (Hos. 2:7), and then seek the Lord and not find Him either (Hos. 5:6). They will seek death and not find it (Rev. 9:6), seek to their idols, see to the true God- and find none of them. They will exist in unbearable limbo. They will wander seeking the word of the Lord, but not find it (Am. 8:12). Tragically, it was so freely available in their lifetimes (cp. the foolish virgins seeking oil, banging on the door trying to hear their Lord's words and speak with Him).

Put together two Bible passages: Cain felt that his condemnation was greater *than he could bear*, and so God put a mark upon him so he wouldn't be slain (Gen. 4:13,15). Now 1 Cor. 10:13: God will not allow us to be tested *more than we can bear*, but will make a way of escape so we can bear it. I take this as meaning that if God is even sensitive to the feelings of a condemned man like Cain, rather like putting an animal to sleep in a humane way... then we who are saved in Christ can take comfort that

even in this life, we will not be asked to bear the unbearable, and yet we have the prospect of eternity in front of us when this life is through. And in a very quiet, sober way, we have to respond with gratitude: 'Wow'.

The idea of a way of escape being provided along with the temptation throws fresh light on Heb. 11:35. Some refuse the legitimate deliverances provided from temptation- and rightly shall receive a "better resurrection".

Yet a way of escape is not always provided from physical trials- especially in the case of those who were soon to be the Christian martyrs amongst Paul's readership. But when faced with situations which make us feel that we will be spiritually swamped by the power of our innate evil tendencies, then we can take courage that although the physical conditions causing the trial may not be taken away, there will certainly be an opportunity made for us to resist the spiritual temptation. Notice how a way of *escape* is provided- implying that initially the temptation is truly too heavy for us, and an escape is therefore made for us by God so that He is not in the position of forcing us to sin. Surely all readers of these words know this feeling only too well- sensing that we are in a position where our evil desires are growing stronger and stronger, not wanting to sin, but feeling that humanly, given a few more moments, and it will be inevitable. It is in these moments that we have to desperately cling to this promise- that God *will* make a way of escape, that he will keep us from falling (Jude 24) by His power of righteousness. Hence verse 14 continues "*wherefore*... flee from idolatry"- i.e. from the spiritual temptations.

10:14- see on :13.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry- Some were guilty of idolatry in the Corinthian church, actually believing that the idols represented real gods who actually existed (8:7-12). Paul calls for sensitivity to these weak ones, but urges they all flee from idolatry. The allusion is to Joseph fleeing from temptation with Potiphar's wife. Distancing ourselves from temptation is an important part of spiritual life in practice.

10:15 *I speak as to wise people. Think upon what I say*- The Corinthians were not wise; there was not apparently a wise man amongst them (1 Cor. 6:5). They had been given the Spirit gift of wisdom, according to chapter 1; but they were not wise because they were not spiritual (3:1). But Paul relates to the converts as if they were going to be saved, as if they were in fact spiritual. Seeing we cannot condemn our brethren, we are left with no option but to relate likewise to those whose weakness and immaturities are so evident to us. Paul never advocates disfellowshipping these individuals. Paul's patience with the Corinthians is amazing. He clearly had no fear of guilt by association with them, and addresses them repeatedly as if they are by status "in Christ"- he spoke to them *as if* they were "wise men" (:15).

10:16 *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?*- Paul is going to build up to the argument that partaking in Christ is exclusive of any relationship with other gods, idols, religions etc. Bearing in mind the Judaist influences in Corinth, Paul uses the Passover terminology for the cup of wine which represents the Lord's blood: "The cup of blessing". The Passover was a prototype of the breaking of bread meeting. The cup is a symbol of God's blessing / forgiveness of us; and we bless it. There is thus a mutuality between us and the Lord as we bless that cup, and are reminded again of the blessing mediated to us through His death blood. "The cup of the blessing" (Gk.) may suggest that a blessing was pronounced over the cup by each believer as they took the cup- for "we bless" it. The reference to "a

communion" could suggest that the breaking of bread is but one way of fellowshipping with His body and blood. Baptism, fellowship with the church which is His body, living aware of our connection with His blood- these are all other ways.

Paul expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ. An example is 1 Cor. 10:16 = Mt. 26:26; hence Paul reasons: "The cup of blessing... *is it not* the communion of the blood of Christ?" - i.e. 'Isn't it? I mean, this is familiar to us from the Gospels, isn't it'. It seems likely that the Gospels were memorized by the early converts.

Paul speaks of "the cup of blessing which we bless" (1 Cor. 10:16), probably using "blessing" in its Biblical sense of 'forgiveness' (e.g. Acts 3:25,26). Whilst there is, therefore, an awareness of our own sins and salvation from them at the memorial meeting, there is not any specific mediation of forgiveness to us through the bread and wine. In prospect, we were saved at baptism, through our Lord's work on the cross. In prospect, all our sins were forgiven then. We must be careful to avoid the Catholic notion that the bread and wine do themselves possess some power of atonement. They are the appointed aids to help us *remember* what has already been achieved. And this is why the early brethren could break bread with joy- not as part of a guilt trip prompted by the worrying remembrance of the standard set for us in Jesus (Acts 2:46).

The declaration that we are in the one body is shown in terms of breaking bread together. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (the sign of sharing in) the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:16-18). All who share in the saving work of the Lord Jesus by true baptism into Him ought to break bread together.

Paul sees the bread and wine as gifts from God to us. It's all about receiving the cup of the Lord, the cup which comes from Him. We should take it with both hands. It seems so inappropriate, given this emphasis, if our focus is rather on worrying about forbidding others in His body from reaching their hands out to partake that same cup and bread. Way back in Gen. 14:18, the gift of bread and wine [which foreshadowed our present memorial meetings] was a sign of God blessing us. Hence it was "the cup of blessing", which Paul says we also bless. There is a mutuality about it- we bless God, He blesses us. No part of this wonderful and comforting arrangement depends upon us not passing that cup to our brethren.

The communion, *the* fellowship, was brought about by the Saviour's body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). Indeed, "*the* fellowship" is a common NT phrase (e.g. 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:3). Because this has been created in prospect, from God's perspective we are all united in *the* fellowship, therefore we should seek to be of one mind (Phil. 2:1,2). It broke down, at least potentially, the walls which there naturally are between men, even the most opposed, i.e. Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14). The laying down of the Shepherd's life was so that the flock might be one, in one fold (Jn. 10:15,16). The offering of the blood of Christ was *so that* He might "make in himself... one new man" (Eph. 2:15). Thus the theme of unity dominated the Lord's mind as He prepared for His death (Jn. 17).

10:17- see on 1 Cor. 11:29; 1 Cor. 12:15.

Seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partaking of the one loaf- Just as Israel partook of "the same" food and water, "which is Christ", so the many within the body of Christ partake of Him. This verse is not saying that participation in the breaking of bread service somehow magically makes us 'one' and therefore it should only be done with those with whom we are in theological agreement. The unity in view here is between the believers and the Lord Jesus. We the many are one with Him, with His body. We are partakers in or of Christ (Heb. 3:14). Paul has argued in 1 Cor. 6 that because believers are one with the body of Christ, they should not be one with religious prostitutes, even Christian ones. And here he will go on to reason that we cannot be one with the Lord Jesus and also with the gods represented by the idols. If we are partakers in Christ, the one loaf, then we cannot partake with idols (:21). Heb. 2:14 uses the same word to explain that the Lord Jesus partook in our human nature; and in response, we partake in Him by acts of identity such as baptism and the breaking of bread, and in a life lived in Him. Here we see the practical power of understanding the representative nature of His sacrifice and His genuine human nature; it is an invitation to both ritual and psychological identity with Him.

The bread represents the body of Christ; at the communion service we express our unity with all who are in Christ as well as with Him. To refuse to break bread with those who are in Christ is therefore to effectively count ourselves out of His body. This doctrine of the one body is as fundamental as there being one God, one baptism and one hope (Eph. 4:4-6). But Paul's argument here is that we cannot therefore bind ourselves in communion with idols if we are truly in the body of Christ. The boundaries he draws are between the believer and the world, not between believer and believer. As the whole community of Israel were treated as one body of believers, even though there was unbelief, doctrinal and moral error amongst them, so is the body of Christ (:18). One implication of this doctrine of the one body is that we cannot be part of any other body. And this was exactly relevant to the Corinthians, who were turning the breaking of bread service into part of an idol service; see on :21. If we are truly "in Christ", our whole world will revolve around that; to be involved in any other system of thinking or worship is to provoke Him to jealousy.

To refuse to fellowship a brother is to effectively say that he is not within the Lord's body; for when we break bread, we show that we are one bread and one body (1 Cor. 10:16,17). It is simply not true that refusal to break bread with another is not passing judgment upon them; it most clearly is. And as we condemn, so we will be (Mt. 7:1). The purpose of the cross was to gather together in one all God's children (Jn. 11:52), that the love of the Father and Son might be realized between us (Jn. 17:26). If we support division, we are denying the essential aim of the Lord's sacrifice.

Surrounding Roman culture forbad women to drink wine with men, and only permitted them to do so in special cases if they drank different wine from a different cup. But Paul in conscious reference to this emphasizes the one cup shared by all believers, male and female, in memory of the unity and tearing down of barriers between people achieved by the Lord's death.

The bread represents the body of Christ; but it is hammered home time and again in the New Testament that the *believers* are the body of Christ. By partaking of Christ's body, we are sharing with each other. Paul drives home this point with an Old Testament allusion: "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18). We are the living sacrifices, offered

on the Christ altar (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:10). By being placed upon the altar, the sacrifice was counted as the altar. As Christ hung on the cross, all believers were counted as being in Him; Christ and the believers were, in this sense, indivisible on the cross. And they still are- hence the figure of us being the very *body*, the very *being*, of Christ. To personally share in fellowship with Him therefore *must* involve intense fellowship with other members of Christ's body. We must 'discern' the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29), and also judge (same word as 'discern') ourselves" at the memorial meeting (1 Cor. 11:31). We discern the Lord's body, and thereby discern ourselves too- because we are part of His body. This further shows that our self-examination at the breaking of bread is both of Christ and also of ourselves (both individually *and* collectively, as the body of Christ?).

10:18 *Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?*- "Participants" is the same word for "communion" in :16. Eating the sacrifice meant fellowshipping, having a common union, with the altar it was placed upon, and the god or religious entity the altar stood for. We recall that in chapter 8, Paul seems to say that a believer could eat food sacrificed to idols if he or she didn't believe there was a real god behind that idol; but to do so was wrong because it would encourage those Christians who still believed in the gods to do the same and in their case, actively participate in idol worship. The argument here seems to be that any eating idol food within the temple context meant that you were declaring common union with the idol. But Paul's argument in 8:10 was that a believer could eat food in the idol's temple but should not do so, lest it lead weaker believers into sin. He could have stated this higher and more obvious principle- that such action was effectively declaring common union with the idol. But instead he argues that an even higher principle is not to lead our brethren into sin. This too should be our primary concern- not, in the first place, whether this is right or wrong- but rather, what effect will this have on others? That is not to say that the right / wrong issue is irrelevant- as Paul makes clear here in chapter 10.

"Those who eat the sacrifices" within the Israelite system were the priests. They were allowed to take their daily food from the sacrifices offered to Yahweh. But Paul has earlier used this very argument in 1 Cor. 9:13 to prove that he would have been justified in taking material support from the Corinthians- because he was likewise involved in ministry work. He chose not to make use of that concession. But here he rather cleverly alludes to the same reality and says that in fact, all the Corinthians were like the priests, eating of the sacrifice, that of the Lord Jesus. This is one of many examples where the NT teaches that we are all priests, the entire brotherhood of believers is "a royal priesthood", every one of us as dedicated to the Lord's service as the Levites were.

The only exclusivity of the Lord's table was that it was not to be turned into a place for worshipping pagan idols. Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply

personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshipping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What *is* criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods. Is. 66:3 speaks of this dualism in worship:

What was offered to Yahweh	What was offered to other gods simultaneously
"An ox is sacrificed,	a man is killed;
a lamb is slain,	a dog is struck down;
an offering is brought,	swine-flesh is savoured;
incense memorial is made,	idols are kissed"

And the new Israel made just this same blasphemy in the way some in the Corinth ecclesia ate of the Lord's table and also at the table of idols ["demons"]. Paul wasn't slow to bring out the similarities when he wrote to the Corinthians. It is this kind of dualism which is so wrong; to be both Christian and non-Christian at the same time, to mix the two. But differences of interpretation between equally dedicated worshippers of Yahweh, or believers in Christ, were never made the basis of condemnation.

10:19 *What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*- In 8:4 Paul has clarified that "an idol is nothing". In chapter 8, he accepts that some of the Corinthian believers entered idol temples and ate their sacrifices without believing in the existence of the idols (8:10). This was not a case of eating meat sold in the market which had been offered to idols. Paul in chapter 8 accepts the situation but urges against it for the sake of not causing the weaker brethren to stumble. But now he seems to be saying that by forbidding eating in the idol temple, he is not presuming the real existence of the gods thought to be behind the idols. But all the same, despite that, he feels that to eat their food in the temples is to proclaim common union with the idols, and this is not possible if we also declare that common union with the Lord Jesus and eat as it were His food at the communion meal with Him. Note again that the even greater reason not to eat idol food in the idol's temple was in order not to cause weak Christians to stumble. This is paramount, and must forge our positions and behaviour on absolutely everything.

10:20 *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I would not have you sharing communion with demons*- Demons refer to idols (Dt. 32:17; Is. 65:11 LXX calls Gad, the god of fortune, “the demon”). Paul now makes the act of eating idol sacrifices tantamount to having common union with the demons, the gods thought to be behind the idols and represented visually by them. In 8:10 Paul didn't make that direct attack when mentioning Corinthian Christians eating idol food in idol temples, whilst not believing in the demons. There, he argued this was wrong because it made other believers stumble. He could have attacked their behaviour with a direct broadside- but he didn't. This more subtle approach is often required in dealing with the error and immorality of others. Direct broadsides may feel good for *us*- but we must think of what *others* need and the way to achieve that, rather than salving our own consciences about wanting to speak out against wrong behaviour.

10:21- see on 1 Cor. 11:20.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons- Paul is stating baldly that it is one or the other. If they ate idol food on the idol altar or table, then they were not really partaking of the Lord's table, in spiritual reality. Perhaps it is to this fact that he alludes when he states that "When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat" (11:20). Their external celebration of the Lord's supper was not that at all, because they also partook of the table and cup of the gods.

Paul speaks of us each one partaking of "the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21), a phrase used in the LXX for the altar (Ez. 44:16; Mal. 1:7,12)- the sacrifices whereof only the priests could eat. This would have been radical thinking to a community used to priests and men delegated to take charge of others' religious affairs. Hebrew 3:13 gets at this idea when we read that *we* are to exhort one another not to turn away, situated as we are on the brink of the promised land, just as Moses exhorted Israel. As mentioned earlier, the Corinthians had turned the breaking of bread meeting into a religious gathering similar in style and format to the religious feasts of the surrounding cults. Vine comments that "The Greeks and Romans placed images of the gods reclining on couches, with tables and food beside them, as if really partakers of the things offered in sacrifice. In Mal. 1:7, the altar of burnt-offering is called "the table of the Lord". The "altar" of :18 is the Lord's table. The idol altars were likewise their table.

The "table of the Lord" was Old Testament language for the altar (Ez. 41:22). By eating from it we are partaking of the altar, the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 9:13; 10:18; Heb. 13:10). If we don't partake of it, we declare ourselves to have no part in Him. Yet the very fact we partake of it, is a statement that we have pledged ourselves to separation from this present world; for it is not possible to eat at the Lord's table, and also that of this world (1 Cor. 10:21). The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom.

10:22 *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?*- The Corinthians were told that they would "provoke the Lord to jealousy" by breaking bread with the Lord Jesus and yet also with idols. This is surely an allusion to the "trial of jealousy" (Num. 5:24). A curse was recited and then the believer drunk a cup; if they were unfaithful, they drunk to their condemnation. Paul's allusion suggests that each time we break bread and drink the cup, we as the bride of Christ are going through the trial of jealousy. Brutal honesty and self-examination, and not merely of our lives over the last few days, is therefore crucial before drinking the cup. It wasn't possible to eat the Lord's food and that of idols. This was actually counted as total idol worship in God's eyes; thus the prophets likewise consistently taught the need for wholehearted devotion to Yahweh, and nothing else. In essence, we have the same temptation; to serve God and mammon, to have a little of both, to be passive Christians; to flunk the challenge of the logic of devotion. As the reality of Christ's crucifixion made Joseph and Nicodemus 'come out' in open, 100% commitment, come on them what may, so serious contemplation of the Saviour's devotion ought to have a like effect on us. It has been well observed: "that air of finality with which Jesus always spoke [meant that] everything he said and did constituted a challenge to men to reach a decisive conclusion".

Are we stronger than he?- Chapter 1 of this letter opened by speaking about the weak and the strong, arguing that God's weakness is stronger than man's strength.

What seems humanly smart and clever is actually a vain bid to be stronger than God. To consider that we can have a little of both, to serve two masters, is serious indeed.

10:23 *All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful, but not all things edify-* I have repeatedly pointed out that Paul's condemnation of any eating of idol food in an idol temple is in apparent contrast to the way that in 8:10 he appears to accept that some did this whilst genuinely not believing in the idols. Paul there urged them not do so because it could lead others into sin. But here in chapter 10 he argues that by eating that idol food, one is declaring common union with them, and therefore any claim to also communion with the Lord Jesus is voided. Because He is rightfully jealous and demands out total devotion. And yet here again in 10:23 he nuances the argument by saying that all things are lawful- yes, they could eat in the idol's temple- but the essential problem with this was that it would not build others up ("edify") and was therefore "not expedient". It was therefore prohibited because of the colossal importance of the principle of edifying others and never making them stumble. The idea of 'expediency' is used by Paul with the idea of what is profitable for others; he will soon use the same word in :33 about his concern for their "profit". His concern was ever what was expedient or profitable for them (2 Cor. 8:10).

"Edify" is literally 'to build up'. This is a major concern with Paul, and it is a common NT theme. The parable of the wise man building *his* house upon the rock of Christ and His word may, at first blush, appear to mean that we build our personal faith on Him (Mt. 7:24). But the Greek word for 'build', which in 1 Cor. 10 is translated "edify", is usually used about building up others, and is never used about building up ourselves (Rom. 14:19; 15:2,20; 1 Cor. 14:17; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thess. 5:11). And it is God and His Son who builds up the church (Mt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:9;2 Cor. 5:1; 1 Pet. 2:5). He works through the efforts of the body of Christ to build itself up (Eph. 4:16); He operates through our building efforts, and the building up of others is done through the gift of the Spirit (Eph. 4:12)- which the Corinthians refused to use seeing they were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). Indeed in 1 Cor. 14:3,4,12 Paul will criticize the Corinthians individually for building themselves up but not thinking about building up others. Edifying or building up others is therefore a strong theme; so major that it dominates Paul's thinking about all the various questions he has to answer throughout the Corinthian correspondence. And it likewise should be our guiding principle. An addiction to having theoretical, propositional truth can lead us to ignore this; we may be right and others wrong, but the question is how can we build them up. And such building up of others is in fact building our own spiritual house. This again has been Paul's theme; that he wants the Corinthians in the Kingdom because they are part and parcel of his own eternal destiny.

10:24 *Let no one seek his own, but his neighbour's good-* In the context of what Paul has been saying (see notes above), the way to salvation involves far more than focusing upon our personal salvation. We get there, as the Lord did, through our focus upon saving others. What this means in practice is that we should be concerned, *truly* concerned, for the spiritual growth of our brethren. This isn't equivalent to a spirit of nosy observation of others' weaknesses. In spiritual terms, we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Such a spirit is rare indeed ("all seek their own...", Phil. 2:21); and in 1 Cor. 13:5 Paul will say that not seeking our own (but by implication, that of others) is the essence of love. seeking first the Kingdom (Mt. 6:33) therefore involves seeking it for others as well as ourselves. A few verses later in 10:33, Paul clarifies that this is indeed his sense- he seeks not his own profit, but rather the salvation of

others. Truly he could later write to the Corinthians: "I seek not yours (i.e. your money), but you (i.e. your salvation)" (2 Cor. 12:14).

10:25 *Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience*- The left over meat from the idol sacrifices was sold in the meat market. Despite their deep immaturity, it would seem some in this very immature church had been caught up in the Jewish obsessions regarding whether the meat they were buying had been offered to idols. It has been commented that such meat was the cheapest meat, and the fact this issue is raised reflects the poverty of some in the church. Some of those very poor members were also those who had been taken in by the Judaist arguments. We have a window here onto the moral confusion there was at Corinth- some using church prostitutes, others not believing the Lord had risen from the dead; and others [and perhaps the categories overlapped in some cases] with an over finely tuned conscience regarding the previous history of the meat they ate. As noted elsewhere, such legalistic attempts at hyper obedience to irrelevant principles can be used to justify the conscience in performing serious acts of immorality in other areas.

10:26 *For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it*- Everything is God's. There is only one God, and so the fact the meat had been previously offered to an idol did not mean that it belonged to an idol, and that eating such meat with that history implied fellowshipping the idol. It was eating the meat in the idol's temple as a conscious act of fellowship with the idol which was wrong- hence the Lord Jesus Himself condemns eating meat offered to idols in his letters to the churches in Rev. 2:14,15,20-25. Note that in each of those cases, He links such eating with sexual immorality. Eating with the idol and then sleeping with the cult prostitutes was pure paganism, and typical of Corinthian religiosity. And it had entered the church at Corinth.

10:27 *If one of them that do not believe invites you to a feast and you are inclined to go*- "To a feast" is an insertion; the invitation could likely have been to a meal at home.

Whatever is set before you eat- This echoes the Lord's words: "Eat whatever is set before you" (Lk. 10:8 RSV). It could be that there is no semantic connection between the two passages; so perhaps this is purely an unconscious allusion to the Lord whose words were ever in Paul's mind. Or it could be that Paul saw accepting an invitation by an unbeliever as an opportunity to preach, to do missionary work just as valuable as that done by the apostles who were sent forth to preach. In this case, Paul's point was: 'You're all preachers, just like those seventy specially commissioned preachers, and in your everyday contact with the world, you too have a special commission to preach as they did'.

Asking no question for conscience sake- See on :25.

1 Cor. 10:25-27 and Rom. 14 give the impression that Paul either ignored or severely modified the prohibitions agreed upon in Acts 15, especially in relation to eating food offered to idols and blood (unless the Acts 15 decrees were only relevant to "Antioch, Syria and Cilicia"). Perhaps with later reflection he realized he had compromised too far; or, more likely, he re-interpreted the decrees and sought to keep the spirit of them, which was that there should be unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. We too may make an agreement and then realize we were mistaken, and it is humility rather than fickleness which should motivate us to act otherwise. Too

many are trapped by pride in previously agreed to positions which they later realize were unwise or not Biblical.

10:28 *But if anyone says to you: This has been offered in sacrifice to idols! Do not eat it for the sake of he that tells you, and for conscience sake-* Paul has just explained that the history of the meat is irrelevant. But if someone else at the meal table feels differently, then do not insist on eating and having your conscience. The person who makes the objection is presumably a weaker fellow believer (see on :25). Although as noted on :32, it could also refer to an unbelieving Jew or Gentile whose potential path to the Kingdom would be blocked by a believer insisting that he is doing nothing wrong.

10:29 *Conscience, I say, not your own, but the other's. One may ask: Why is my liberty judged by another's conscience?-* "But it's OK in *my* conscience" is not therefore an appropriate argument for someone committed to building up their weaker brother. The freedom or liberty in view is that provided by the Spirit- "for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). The Corinthians lacked the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:1), hence they laboured under the bondage of legalism and guilt by association, worrying the prehistory of the meat they ate might make them unclean. It was the Judaists who specifically tried to take believers away from the liberty they had in Christ (Gal. 2:4). Gal. 5:13 contrasts our liberty with the need to "by love serve one another". And so Paul now goes on to argue that our freedom is overridden by the need to not make our weak, unspiritual brother to stumble.

10:30 *If I eat my food with thankfulness, why is evil spoken of me, for that for which I give thanks?-* This is not Paul stating his personal view or complaint, but a continuation of his answer to the objections he could guess would be raised against his teaching about respecting another's conscience more than our own in these matters. He imagined that it could be objected that if thanks were given to the one true God for the food (reflecting the practice of blessing food before eating it), then there ought to be no objection to eating any meat. That argument was true. But the utterly paramount issue is not to make our brother stumble.

10:31 *The principle is that whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do or do not- do all to the glory of God-* The glory of God is parallel with not making another to stumble from the path to the Kingdom of God (:32). For Paul, "the glory of God" was to be ultimately achieved in human salvation; he so often uses the term "glory" with reference to our final salvation at the last day. It can be that legalistic obedience and insistence upon our rightness of interpretation is not for God's glory, but our own. This is the tendency of legalistic Christianity and those who insist that finding Biblical truth about a matter is paramount *per se*. Greater than anything in these matters is love, the love that seeks not to cause a weaker person to stumble.

10:32 *Give no occasions of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Gentiles, or to the church of God-* see on :31. Making another stumble is not doing all to the glory of God, and as explained in these notes, is the paramount, deciding principle that must forge all our approaches. But even further, we can make unbelievers stumble; that is the context of :27 speaking of behaviour before an unbeliever. Perhaps the objector of :28 is also to be read as an unbelieving Jew or Gentile. We must consider the same principle of making another stumble- even with reference to the world. Unbelievers have the potential to come to faith and salvation in Christ, but we can place a barrier

in that path by insisting on our own rightness. That is indeed true to observation; it is perceived hypocrisy which turns so many away from the Christ of the Christians.

10:33- see on 1 Cor. 4:16.

Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved- The "profit" of another was their salvation; and therefore we have to consider all our actions and positions from the viewpoint of what would be best for their salvation. Several times Paul explains his positions as being because it was "expedient" or "profitable" [s.w.] for others, and always he has in view what will help them to salvation. His views on marriage and all these questions about how to act in various situations were resolved according to what would be "profitable" for their salvation (1 Cor. 6:12; 7:35; 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:10). And he will soon teach that the Spirit is given to each of us in order to "profit" both ourselves and others towards salvation (1 Cor. 12:7). The Corinthians denied the movement of the Spirit (3:1), and so they were left to struggle with all their questions on a case by case basis with no guiding principle to help them resolve them. That principle clearly enough is: What is helpful to their and thereby my salvation, to God's glory? The focus is not to be upon our personal profit or salvation, but upon that of others. And that was what motivated the Lord to the great achievement of the cross. In the same way as the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save, so Paul appropriates the same two Greek words regarding *his* seeking and saving of others (Lk. 19:10; 1 Cor. 10:33). Like Paul, the Lord Jesus didn't please Himself by being selfishly concerned with His own salvation, but pleased his neighbours for their good unto their eternal edification (Rom. 15:2,3). Here in 1 Cor. 10:33; 11:1 he bids us follow his example in that he lived a life dominated by seeking to save others- both in and out of the ecclesia [see context]. This may explain why there is little direct encouragement in Paul's letters to preach; not only was his pattern axiomatically an imperative to live a life devoted to witness, but the following of Christ as he did inevitably issued in a life of witness.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

11:1 *Be imitators of me, even as I am of Christ*- This verse is best linked to the preceding chapter 10, where Paul urges the Corinthians to put the spiritual profit of others before their own personal conscience on some issues. Paul's relationship with and perception of the Lord Jesus is held up by the Spirit as our example. He himself asks us to copy (Gk. *mimic*) the way in which he followed the Lord Jesus (this is what 1 Cor. 11:1 implies in the Greek). His mind was increasingly *saturated* with the Gospels, and with the surpassing excellency and supremacy of the *Lordship* of the risen Jesus.

The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking. Not only does he do it himself, but he encourages others to do it. He doesn't use the word 'modelling'; he uses the word 'mimicking', Greek *mimicos*, normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul:
"Ye became *followers* of us and of the Lord.... ye know how ye ought to *follow* us...an ensample unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication is that in the gap between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).
"Be ye *followers* of me" (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1)
"Whose faith *follow* (i.e. that of your ecclesial elders)" (Heb. 13:7)

Be "*followers* of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises", e.g. Abraham (Heb. 6:12)
"Ye, brethren, became *followers* of the churches... in Judea" (1 Thess. 2:14).

So Paul encourages them to mimic him, to mimic Abraham, to mimic the persecuted ecclesias in Judea, to mimic the faithful elders in the Jerusalem ecclesia (e.g. Peter), *so that* they would be better mimickers of the Father and Son. But the idea of mimicking involves a child-likeness, an intellectual humility, a truly open mind. Why Paul used that word rather than a word which simply meant 'to copy' or 'to follow' was perhaps because he wanted to stress that this kind of conscious modelling of your life on someone else involved a real need for openness of mind to the word, resulting in an unfeigned, uncontrived, child-like mimicking. Paul is really encouraging his readers to get involved in this 'mimicking' of faithful examples, of absorbing their spirit into our own by careful, sustained meditation. Will we rise up to it? Or are we still on the level of whizzing through our Bible reading in 10 minutes / day, giving little thought to what we've read throughout the next 24 hours?

11:2 *Now I praise you who remember me in all things*- This reflects the wide range in the church at Corinth. There were those who were obedient to the commands and teaching Paul gave, and at the other extreme, there were those who worked as and made use of church prostitutes. The way the more spiritual remained within such an apostate community is a challenge to us all, not least to those who insist on leaving any community which has the slightest apostasy.

And hold fast the traditions, as I delivered them to you- This suggests there was a specific body of practical teachings which Paul gave to his converts; and he frames his language in terms of Moses giving the law to Israel. It was expected that the disciples of rabbis memorized their teaching, and there's no reason to doubt that the Lord's disciples, both those who immediately heard Him and those who subsequently became disciples of their invisible Heavenly rabbi, would likewise have memorized the gospel records of His words. This would account for the way they are arranged [Mark especially] as series of 'pericopes', small bite-sized sections which lend themselves to memorization. This would explain how Paul can use technical terms for handing on a tradition (*paradidomi*, 1 Cor. 11:2,23) and receiving it (*paralambano*, 1 Cor. 15:1,3; Gal. 1:19; Col. 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6); and of faithfully retaining the tradition (*katecho*, 1 Cor. 11:2; 15:2; *krateo*, 2 Thess. 2:15); matched perhaps by John's insistence in his letters that the converts retain that teaching which they received "from the beginning".

11:3 *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God*- The head of “every man is Christ” only in the sense that “every [believing] man” has this relationship with Him. “Every man” to God is therefore those in Christ. “All” shall be made alive at the Lord’s return- i.e. all “that are Christ’s” (1 Cor. 15:22,23). "All things" is a title of the church in Ephesians and Colossians, and "any man" evidently means 'any believer' in 1 Cor. 8:10. “All men... every man” means ‘all that believed’ in Acts 2:44,45. So what Paul now writes is specifically about relationships between believers, and specifically in response to the Corinthians' question which we do not have access to. "The head of Christ is God" is a fair nail in the coffin of trinitarianism.

11:4 *Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head*- This may well be a criticism of the way that under the influence of Judaism [which we have noted earlier was a problem in Corinth], some of the brothers were covering their heads to pray. The head of the man was Christ (:3), and by acting as if

He needed covering for sin and shame before God, they were dishonouring Him. Paul repeatedly uses the same word to argue that in Christ, we are not ashamed [s.w. 'dishonoured'] before God (Rom. 5:5; 9:33; 10:11 etc.). Those who had fallen under the influence of Judaism and its practices had failed to perceive this. And thus they were shaming their Lord, Jesus.

11:5- see on 1 Cor. 6:4.

But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonours her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven- I suggest there are a series of allusions to the trial of jealousy in Numbers 5; and the idea of uncovering a woman's head connects with how the woman suspected of infidelity had to have her head uncovered (Num. 5:18). A woman's hair was seen as her glory, and a covered head was associated with shame. It could be argued that the woman was being treated as innocent until proven guilty, and even invited to openly display her glory. The uncovering of the woman's head was a form of shaming (as in 1 Cor. 11:5,6). She had to be shamed whether or not she was guilty; and this led the man to a lose-lose scenario. If she was innocent, then he had needlessly shamed him, she would likely not love him in future, and he had to bear the sin of doing that (:31). If she were guilty, then he had to support a barren wife for the rest of her life, seeing the curses about killing or divorcing her were to be blotted out.

There are several such allusions to Numbers 5 in 1 Corinthians 11. The idea there of drinking unto condemnation or blessing / justification simply has to be understood in the Numbers 5 context. And it is no accident that the language of a woman having an uncovered head also occurs. What's the connection and the bigger picture? I suggest that what was happening in Corinth was that members who had sinned were being publically shamed before the congregation by e.g. the sinful sisters being made to sit in the meeting with uncovered heads. In Middle Eastern societies today, forcing a woman to uncover her head is a source of shame. Paul is saying that paradoxically, such misbehaviour in the Corinth ecclesia was actually 'shaming' those demanding it; "I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 6:5; 11:22; 15:34). The allusions to Numbers 5 would therefore be saying: 'You are publicly shaming some sisters by making them remove their veils / head coverings in your meetings; and by the way in which you eat the Lord's supper, you are also purposefully shaming some (:22). Instead, *you* should be the ones in shame for your behaviour. By doing so, even if indeed those sisters have sinned, you are acting like the husband who uses the Numbers 5 legislation. Instead, whenever you drink the cup, examine *yourselves* and not others, and remember that you are the one who is being tested by the Lord's cup- either to your condemnation or justification'. Paul will soon go on to point out that the Corinthians were wrongfully shaming some within the church at the breaking of bread meetings (:22 "shame" is the same Greek word translated "dishonour" here in :4,5).

Shaved female heads were associated with prostitution in first century Corinth. To shame a woman by making her remove her head covering was effectively labelling her as a prostitute. Paul is against all such shaming behaviour; it is a tendency of religions to shame others, and Paul is deeply critical of it. The irony of course was that according to our notes on chapters 6 and 7, there were church prostitutes operating within the Corinthian church. And yet any sister who got on the wrong side of the leadership was shamed as being a common street whore by demanding she wear her hair uncovered. It ought to be clear enough that these verses speak to a very specific situation within Corinth according to the culture of that time and place; they can not legitimately be used to require women to wear head coverings at all Christian meetings in the world today.

11:6 *For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled*- See on :4. The male eldership were seeking to shame some women, just as they shamed others by not providing food for them at their memorial feasts (:22). Paul is saying that to make a woman take her veil off is the same as making her shave her head. Instead of shaming her, they should allow her to be veiled as she dearly wished to be in that society.

11:7 *For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man*- When we read that man is the "image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7), it seems to me that Paul is stating something which is only potentially true, rather than stating a global principle which is true for all males from birth until death- for he elsewhere says that we must be transformed *into* the image of God (2 Cor. 3:18), speaking of a progressive renewal in knowledge until we come to the image of our creator (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). This kind of approach is common in Paul- he speaks of a state of being which we should rise up to, as if we already have it. He's surely inspiring us to rise up to our potential.

But another approach is suggested by observing that the whole arguments in 11:7-15 appear very contradictory. Woman was created out of the man, so she is to have her head covered (:8); but "in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (:11). Whether or not a woman should pray with uncovered head is considered to be something they should judge (:13). Long hair should be exposed and gloried in as a woman's covering (:14,15); whereas :10 says she should over her hair to show she is under her husband's authority. And the more one re-reads this section, the more apparent contradictions appear. An answer could be to remember that there are no quotation marks in the original text; and that Paul is quoting or alluding to the questions and arguments of the Corinthians. I suggest that he is quoting here from their arguments, which they had been using to justifying shaming some women by making them pray with uncovered heads. I suggest that :7-11 are all quotation from the arguments used by the Corinthians; and then :12 Paul answers all this by saying that "in the Lord" there is no such distinction. He then concludes by saying that contrary to what some wanted to imply, there was no universally agreed practice regarding head coverings in the churches (:16). Those who insist upon a head covering policy as a global truth are totally ignoring Paul's statement. The whole question depends upon local customs and attitudes to women, and whatever they are, in whatever time or place, the principle of :11,12 must be accepted: "In our life in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman was made from man, in the same way man is born of woman; and it is God who brings everything into existence". On this foundation, we are to "judge for ourselves" on these matters (:13), remembering that there is no universal principle to be enforced about them (:16).

11:8 *For the man is not of the woman, but woman of the man*- See on :7. I suggest this is part of the Corinthians' argument which Paul is quoting. It seems they as Gentiles had fallen under the influence of Judaist arguments.

11:9 *For neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man*- This was very much the language of Judaism- that women were created to serve men. It could be that Paul is here quoting it and then goes on to deconstruct it in the section beginning at :11.

11:10- see on Acts 18:18.

For this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels- If this continues the quotation from the Corinthians' argument, then they would be arguing that because of how the Angels ordained things at the creation, the women should wear head coverings to show they were under their husband's authority. This was a distinctly Jewish attitude; and the reference to "Angels" is again Jewish, seeing Jewish thought was quite obsessed with Angels.

But it could be that at church meetings, indeed the Angel are literally present, and this command was to help those present be aware of this. Great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

11:11 *Nevertheless, in the Lord, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman*- This reference to how things should be in Christ, presumably in distinction and contrast to the ideas Paul has just quoted in :7-10. Paul is seeking to balance their Judaist-interpretation of the Genesis record by arguing that male and female are equal before God and interdependent.

11:12 *For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God*- Paul is here balancing their argument that because woman was made out of man, therefore she must be subservient and wear a head covering to symbolize it. He reminds them that in fact man is taken out of woman at birth. And it is not so that males are superior to females simply because Eve was made out of Adam's bone. For it is God who is the creative source of all things, not man; and His creative power is responsible for not just humans but literally "everything".

11:13 *Judge for yourselves. Is it appropriate that a woman pray to God unveiled?*- The Corinthians had asked for Paul's judgment on this matter. Having explained some principles, Paul now throws the judgment back over to them. But he will argue in :14,15 that the whole issue of whether a woman should be covered or not is misplaced because God has given women a natural head-covering, in their hair. That covering should not be covered by human covering laws, so :15 implies. And this will lead up to the clear statement in :16 that this should not be the matter of contention which it was at Corinth, and there is no inspired standard for all the brotherhood to follow. As Paul puts it here in :13, we must "judge for yourselves" given the local culture and customs we find ourselves in.

11:14- see on Jn. 16:2.

Does not nature itself teach you, that if a man has long hair it is a dishonour to him?- This was true within the cultural context of Corinth. Nature does not teach that to all people in all cultures at all times. And "long hair" only applies to some people. Paul obviously isn't speaking about Africans whose hair cannot easily be described as "long". So he is obviously writing in a very limited context- to those at Corinth. It seems that men with long hair and women with short hair carried sexual overtones in the Corinthian context, related to prostitution. And the context of Paul`s words are that the church at Corinth was mixing the cultic sexual practices of the surrounding pagan cults (to which they had previously belonged) with Christianity, and introducing them to the breaking of bread meeting. Even if we are to deduce that Paul was against long hair on Corinthian brothers and short hair on Corinthian sisters, it was in this context alone.

11:15 *But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. For her hair is given her for a covering*- As noted on :14, this too is culturally limited to a specific time and place. Long hair is no longer seen as beautiful of itself, and again, "long hair" here surely doesn't refer to African Christians. The whole argument is limited to Corinth and the culture of that day. But Paul is making this observation in order to demonstrate that the whole argument about female head-coverings is misplaced. And that would be typical of both the Lord and Paul- to answer an argument or question by stating a mega principle which contextualizes the specific questions.

11:16 *But if anyone seems to be contentious, let them know we have no such custom, neither do the churches of God*- As noted on the previous verses, Paul is saying that contrary to what some contentious members wanted to imply, there was no universally agreed custom in the churches about head-coverings. It was a matter of each judging for themselves within their cultural contexts, but bearing in mind the principles of :11,12 (see on :13). It is typical of many contentious individuals to this day that they will argue and assume that their particular fetish of interpretation must be universally accepted in all Christian churches.

11:17- see on 1 Cor. 7:17

But in giving you this instruction, I do not praise you- for you come together not for the better but for the worse- The "instruction" here concerning how the breaking of bread meeting should be run was not an answer to questions- but an instruction. Their behaviour there was so bad that it would be better for them not to do it. For it was for their "worse" rather than their spiritual betterment.

11:18 *For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you*- Corinth ecclesia had cases of gross immorality, even incest; some got drunk at the memorial meeting, used church prostitutes and some even denied Christ's resurrection. There can be no question that such belief and practice was not ultimately tolerated either by Paul or God. Yet notice the first thing which the Spirit 'takes up' with Corinth. It wasn't any of these more obvious things. It was the fact there was a spirit of factionism within the ecclesia- "first of all" this was the issue Paul tackled. Just as he has in chapter 10 argued that the principle of building each other up is far more important than whether or not we personally consider idols and pagan gods to have real existence. This is also the way the epistles conclude (2 Cor. 13:11); Paul doesn't tell them 'Now don't forget what I said about adultery and having concord with Belial'. Instead: "Finally, brethren... be of one mind, live in peace".

And I partly believe it- This may not mean that Paul was undecided as to whether it is true or not. For in chapter 1 he has directly accused them of being a divided church. I suggest the sense is rather: 'I believe / know that this is partly true'. Some in the church were in line with the spirit of Paul's teaching (:2). But others weren't. It was this 'part' who were answerable for the divisions.

11:19 *For there must also be factions among you, that they that are approved may be revealed among you*- The allusion is to Mt. 18:7: "For it is necessary that the offences occur, but woe to that man through whom the offence comes!". Causing division within the body is therefore a sin which may exclude us from the Kingdom. It is so obviously true to observed experience that factionism within the church causes 'offences' or spiritual stumbling. It is also true that the "approved" are "revealed" by

their correct response to the factionism. How we respond to church division is one of the litmus tests that reveal our spirituality. So many stumble... but it will be no excuse to tell the crucified Lord at the last day that His death and pain for us was rejected by us because of the cranky people in a church we attended. The cross is still there, and His outstretched arms towards us must not be spurned because of an argument here and hypocrisy there. Likewise those who see through those things and will not be swayed from their focus on the Lord who loved them, and who will not spurn His Spirit because others do, are thereby declared "approved" even now. For the essence of judgment day is worked out today. "Approved" translates a word meaning 'tried'; it is in James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he is *tried* he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him". The experience of division in the church is the trial through which we demonstrate our acceptance before the Lord, and even have a foretaste of the Lord's acceptance at the last day.

Although sects and divisions should not be within the one body of Christ, in another sense there must be such sectarianism that they which are approved may be "made manifest" by their response to it- in anticipation of how we will all be "made manifest" (s.w.) at the judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). In this we see the Divine ecology; nothing is wasted. There must not be divisions; but even when they do occur, they are used by God in order to manifest the righteous and the principles of true spirituality. Thus trial can easily arise from within our ecclesial experience.

11:20 *When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat*- Verse 21 goes on to reason that *the Lord's* supper has become *their own* supper. Our breaking of bread is *far far more* than *just* religious ritual, although on one level it is that. But we must rise well above this. Israel kept the Passover (cp. the breaking of bread), and yet to God they never *really* kept it. The Corinthians took the cup of the Lord and that of the idols; they broke bread with both (1 Cor. 10:21). But they were told they *could not* do this. They took the cup of the Lord; but not in the Lord's eyes. They turned *His* supper into their *own* supper. They did it, but for themselves. And so in spiritual terms, they didn't do it (1 Cor. 11:20.21). Just as the "*Lord's* passover" became by the time of the NT "the feast of *the Jews*". They turned His Passover into their own. Likewise they turned the house *of God* into their *own* house (Mt. 23:38); and the Lord called the law of God through Moses as now "*their* law" (Jn. 15:25). And so we must just accept the real possibility that we can break bread on the surface, but not break bread. We've probably all done this. Don't let it become the norm. Likewise Israel had to be asked the rhetorical question: "*Have ye* offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years?" (Am. 5:25). Because they *also* worshipped Molech, their keeping of the feasts wasn't accepted. So I can ask again: Do you *really* break bread? Israel kept their Passovers throughout the wilderness years, one would assume- but they never remembered the day that God brought them out of Egypt (Ps. 78:42)- although notice how although Israel didn't remember God, yet He remembered them in His grace (Ps. 106:7, 45).

11:21 *For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk*- "His *own* meal" meant it was no longer *the Lord's* meal- see on :20. The idea of a ritual meal, accompanied by abuse of alcohol and religious prostitutes, was typical of Corinthian religiosity. Clearly the Christian church there had turned the communion service into something similar. And worse still, the whole ceremony became a place to flaunt wealth. And yet the meal was supposed to

represent the supreme unity enabled by the Lord's death, who on the cross became poor for our sakes.

11:22 *What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in?*- Paul has just been noting that some of them are drunk at the breaking of bread service because they turned the service into a feast similar to those of the idol cults. Paul is apparently telling them to go to their own homes and carry on like this. My response would have been to criticize them for getting drunk. But Paul's primary concern is for the church as a whole, and the damage done to other believers. And so he tells them to do this, if they must, in their own homes. Another possibility is that 'their houses' refer to the houses of the idols whose cults they were clearly still associated with. He would then be telling them to not serve two masters, and seeing they attempted to take the Lord's cup as well as that of idols (10:21) they were unable therefore to properly take the Lord's cup at all (11:20). He may therefore be telling them to go and carouse in the houses of their idols rather than in the Christian church.

Yet another possibility arises from the fact that the church was split into various house groups (listed in chapter 1); but they 'came together' at combined breaking of bread meetings.This wasn't the time to indulge in a huge party, with all the emphasis upon eating and drinking your own food and wine, rather than focusing upon that which God had provided in Jesus. Hence he comments: "Have you not houses to eat and to drink in?" (1 Cor. 11:22). Given almost every reference to 'house' in Corinthians is to a house church or to the spiritual house of God, it would seem Paul's idea is: 'It's OK to eat and drink and have a collective meal etc. in your house church meetings. But don't do that when you all meet together for the breaking of bread- it's getting divisive, because of the social differences between the house groups which are made apparent by the choice of food and drink'. They were to 'discern the body of the Lord Jesus' at those gatherings- i.e. recognize that all of them gathered there, the various house churches of Corinth, were in fact the collective body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29). If anyone was hungry and therefore in need of material support, the combined breaking of bread meeting wasn't the place to raise the issue- he should "eat at home", i.e. take food and support from his local house church (1 Cor. 11:34). That's surely a more reasonable reading, for at face value it would seem the hungry brother lacking food is being heartlessly told 'Well go home and eat!'.

Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who do not have? What shall I say to you? - The reference to shaming connects to the allusions to the trial of jealousy commented on under :5. To not offend others, to seek to save them, means that we will not despise them. 1 Cor. 11:22 accuses some brethren of despising others [s.w. Mt. 18:10 about despising the little ones] in the ecclesia by "shaming" them. If we perceive the value of persons, the meaning of others personhood, we will not shame them in our words, gestures, body language or actions. No "shameful speaking" should proceed out of our mouths (Col. 3:8 RV). Of course, the true believer in Christ cannot be ashamed- for whilst some stumble on Christ, the rock of offence, the believer in Him will not be shamed (Rom. 9:33; 10:11- s.w. 1 Cor. 11:22). For his or her sure hope of the Kingdom "maketh not [to be] ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). Again, if our hope of the Kingdom is real to us, nobody will make us ashamed, will in reality make us feel despised, or make us stumble. The reality ahead will transfix us so that all human unkindness toward us gains no permanent lodgment in our hearts. We do well to review our way of talking and acting to ensure we do not shame others.

Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you!- This connects to how he praised some of them in :2. But this group who behaved in this way were not being praised.

11:23- see on 1 Cor. 11:2.

For I received of the Lord that which I in turn delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread- The order of service which the Lord had given Paul required just a cup of wine and loaf of bread. Their style of feasting was not at all His intention. Note how Paul associates the themes of betrayal and the breaking of bread- and John quotes the prophecy that "He who feeds on bread with me has raised his heel against me" in the context of Judas breaking bread with Jesus. "Is it I?" must be a dominant part of the breaking of bread experience. The hint was clearly enough that there was one present at the original last supper who had betrayed the Lord; and Paul saw those who were also involved with the idol cults as being represented by Judas the betrayer.

11:24- see on Jn. 6:51.

And when he had given thanks- Paul saw the breaking of bread prefigured in Christ's feeding of the 4000 after taking the bread and blessing it, and then distributing to the disciples and they to the crowds (Mt. 15:36 = 1 Cor. 11:24). The connection surely show that the breaking of bread was not based upon any closed table ideology, but was radically open.

He broke it, and said: This is my body, which is for you. This do in remembrance of me- Some manuscripts add "which is *broken* for you". 'Broken' can imply divided and shared out. The gruesome record of the Levite cutting up his wife's body and sending parts of the body throughout all Israel has much to teach us of the power of the memorial service. It was done so that all who received the parts of that broken body would "take advice and speak [their] minds" (Jud. 19:30). It was designed to elicit the declaration of their hearts, and above all to provoke to concrete action. Splitting up a body and sharing it with all Israel was clearly a type of the breaking of bread, where in symbol, the same happens. Consider some background, all of which points forward to the Lord's sufferings:

- The person whose body was divided up was from Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah (Jud. 19:1)
- They were 'slain' by permission of a priest
- They were dragged to death by a wicked Jewish mob
- They were "brought forth" to the people just as the Lord was to the crowd (Jud. 19:25)
- "Do what seemeth good unto you" (Jud. 19:24) is very much Pilate language
- A man sought to dissuade the crowd from their purpose- again, as Pilate.

There should be a like effect upon us as we receive the emblems of the Lord's 'broken body'- the inner thoughts of our hearts are elicited, and we are provoked to action.

Considering how the bread represents the body of Christ leads us to a common query: 'Seeing that "a bone of Him shall not be (and was not) broken", how can we say that we remember the *broken* body of Jesus by *breaking* the bread?'. First of all, it must be understood that 'breaking bread' or 'eating bread' is simply an idiom for sharing in a meal (Is. 58:7; Jer. 16:7; Lam. 4:4; Ez. 17:7; 24:17; Hos. 9:4; Dt. 26:14; Job 42:11). 'Bread' is used for any food, just as 'salt' is used in the same way in Arabic. The breaking of a loaf of bread is not necessarily implicit in the phrase (although it can be). However, we must also be aware of a fundamental misconception which one feels is held by many; that the physical blood and body of Christ are *all* that we come to remember. This notion is related to that which feels that

there is some mystical power in the physical bread and wine in themselves. Robert Roberts makes the point in *The Blood of Christ* that "it is not the blood as literal blood that is precious or efficacious". And the same might be said about the Lord's literal body. His body and blood were no different to those of any other man.

The fact that we are asked to symbolize His broken body, when it is stated that His literal body was *not* broken, is proof enough that Christ's body is to be understood as something more than His literal flesh and blood. Indeed, 1 Cor. 10:16,17 seems to suggest that the "body of Christ" in which we partake through the bread is a symbol of the whole body of believers, just as much as His actual body which enabled this salvation. Likewise the Passover was not intended to commemorate the red liquid which flowed from the first Passover lambs, but to remember the salvation which God had achieved for *all Israel* on account of that. Christ bore our sins "in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24)- and it was more in His mind and mental awareness that this was true, rather than our sins being in (e.g.) His arms and legs. Other uses of " body" which require reference to our whole mind and being, rather than our literal body, include Mt. 5:29,30; 6:22-25; Jn. 2:21; Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:19; 9:23. Luke's record of the Last Supper shows how the Lord spoke of His body and blood as parallel with His whole sacrifice: "This is my body... this do in remembrance of *me* (His whole way of life- not just His physical body). This cup is the new testament in my blood, which *is* shed for you" (Lk. 22:19,20). Col. 1:20 likewise parallels “the blood of the cross" with “him" (the man Jesus). Rom. 7:4 puts “the body of Christ" for the death of that body; He was, in His very person, His death. The cross was a living out of a spirit of self-giving which *was* Him. The cup of wine represents the promises ("testament") of salvation which have been confirmed by Christ's blood. Note how Jesus quietly spoke of "my body which *is* (being) given for you... my blood which *is* shed for you". The pouring out of His life/blood was something ongoing, which was occurring even as He spoke those words. The cross was a summation of a lifetime of outpouring and breaking of His innermost being, or "body". It is this that we remember at the breaking of bread. The Passover was comprised of the lamb plus bread. The breaking of bread, the Passover for Christians, is wine and bread. The lamb was thus replaced in the thought of Jesus by His blood / wine. He perceived that His blood was Him, in that sense.

It is also worth reflecting how the Hebrew writer saw the torn veil as a symbol of the Lord’s flesh. It is just possible that the physical tearing of the Lord’s flesh at His death through the nails represented the tearing of His flesh nature, symbolized in the physical tearing of the veil. But the tearing of the veil was something essential and far reaching- not a surface rip. The Lord’s death is surely to be understood as a tearing apart of the flesh nature and tendencies which He bore; and it is this we remember in breaking the bread which represents His flesh. Note that to break the bread in a place was an idiom for breaking the life there (Ez. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13; Lev. 26:26). This was what the Lord asks us to remember- not the physical breaking of His body, but the breaking of His life for us and sharing it with us (Is. 58:7).

11:25 *In the same manner also the cup, after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood-* The breaking of bread brings us before the cross, which is in a sense our judgment seat. There can only be two exits from the Lord’s throne, to the right or to the left, and likewise we are faced with such a choice in our response to the bread and wine. The cup of wine is a double symbol- either of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25), or of condemnation (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Rev. 14:10; 16:19). The very structure of the Hebrew language reflects this. Thus the Hebrew *baruch*

means both ‘blessed’ and ‘cursed’; *kedoshim* means both ‘Sodomites’ and ‘saints’. Why this use of a double symbol? Surely the Lord designed this sacrament in order to highlight the two ways which are placed before us by taking that cup: it is either to our blessing, or to our condemnation. Each breaking of bread is a further stage along one of those two roads. Indeed, the Lord’s supper is a place to which the rejected are invited (Zeph. 1:7,8; Rev. 19:7), or the redeemed (Rev. 3:20). Like the cup of wine, being invited to the Lord’s supper is a double symbol. And there is no escape by simply not breaking bread. The peace offering was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of “eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship.

This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me- This seems carefully worded so as to free us from any idea that we must break bread at a certain commanded frequency. Or perhaps the import was more practical- in that the cup was being used as means for getting drunk. The idea would be: 'Every time you lift that cup to your mouth and drink, it is to be in remembrance of the Lord- and not in the name of something else, and just as a path towards intoxication'.

11:26 *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death*- 1 Cor. 11:26 AVmg. makes the act of breaking bread a command, an imperative to action: “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew ye the Lord’s death, till he come". If we are going to eat the emblems, it is axiomatic that we will commit ourselves to shewing forth His death to the world, like Paul placarding forth Christ crucified in our lives (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). The Passover likewise had been a ‘shewing’ to one’s family “that which the Lord did unto me" (Ex. 13:8), the redemption we have experienced. The description of the memorial service as being a 'proclamation' of the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26 RV) is an allusion to the second of the four cups taken at the Jewish Passover: "the cup of proclamation". This was drunk after the reading of Psalms 113 and 114, which proclaimed Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Therefore our breaking bread is our proclamation that we really believe that we have been saved out of this world, and are on the wilderness path to the Kingdom. God forbid, really, that our breaking bread should come down to mere ritual and habit. It is a very personal proclamation of our own salvation- as well as that of the whole body of believers.

Until he comes- This is surely an allusion, but not a quotation, to the Lord's comment that He would not take the cup again *until* He returns (Mk. 14:25). The most evident link between the breaking of bread and the judgment / second coming is in the fact we are to do it “until he come". The Jews expected Messiah to come at Passover, and the Lord seems to have plugged into that fact. ‘Until he come’ was an allusion by Paul to the contemporary Passover prayer for the coming of Messiah at the Passover meal: “May the Lord come and this world pass away. Amen. Hosanna to the house of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen". Joachim Jeremias translates the phrase: “’Until (matters have developed to the point at which) he comes’, ‘until (the goal is reached, that) he comes’". He points out a similar construction in other passages relevant to the second coming (Lk. 21:24;

1 Cor. 15:25; Rom. 11:25). Thus each memorial meeting brings us a step closer towards the final coming of Jesus. It would therefore be so appropriate if the Lord did return during a breaking of bread. One day, the foretaste of judgment which we experience then will be, in reality, our final judgment. As we break bread, each time we are 'reminding' the Father as well as ourselves of His Son's work and the need to climax it in sending Him back.

11:27 *Therefore whoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner*- The "unworthy manner" in the context clearly refers to things such as using church prostitutes at the breaking of bread, getting drunk on the wine there as if the whole service was an idol ritual, and in fact not really keeping the Lord's supper because they were also drinking the cup of idols (10:21) and had turned the Lord's supper into their own supper (:20). We come to the Lord's table as sinners; our pangs of conscience are in fact the sign we are there in the right and 'worthy' manner. The Greek for "unworthy" means 'irreverent'; and this is exactly the context. It is drunkenness with the wine, using it as part of an orgy, which is the irreverence in view.

Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord- Noting the earlier allusion to Judas (see on :23), we can rightly assume that again it is Judas whom Paul has in mind. The unworthy are not weak sinners, which is us all, but those who wilfully are betraying the Lord.

11:28 *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*- We are to eat in a spirit of self examination ["so..."], not of light hearted partying as was happening at Corinth. See on :29 *discern*.

There seems an allusion in this section to Joseph's cup of divination. The Hebrew for "divines" means literally 'to make trial'; their taking of the cup was their trial / judgment. Thus we drink either blessing or condemnation to ourselves by taking the cup. The word used by the LXX for "divines" in Gen. 44:5 occurs in the NT account of the breaking of bread service: 'everyone should *examine* himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup' (1 Cor. 11:28). The Lord examines us, as we examine ourselves. There is a mutuality here- the spirit of man is truly the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). He searches us through our own self-examination. He knows all things, but there may still be methods that He uses to gather than information. Our hearts are revealed to God through our own self-examination. And is it mere co-incidence that the Hebrew words for "divination" and "snake" are virtually identical [*nahash*]? The snake lifted up on the pole [cp. the crucified Jesus] is the means of trial / divination. Through the cross, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed (Lk. 2:35), just as they will be at the last day. Thus the breaking of bread ceremony is a means towards the sort of realistic self-examination which we find so hard to achieve in normal life.

The whole story of Joseph is one of the clearest types of Jesus in the Old Testament. The way His brethren come before His throne and are graciously accepted is one of the most gripping foretastes we have of the final judgment. The rather strange way Joseph behaves towards them was surely to elicit within them a true repentance. He sought to bring them to self-knowledge through His cup. Joseph stresses to the brethren that it is through his cup that he "divines" to find out their sin. He also emphasizes that by stealing the cup they had "done evil" (Gen. 44:4,5). And yet they didn't actually steal the cup. The "evil" which they had done was to sell him into Egypt (Gen. 50:20). They had "stolen" him (Gen. 40:15) in the same way they had "stolen" the cup. This is why he says that "ye" (you plural, not singular, as it would

have been if he was referring merely to Benjamin's supposed theft) had stolen it (Gen. 44:15). And the brethren in their consciences understood what Joseph was getting at- for instead of insisting that they hadn't stolen the cup, they admit: "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (Gen. 44:16). Clearly their minds were on their treatment of Joseph, the sin which they had thought would not be found out. And this was why they were *all* willing to bear the punishment of becoming bondmen, rather than reasoning that since Benjamin had apparently committed the crime, well he alone must be punished. The cup was "found" and they realized that God had "found out" their joint iniquity (Gen. 44:10,12,16). The cup was perceived by them as their "iniquity" with Joseph. They had used the very same Hebrew words years before, in telling Jacob of Joseph's garment: "This have we found…" (Gen. 37:32).

The cup made them realize their guilt and made them acceptive of the judgment they deserved. And it made them quit their attempts at parading their own righteousness, no matter how valid it was in the immediate context (Gen. 44:8). The cup made them realize their real status, and not just use empty words. Behold the contradiction in Gen. 44:9: "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my Lord's bondmen / servants". The Hebrew words translated "servants" and "bondmen" are the same. Their mere formal recognition that they were Joseph's servants was to be translated into reality. Thus they say that Joseph had "found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we *are* my Lord's servants". Describing themselves as His servants had been a mere formalism; now they wanted it in a meaningful reality. And the Lord's cup can do the same to us. The way they were "searched" (Gen. 44:12) from the oldest to the youngest was surely the background for how the guilty men pined away in guilt from the Lord, from the eldest to the youngest. The whole experience would have elicited self-knowledge within them. The same word is found in Zech. 1:12, describing how God Himself would search out the sin of Jerusalem.

Joseph was trying to tell them: 'What you did to the cup, you did to me. That cup is a symbol of me'. And inevitably the mind flies to how the Lord solemnly took the cup and said that this was Him. Our attitude to those emblems is our attitude to Him. We have perhaps over-reacted against the Roman Catholic view that the wine turns into the very blood of Jesus. It doesn't, of course, but all the same the Lord did say that the wine *is* His blood, the bread *is* His body. Those emblems are effectively Him to us. They are symbols, but not mere symbols. If we take them with indifference, with minds focused on externalities, then this is our essential attitude to Him personally. This is why the memorial meeting ought to have an appropriate intensity about it- for it is a personal meeting with Jesus. "Here O my Lord, I see thee face to face". If it is indeed this, then the cup will be the means of eliciting within us our own realization of sin and subsequently, of our salvation in Jesus.

Joseph's brothers' words are exactly those of Daniel in Dan. 10:15-17, where in another death and resurrection experience, he feels just the same as he lays prostrate before the Angel. Our attitude to the Lord in the last day will be our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread- just as our "boldness" in prayer now will be our "boldness" in the day of judgment. In the same way as the brothers had to be reassured by Joseph of his loving acceptance, so the Lord will have to 'make us' sit down with Him, and encourage us to enter into His joy. There will be some sort of disbelief at the extent of

His grace in all those who are truly acceptable with Him ("When saw we thee…?"). The brothers grieved and were angry with themselves in the judgment presence of Joseph (Gen. 45:5)- they went through the very feelings of the rejected (cp. "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in self-hatred). And yet they were graciously accepted, until like Daniel they can eventually freely talk with their saviour Lord (Gen. 45:15). And so the sheep will feel rejected at the judgment, they will condemn themselves- in order to be saved ultimately. The same words occur in Neh. 8:10,11, when a repentant Israel standing before the judgment *bema* (LXX) are given the same assurance.

11:29 *For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not discern the body of the Lord*- The invitation to *discern* the Lord's body at the memorial meeting uses the same word occurs in v.28: "let a man *examine* himself". It's too bad that the translations mask this connection. We are to examine / discern the Lord's body, and to do the same to ourselves. The two are inextricably related. Meditation upon and analysis of *His* body will lead to *self* examination and discernment. In this lies the answer to the frequent question: 'What should we examine at the breaking of bread? Our own sins, or the facts of the crucifixion / resurrection?'. If we think about the latter, we will inevitably be led to think of the former. In the Corinthian context, the body of Christ is to be understood as the ecclesia. 1 Cor. 12 is full of this figure. The need to discern the Lord's body at the breaking of bread means that we must go beyond reflection upon His physical body. We must recognise / discern His ecclesia too. The immediate context of 1 Cor. 11 is of unbrotherly behaviour at the memorial meeting. If we fail to recognise / appreciate / discern the Lord's physical body, we will fail to recognise His brethren. And if we do this, we have made ourselves guilty of His body and blood, we have crucified Him again. This is why I plead with those who use the breaking of bread as a weapon for division within the Lord's body to think again. The body which we must discern at the breaking of bread evidently has some reference to the ecclesia. We thereby place ourselves in a dangerous position by refusing to share the emblems with others in the body, and disfellowshipping those who do so.

Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 10-12 seems to be specifically in the context of the memorial meeting. The issue he addresses is that of disunity at the Lord's table- different groups were excluding others. It is in this context that he urges believers to "discern the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29)- and the Lord's body he has previously defined as referring to the believers within that one body. For in 1 Cor. 10:17 he stresses that all who have been baptized into the body of God's people "being many are one loaf, and one body". There's only ultimately one loaf, as there's only one Christ. All within that one body are partaking of the same loaf whenever they "break bread", and therefore division between them is not possible in God's sight. "The bread which we break, is it not the *koinonia*, the sharing in fellowship, of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). By breaking bread we show our unity not only with Him personally, but with all others who are in His one body. To refuse to break bread with other believers- which is what was happening in Corinth- is therefore stating that effectively they are outside of the one body. And yet if in fact they *are* within the body of Christ, then it's actually those who are refusing them the emblems who are thereby declaring *themselves* not to be part of Christ.

Our attitude to the cross *and all that is meant by it* is the summation of our spirituality. I normally dislike using alternative textual readings to make a point, but there is an alternative reading of 1 Cor. 11:29 which makes this point so clearly: "He who eats and drinks ['unworthily' isn't in many manuscripts], eats and drinks discernment [judgment] to Himself. Not discerning the Lord's body is the reason

many of you are weak and sickly". The Corinthians were not discerning the difference between the Lord's body and a piece of bread, for they were eating the bread as part of a self-indulgent social meal, rather than discerning Him.

The command to *examine* ourselves uses the same word as in 3:13 concerning the way our works will be *tried* with fire by the judgment process of the last day. If members of an ecclesia break bread unworthily, they "come together unto condemnation" (11:34). Yet we must judge ourselves at these meetings, to the extent of truly realising we deserve condemnation (1 Cor. 11:31). We must examine ourselves and conclude that at the end of the day we are "unprofitable servants" (Lk. 18:10), i.e. worthy of condemnation (the same phrase is used about the rejected, Mt. 25:30). This is after the pattern of the brethren at the first breaking of bread asking "Is it I?" in response to the Lord's statement that one of them would betray Him (Mt. 26:22). They didn't immediately assume they wouldn't do. And so we have a telling paradox: those who condemn themselves at the memorial meeting will not be condemned. Those who are sure they won't be condemned, taking the emblems with self-assurance, come together unto condemnation. Job knew this when he said that if he justifies himself, he will be condemned out of his own mouth (Job 9:20- he understood the idea of self-condemnation and judgment now). Isaiah also foresaw this, when he besought men (in the present tense): "Enter *into the rock*, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty", and then goes on to say that in the day of God's final judgment, "[the rejected] shall go *into* the holes of *the rock...* for *fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty* when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Is. 2:10,11,19-21). We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment.

Judging / examining ourselves is made parallel with discerning the Lord's body: as if discerning His body on the cross inevitably results in self-examination, and vice versa (1 Cor. 11:28,29). We must *discern* the Lord's body, and thereby *examine* ourselves (these are the same words in the Greek text). Yet the Lord's body in the Corinthian context is the ecclesia, the body of Jesus. To discern ourelves is to discern the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29,30 RV). By discerning our brethren for who they are, treating them as brethren, perceiving our own part in the body of Jesus, our salvation is guaranteed. For this is love, in its most fundamental essence.

If we examine / judge / condemn ourselves now in our self-examination, God will not have to do this to us at the day of judgment. If we cast away our own bodies now, the Lord will not need to cast us away in rejection (Mt. 5:30). There is a powerful logic here. If we pronounce ourselves uncondemned, we condemn ourselves (Tit. 3:11); if we condemn ourselves now, we will be uncondemned ultimately. This is why the Greek word translated "examine" (1 Cor. 11:29) is also that translated "approve" in 11:19 (and also 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 13:7; 2 Tim. 2:15). By condemning ourselves we in a sense approve ourselves. Our self-examination should result in us realising our unworthiness, seeing ourselves from God's viewpoint. There is therefore a parallel made between our own judgment of ourselves at the memorial meeting, and the final judgment- where we will be condemned, yet saved by grace (James 2:12; 3:1). If we don't attain this level of self-knowledge now, we will be taught it by being condemned at the judgment. This makes the logic of serious, real self-examination so vital; either we do it in earnest, and realise our own condemnation, or if we *don't* do it, we'll be condemned at the judgment. Yet as with so much in our spiritual experience, what is

so evidently logical is so hard to translate into reality. The process of judgment will essentially be for our benefit, not the Lord's. *Then* the foolish virgins realise that they didn't have enough oil / spirituality; whilst the wise already knew this (Mt. 25:13). As a foretaste of the day of judgment, we must "examine" ourselves, especially at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:28). The same word is used in 1 Cor. 3:13 concerning how the process of the judgment seat will be like a fire which *tries* us.

11:30 *For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep*- It was due to an incorrect attitude to the memorial meeting that many at Corinth were struck down "weak and sickly... and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30), presumably referring to the power the apostles had to smite apostate believers with physical discomfort and death. Such was the importance accorded to that meeting by them. This is not the only reference to physical sickness or death being used in the first century as a punishment for apostasy (Acts 5:5; James 5:15; Rev. 2:22,23).

11:31 *If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*- If we perceive ourselves as worthy of condemnation, we will be saved. If we would judge [i.e. condemn] ourselves, we will not be judged / condemned. This is written in the context of the breaking of bread. When we examine ourselves then, and at other times, do we get to the point where we truly *feel* through and through our condemnation? If this is how we perceive our natural selves, then surely we will be saved- if we *also* believe with joy that God's righteousness is counted to us. See on Lk. 17:10.

Our self-examination must be so intense that we appreciate that we ought to be condemned; if we achieve that level of self-knowledge now, we will not be condemned at the judgment. In the context of the self-examination command in 1 Cor. 11, Paul is speaking of the need to completely focus our attention on the sacrifice of Christ. Yet this command must have its basis in the directive for Israel to search their house for leaven before eating the Passover (Ex. 12:19). "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven... of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:8). The disciples' question at the first breaking of bread, "Lord, is it I?" is another prototype of the command to examine ourselves at the feast (Mt. 26:22). Combining Paul's command to examine ourselves that we are really focusing upon our Lord's sacrifice, and the Exodus allusion which implies that we should examine our own lives for wickedness, we conclude that if we properly reflect upon Christ and His victory for us, then we will inevitably be aware of our own specific failures which Christ really has vanquished. But this will come as a by-product of truly grasping the fullness of the Lord's victory. The Passover was to be a public proclamation to the surrounding world of what God had done for Israel. Likewise our feast 'shows forth' (Greek: 'publicly declares') the Lord's death. Our memorial meeting should therefore include a degree of openly declaring to others what spiritual deliverances the Lord has wrought for us. This is surely the sort of talk that should fill up the half hour between ending the service and leaving the hall.

11:32- see on Lk. 13:28.

But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world- Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). If we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from

them when the judgments fall. If we don't come out from Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4).

“The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts" (Prov. 20:27); our self-examination is what reveals us to the Lord. What we think about at the memorial meeting, as we are faced with the memory of the crucified Saviour, is therefore an epitome of what we really are. If all we are thinking of is the taste of the wine, the cover over the bread, the music, what we didn’t agree with in the sermon, all the external things of our Christianity; or if we are sitting there taking bread and wine as a conscience salver, doing our little religious ritual to make us feel psychologically safe- then we simply don’t know Him. We are surface level believers only. And this is the message we give Him. Our spirit / attitude is the candle of the Lord, with which He searches us. Our thoughts when confronted by the cross reveal us to Him who died on it. Likewise Joseph (one of the most detailed types of the Lord) knew / discerned his brethren by his cup (Gen. 44:5). 1 Cor. 11:31,32 further suggests that our self-judgment at the breaking of bread is in fact the lord’s judgment of us: “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord". We expect Paul to say: ‘But when we judged ourselves, we are chastened...’. But he doesn’t; our judgment is what reveals us to the Lord, and is therefore the basis of His judgment of us. Even if we flunk conscious self-examination from an underlying disbelief that we will attain the Kingdom, then this of itself reveals our hearts to Him.

Because of this connection between the breaking of bread and judgment, it would seem that the first century church experienced the physical chastising of the Lord in terms of being struck with sickness and even death *at the memorial meeting* (1 Cor. 11:29,30). Thus at ecclesial meetings- particularly the breaking of bread- the early church confessed their sins and prayed for healing from the afflictions some were smitten with as a result of their sins (James 5:14-16). It's easy to forget that the prophecy of the crucifixion in Is. 53 is in fact a confession of repentance by God's people- as His sufferings are spoken about, so they lead to the confession that "He was bruised for *our* iniquities... with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:3,5). Reflection on the servant's sufferings elicited repentance. See on Lk. 2:35.

11:33 *Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat*- The eating and drinking at the memorial meeting is a judging of ourselves. It’s a preview of the judgment. All of 1 Cor. 11 seems to be concerning behaviour at the memorial meeting. Time and again the brethren are described as “coming together" to that meeting (:17,18,20,33,34). Believers ‘coming together’ is the language of coming together to judgment. Where two or three are *gathered* , the Lord is in the midst of them (Mt. 18:20) uses the same word as in Mt. 25:32 concerning our gathering together unto judgment. We should not forsake the “assembling of [ourselves] together" (Heb. 10:25)- the same word as in 2 Thess. 2:1 regarding our “gathering together unto Him". The church being assembled (Acts 11:26), two or three being gathered (Mt. 18:20)- this is all a foretaste of the final gathering to judgment (Mt. 25:32 s.w.).

Wait for one another- Again, despite all the serious abuses present at the Corinthian communion services, Paul's paramount concern is for love to be shown to each other. Waiting for each other may mean literally waiting for all to be present before beginning the service, rather than selfishly focusing upon themselves. But "wait for" can also mean to 'look out for', to wait for another's good- as in James 5:7; 1 Pet. 3:20.

11:34 *If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home*- See on :22. The assumption is that the person has food at home to eat; so I would doubt whether this is a reference to any attending the meetings just in order to be fed. In any case, the hungry remained hungry, because the more prosperous didn't share their food with them (:21). So I suggest Paul is targetting the Corinthian's justification of their feasting by saying that they were eating because they were hungry. His comment is that if you're hungry, then eat at home- not at church. Continually we find the interpretation of Corinthians to depend upon understanding or guessing the content of the questions which Paul was responding to.

That your coming together be not to condemnation. About the other things I will give instruction when I come- If we break bread unworthily, they "come together unto condemnation" (11:34). Yet we must judge ourselves at these meetings, to the extent of truly realising we deserve condemnation (1 Cor. 11:31). If we feel we are worthy, then, we are unworthy. If we feel unworthy, then, we are worthy.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

12:1 *Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts-* Chapter 1 has explained that they had been given the Spirit, but they were not spiritual (3:1), and were refusing the leading of the Spirit. Paul wanted them to be aware of the working of the Spirit and how they were to walk in step with that Spirit. The Greek means literally 'spirituals'; it is the general working of the Spirit that is in view here, not specifically the miraculous gifts. By saying "I do not want you to be ignorant", the emphasis might be placed upon the word "not". Maybe they were justifying their lack of spirituality by claiming that Paul had kept them in the dark about the Spirit's working.

12:2 *You know that when you were Gentiles you were led away to those dumb idols, in whichever way you might have been led-* Paul places their idol worship in the past tense, but it is clear from several places that many of them were still involved in idol worship and even drunk the cups of the idols (10:21). This is another example of where Paul assumes his readership are saved and counts them as obedient when he knows that in practice they are not. Ellicott suggests the imperfect tense should be translated "As from time to time ye might be led". This would mean that they occasionally went off to the idol temples and then at times to the Christian church meetings. It is this kind of fickleness which is typical of so many converts to Christ. "When you were Gentiles" implies they were no longer Gentiles; they had a new identity as God's people, spiritual Israel. "Led away" is a strange term to use as it is often used with the sense of 'led away to death'. The idea would be that idol worship leads to death, and therefore there can be no compromise between idol worship and Christianity. They lead to death and life respectively, and nobody can be on both paths. The dumbness of the idols (alluding to Ps. 115:5,7 and Hab. 2:18,19- these were the types of idols which apostate Israel worshipped) is contrasted with the activity and sensitivity of the Lord the Spirit, who causes His people to speak forth the fact He is Lord (:3). The dumb idols claimed to speak through their priests and prostitute priestesses, who supposedly spoke forth the words of the gods at places like Delphi or other shrine. But by contrast, the Lord Jesus speaks in the hearts and minds of His people wherever they are (:3).

12:3 *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit-* The speaking of the Spirit is very different to the speaking of the gods represented by the idols- see on :2. It deeply costs us to accept Jesus as Lord. Yet for so many moments of each day, we deny Him His Lordship in practice. In the first century, accepting Jesus as Lord was a life and death issue. Pliny wrote to Trajan how accused Christians had to both say "The emperor is Lord" and also curse Christ. Polycarp was urged by a Roman official to submit: "What harm is there in saying "Caesar is Lord?"", and yet because he refused, Polycarp was killed (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8.2). Paul had likewise forced Christians to blaspheme, probably by saying this curse upon Jesus (Acts 26:11). It would seem that there were some Christians who gave in- and even justified it by saying that the Spirit had told them to do this. For 1 Cor. 12:3 warns that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is cursed!", and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit". My suggestion is that this is a reference to Mt. 10:17, which comforts believers that when we are delivered up, "what you are to say will be given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you". It would appear that some of the Christians who gave in were claiming that in accordance with this verse, it was the Spirit of God which had made them say "Jesus is cursed!" and deny that "Jesus is

Lord". Paul is pointing out that this simply doesn't happen. In fact, the opposite. The Spirit of God will strengthen us not to give in and curse Jesus. The way of escape which we will be given (1 Cor. 10:13) is of the Spirit. And those who did resist the pressure to curse Christ, did so by the gift of the Spirit.

In our context, the point simply is that to constantly affirm "Jesus is Lord" demands an awful lot from us, and as in the first century, so in the twenty first... we will be sorely tempted to think that just a few moments of denial when in a tough situation is quite OK. But in this there is the true test as to whether really we are under His Lordship or not. We have no court to face, no lions to fear. Instead, we have the court of human opinion, the lions of social mockery, financial loss, the human negatives that arise from the unselfish living which Christ's Lordship demands of us. Paul had forced Christians to blaspheme under torture- to say things like "Jesus is accursed". He knew from experience that those who truly had the Spirit somehow had the strength not to say those words. And through that same Spirit had had the power to answer Saul: "No, Jesus is Lord", as he tortured them to say "Jesus is anathema / accursed". It could also be that there were false teachers at Corinth claiming to be inspired by God, who were claiming that Jesus is accursed.

As with Pentecostalism today, the Corinthians were wrongly obsessed with the more visible and dramatic gifts. And Paul is beginning his critique of this by pointing out that the essential work of the Spirit is within the heart, leading people to confess "Jesus is Lord" even in the midst of persecution. And likewise, strengthening believers to refuse to curse Him.

12:4 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*- Verses 4-6 connect gifts with the Spirit; service with the Lord Jesus (:5); and activities with the God who empowers them (:6). This is an example of where Paul often brings together the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Trinitarian doctrine in its standard form is wrong in the relationships it presupposes between these three entities. But as the baptismal formula of Matthew 28 makes clear, the believer is associated with Father, Son and Holy Spirit by baptism. Baptism is the point at which the Spirit gifts were given, and baptism associates with Father, Son and Spirit. This I suggest is the reason for the allusion to all three entities here in the context of the gifts of the Spirit.

There is major emphasis within this section upon there being only one and the same Spirit; all the blessing and gifts were all manifestations of the same one Spirit. We wonder why there is such repeated emphasis. I suggest the answer is in appreciating the degree to which the Corinthian church was operating its services in a way similar to the rituals of the idol temples, which had been their previous religious experience. And this is true to observation with modern converts to true Christianity- they will have a tendency to bring with them the practices of religion which they were previously exposed to, despite the apparent change in understanding concerning Jesus as Lord and focus. These cults, especially in Corinth, also featured the idea of spirit possession and speaking in tongues, in the sense of glossolalia / ecstatic utterance. The idea was that a worshipper of the idol slept with the cult prostitutes and in turn, were possessed by the spirit of the god who was represented by the idol. This possession was thought to be expressed in terms of ecstatic utterances and moaning / groaning, and could also produce supposed words of wisdom and knowledge. It was typical for people to have relationships with multiple gods and to claim possession by the spirits of the various gods. I suggest that this was what was going on amongst some in the Corinthian church. But they were claiming that all this was in fact part of their possession by the spirit of the Lord Jesus. To understand the Corinthian correspondence correctly, we need to appreciate this. Hence so much about speaking

in tongues in chapter 14 (Corinth was near to the oracle at Delfi where this was common). And it's why there is so much emphasis upon the Spirit of God being one, and responsible for all things. It was not that He, or His Son, were one source of spirit amongst many others. The unity of God and the unity of the Spirit are therefore connected- "one God... one Spirit... one Jesus" (Eph. 4:4-6). If there was only one true God, then there could only be one Spirit. If there were many gods / idols, there would be many spirits, each responsible for a different aspect of spiritual life.

The Greek word translated "diversities" and "divided" only occurs here in the New Testament (:4,5,6,11)- with one exception. It is when we read that the lovely Father "divided" all He had between His sons (Lk. 15:12). And they were to use it. The elder brother apparently did nothing with it, and the younger brother prodigally wasted it- and then repented. Perhaps the connection is intentional, as Paul so often alludes to the Lord's parables. We have therefore the idea that what we have been given is all the Lord has.

12:5 *And there are diversities of service, but the same Lord*- The gifts of the Spirit are given to enable us to serve the Lord. Never are they for our personal, secular benefit. They are for the service of others, through serving the Lord Jesus. The emphasis upon diversity would be appropriate to a community who favoured the more public, visible forms of service. See on :4.

12:6 *And there are diversities of activities, but the same God who empowers them all in everyone*- "Everyone" means that it can never be the case that only the church leadership are empowered. All are empowered- if they are open to it. "Activities" and "empowers" translate the same Greek term; literally, 'energy'. There is a power of energy within- "*in* everyone"- from God through the Spirit. Such internal empowering is within the human mind. The reference is not simply to the more visible miraculous powers; for as later explained in this chapter, those were not possessed by "everyone". See on :4.

12:7- see on Mt. 25:15.

But to each individual is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good- Again the stress is upon the way in which "each individual" has been given the Spirit; see on "everyone" in :6. Paul's theme in this letter so far is that the welfare of others must be paramount in our thinking. The Spirit is given "for the common good". All spiritual gifts and empowerments are not for ourselves; even the energy given within us (see on :6) is ultimately to be used for the good of others.

Although NEV offers "each individual", the Greek literally means ‘to each one’, and it could refer to how each house church was given a specific gift; although note :11 "each man". I say that because there is New Testament evidence that suggests that not every single individual believer in the first century had miraculous Holy Spirit gifts. That is hard to square with 1 Cor. 12 teaching that ‘each one’ had such gifts. But remember the context. Paul has been arguing that there is one body of Christ in Corinth, and each house church contributes towards that. The house churches were divided against each other and some groups shunned others. Paul is saying that each of those house groups played a vital role. We can take a lesson from this. Each ecclesia even today has a somewhat different emphasis, and all too easily, ecclesias can divide from each other. And yet this would be a denial of the one body of Christ; we not only need each other individually, each ecclesia needs each other ecclesia in their area, if they are to fully function as the one body. The warning against “schism

in the body" (1 Cor. 12:25) applied in the context to there being schism between local house churches, rather than between individuals.

12:8 *For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit*- Chapter 1 began by stating that the Corinthians as a church were enriched with all wisdom and knowledge. This was true insofar as these gifts had potentially been given to some within the community. But the church was divided, and the individuals it seems refused to recognize their gifts. And so the situation became analogous to that which we meet today- that many read the promises of Spirit empowerment and simply find them so untrue to observed experience. But that is our fault, both on an individual and collective level. See on :10.

12:9 *To another faith through the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings through the same one Spirit*- "Faith" may mean just that- the Spirit gives internal spiritual power to believe, once we have taken the step of faith and baptism. But *pistos* can also reasonably be translated 'conviction'; perhaps the reference is to the Spirit power to convict others of sin, as Peter displayed with Ananias and Sapphira, and which may have been used to smite some with illness as mentioned in James 5. Paul likewise appears to have used it in Acts 13:10. The plural "healings" suggests there were different gifts to heal different illnesses. See on :10.

12:10 *And to another workings of miracles, and to another prophecy and to another discerning of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues*- The question that arises of course is whether the Corinthians, who were for the most part not spiritual (3:1) and deeply astray in understanding and practice, actually had these gifts. When we read "to one is given... and to another... to another...", is this Paul describing how things are at Corinth? Or is he saying that these were the potentials? They had been given the gifts of wisdom, according to chapter 1; and yet Paul laments there was not a wise man amongst them (1 Cor. 6:5). They were struck down with sicknesses because of their abuse of the memorial meetings (1 Cor. 11:30); so why were they not healed, if the gifts of miracles, healings etc. were present amongst them? If indeed they had the gifts of speaking in and interpreting foreign languages ["tongues"], then why in chapter 14 will we read that they were talking in unintelligible language without an interpreter? I am therefore driven to the conclusion that these gifts had been given in potential to the community, every single member had some gift ["everyone... to each", :6,7]. But they were not using them, they were focused upon themselves rather than realizing that these gifts were given "for the common good" (:7).

12:11 - see on Mt. 25:15.

All these gifts are energized by one and the same Spirit, apportioned to each man according as he is willing to receive it- I have commented earlier on the emphasis upon the "same Spirit" being at work (see on :4), and upon the way that "each man" had been given a gift (:10). So much spiritual energy and potential lay wasted and idle in Corinth. But the key was the fact that they were given to each man "as he is willing to receive it". They were unwilling; because they were self centered and did not perceive that the gifts were given for the good of others (:7). If they had had a true passion to serve others, then they would have been willing to receive the gifts. The situation recalls the parable where the poor man is brave enough to knock on the door of his rich neighbour at midnight because he needs bread to give to another- an unexpected visitor. And the rich man will give him whatever he needs- in order to give to others (Lk. 11:8).

AV "dividing to every man severally". The idea is that each man receives something directly personal. The same word is used in 1 Cor. 7:11: "Yet I would that all men were even as I myself. However each man has *his own gift* from God, one after this manner and another after that". The context of chapter 12 is of ministry, but Paul is appealing to wider principles. Each has been given some unique gift from the Spirit. It could be our marital state (1 Cor. 7:11); it could be a calling to serve in some specific way. But we have each been given gifts. That is the idea. It is the "one talent" man who fails to perceive this. And is rejected because of it.

12:12 *For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though being many, are one body; so also is Christ*- Paul may be specifically alluding to the breaking of bread. For this is the language of 1 Cor. 10:17: "Seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partaking of the one loaf". Many being one is definitely the idea of Paul in Rom. 5:15,16,19; many sinners, and many sins, are all dealt with by the one, the Lord Jesus. They become one in Him. This is how we are saved- by being brethren "in Christ".

The term "Christ" is even used of the believers, such is His unity with us (1 Cor. 12:12). See on Jn. 3:11. The ideas go back to how Paul began 1 Corinthians. We are to have "the same mind", not uniformity of thought and position, but rather all striving to have the mind of Christ, as he also reasons in Phil. 2. We are Him, collectively. Although the context here is of ministry and each having different roles, in the wider sense, between us all there should be the complete expression of Christ to the world. One has more love, another has more justice, another focuses better on His gentleness. And thus the overall person of the Lord Jesus is expressed to the world. We are His body, the evidence of His resurrection. And He lives in us through the Spirit in order to achieve this.

The analogy to the human body means that every part is critical for the function of the whole. This is why despite the entire raft of problems at Corinth, Paul begins in chapter 1 by addressing their lack of unity. And he uses the same metaphor in Rom. 12:4,5, arguing that all members do not have the same function, but we are thereby "every one members one of another". This continual focus upon "every one" is in the context of the way that religion generally gives importance to the leadership, and the mass are expected to simply attend and empower the leadership. But in the body of Christ, each member is critical to the function of the whole. If any leave the body or malfunction, then all suffer. This is why Paul is so concerned that "members" of Christ's body should become one body with church prostitutes, because "your bodies are the members of Christ" (6:15). Yet within the same metaphor, we are "every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Undeniably, our membership within Christ is intimately connected to our membership of one another. This is why the practices of disfellowship and division, so common to many churches, are absolutely wrong. They deeply damage the entire community, including those who are responsible for them.

Paul's language here is very common to that used in the Imperial cult of Rome. The idea was that Caesar was the head of the body, and the empire functioned through each member contributing, knowing their station and place, and not seeking to aspire to any other role. Likewise the *polis* or city state like Corinth was often compared to a body, with each member playing a part, and division within it was thought to be unacceptable because all would suffer as a result of it. Paul, as he often does, subverts all this language and applies it to the Lord Jesus and His body; Casesar's kingdom is not to be the reality for the Christian, but rather the Kingdom of Jesus. He and not Caesar is to be the Head. He uses the word *polos*, "many [members]" in allusion to the

language of the *polis*, or city state. The Roman idea of the "one body" referred both to the local city, and also to the entire empire. And likewise the "one body" of Christ refers both to the local church, and to the wider, global body of Christ- the empire / Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

12:13- see on Gal. 3:27.

For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free- The argument is that unity arises from the receipt of the Spirit by every person baptized into the body of Christ. Each one is given the Spirit, although the Spirit will work in different ways. Jew, Gentile, slave and free are thereby united in what is elsewhere called the fellowship of the Spirit, the fellowship brought about by the Spirit; or as in 1 Cor. 1:9, the fellowship of / brought about by Jesus. Christ "shall baptize *you*" plural (Mt. 3:11) was deeply meditated upon by Paul, until he came to see in the fact that we *plural* are baptized. The strong implication is that therefore we should be one body, without unnecessary divisions. For *by one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body" of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit seems to be the baptizer. But how? The Lord Jesus baptizes by the Spirit (Jn. 1:33), although He didn't personally hold the shoulders of those He baptized (Jn. 4:2- doubtless to show that who does this is irrelevant). We obeyed the Truth (through baptism) "by the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:22). This doesn't necessarily mean that the Spirit made us obey the Truth. Rather is the idea that as *Christ* died and was raised by the Spirit (1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:4), so we go through the same process in baptism, being likewise resurrected (in a figure) by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18-21). It is therefore the Spirit which raises us up out of the water, as it raised Christ; the man holding our shoulders is irrelevant. It is therefore through / by the Spirit that we have our hope of salvation (Gal. 5:5). There is only one resurrection, ultimately: that of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 6:14,15). By baptism into Him, we have a part in that. God in this sense resurrected us with Christ (Eph. 2:5,6), we even ascended into heavenly places in Him, as He rose up into the literal Heavens. And this whole process was achieved by the Spirit. But what does the Spirit" mean in this context? The Lord Jesus Himself is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Spirit is what quickens us; but consider Jn. 6:63: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth... the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are (what gives) life”. The process of coming alive with Christ by baptism, the raising out of the grave which the water represents, is therefore due to the work of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit and His word. He is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). At baptism we are born of (or by) water-and-spirit (Jn. 3:5; the Greek implies one act, combining water and spirit). We were washed by baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). “He that is joined to the Lord (Jesus) (by baptism) is one spirit (with Him)" (1 Cor. 6:17). We are saved "by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly by Jesus Christ" (Tit. 3:5,6). See on Jn. 3:5.

And were all made to drink of one Spirit- At baptism, we drink of the Spirit. The Corinthians had done so, but were unwilling generally to continue doing so. We were "made" to do this. It is not all a mere question of freewill response. 1 Cor. 10:4 has drawn the parallel with Israel all drinking the same spiritual drink, which was Christ. In Christ, we are "made" to drink of Christ's Spirit. But this is not an overpowering influence- for the Corinthians had drunk of it but had turned aside to idols, just as Israel had done. The only other reference to being made to drink is in Rev. 14:8, where Babylon makes her followers to drink of her wine. Here, Paul speaks of our association with the body and Spirit; but not far from his thought is the bread and

wine. The followers of Babylon have her name on their foreheads; the Lamb's followers have His Name on theirs. His followers are made to drink of His Spirit; those of Babylon are made to drink of her wine. "Made to drink" again suggests some coercion from the Lord; although not to the point of making us mere predestinated puppets. Yet without His initiative and strong coaxing, the reality is that human volition is so weak that we shall not respond. We either drink of His Spirit, or of Babylon's wine. We are sheep, prone to influence. And we must choose His influence.

12:14 *For the body is not one member but many*- Paul puts his finger on the psychological problem- that human beings tend to subconsciously assume that they are the only ones. That my immediate issues are paramount. But if indeed we are Christ's, there must be an acceptance that man is not alone. We do not live nor die to ourselves. Our baptism was not only a statement of our relationship with the Lord Jesus; it is also a sign of our entry into the body of the Lord Jesus, i.e. the community of believers, the one ecclesia (Col. 1:24). Members are added to the church through baptism (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 11:24); thus baptism enables entry into the one body of Christ. Whoever is properly baptized is a member of the one body, and is bound together with all other members of that body: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body... for the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Paul, in his relentless manner, drives the point home time and again. He goes on to reason that just because the hand says it isn't of the body, and won't co-operate with the feet, this doesn't mean that it *therefore* isn't of the body.

12:15 *If the foot shall say: Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body*- When we are first baptized, we can tend to view those who leave our community as simply hard to understand, but we may easily shrug it off. Yet surely we need to do *more*; to *feel* more for them. And to realize that we all leave, in that we can be lost in sin for minutes or hours at a time, having numbed our responsibilities to the Father and Son. And yet, we are in covenant relationship with Him. This means that we do not slip in and out of fellowship with Him according to our concentration upon Him or our spirituality. We likewise shouldn’t call those who leave us Mr or Mrs. They are always our brother or sister. We are in a family bond with them. Even if the hand says "I am not of the body, it is not therefore not of the body" (1 Cor. 12:15 RV). These words were written in the context of some of the Corinthian brethren effectively resigning from the ecclesia and joining the various temples of even synagogues in the town. But they couldn’t really resign from a relationship with God; resign from the fact that their Lord bled to death for them.

Having reminded us that "by one Spirit are we all baptize into the one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), Paul makes the obvious point- that as members of that body we *cannot*, we dare not, say to other members of the body "I have no need [necessity] of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). To fellowship with the others in the body of Christ is our "necessity"; this is why an open table to all those who are in Christ isn't an option, but a necessity. Otherwise, we are declaring ourselves not to be in the body. Indeed "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (1 Cor. 12:22). By rights, we ought to be condemned for such behaviour; for by refusing our brethren we are refusing membership in Christ. And yet I sense something of the grace of both God

and Paul when he writes that if someone says "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" (1 Cor. 12:15). I take this to mean that even if a member of the body acts like they aren't in the body, this doesn't mean that ultimately they aren't counted as being in the body. But all the same, we shouldn't stare condemnation in the face by rejecting ourselves from the body of Christ by rejecting the members of His body at the Lord's table. That's the whole point of Paul's argument. Naturally this raises the question: "Well who is in the body?". Paul says that we are baptized into the body (1 Cor. 10:17); and this throws the question a stage further back: "So what, then, makes baptism valid?". Baptism is into the body of Christ, into His person, His death and His resurrection; and not into any human denomination or particular set of theology. If the illiterate can understand the Gospel, if thousands could hear the Gospel for a few hours and be baptized into Christ in response to it- it simply can't be that a detailed theology is necessary to make baptism valid. For the essence of Christ, His death and resurrection, is surely simple rather than complicated. Those who believe it and are baptized into it are in His body and are thus our brethren- whatever finer differences in understanding, inherited tradition and style we may have.

It could be that Paul has in view those who leave the Christian community whilst still believing in Christ. Maybe his point is that even though they have quit association with us, we are to still treat them as part of the body rather than consider that only those in active association with us are part of the Christian body.

12:16 *And if the ear shall say: Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body*- Clearly there was jockeying for position within the Corinthian church, and some were professing that they had left the body. But declaration that we are not part of the body doesn't make us not part of the body. The principle we can take is that even if there are barriers between us and other believers, barriers which they have placed, distances they have created- they are still part of the body and we still need them. Denominationalism and division over theology are perhaps the most common cause of these distances.

12:17 *If the whole body were an eye, where is the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where is the smelling?*- We cannot all have the same function. Corinth had "ten thousand teachers" (1 Cor. 4:15). There was clearly a desire for prominence, and this contributed to the overall dysfunction of the body. The Corinthians were not spiritual (3:1). They needed to accept the gifts they were given, and realizing them would mean that they would not seek for other positions. They would be more than content to use what they had been given.

12:18 *But now has God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him*- See on :17. If the Corinthians had accepted their given gifts and roles to play, they would not have been interested in usurping the place of others. God has gone to so much trouble to potentially enable the perfect functioning of the church; to the extent that according to John 17, the unity / perfect function of the body should be enough in itself to convert the world. But a self focused approach and refusal to accept the gifts of the Spirit meant that this wonderful potential didn't work out.

God's setting or appointing of "each" member means that we each have a predetermined intention which we are to fulfil. The good works set for us from the foundation of the world. And man is never better than when doing what God intended for him. We are each "set", the same word as "ordained" in Jn. 15:6 "I have ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit". We are all 'ordained ministers'. Paul

clearly understood his calling; he was ordained or "set" (s.w.) as a preacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). We need to also discern our calling and role and focus upon it.

12:19 *And if they were all one member, where is the body?*- A chronic focus upon being the member we would like to be means that effectively we are destroying the body of Christ- crucifying Christ afresh. It would seem there were many aspiring to be leaders and teachers (4:15)- to be the head. But the head is the Lord Jesus. This aspiration was not only inappropriate but effectively leaves the head of the body without a body. Man is never better than when he has a specific calling, and the ability to achieve and practice that calling. And so it is in Christ. We have specific gifts, designed for usage for others "to the common good". Using them, being Spirit-filled in the ways intended for us, will mean that we have no aspiration to fulfil other roles for which in God's wisdom we were not intended.

12:20 *But now they are many members, but one body*- "But now" would imply that Paul saw them as right then at that moment a functional body. They were not "now" just a few members with effectively no body; they were many members in one body. This is one of many examples of where Paul counts the dysfunctional Corinthians as mature in Christ when in reality they were not.

12:21- see on 12:15.

Therefore the eye cannot say to the hand: I have no need of you; nor the head to the feet: I have no need of you- The same word is used in :24 about our more honourable parts thinking they have "no need". Perhaps we are therefore to read in an ellipsis there, to the effect they [think they have] no need; for here in :21 it is made clear that we all stand in need of each other. Again Paul is touching to the core of our subconscious sense that we are sufficient of ourselves.

This is something more than a random example: the head (the Lord Jesus) cannot do without the feet (a symbol of the preacher in Rom. 10:15). In the work of witness especially, the Head is reliant on the preacher for the work He wills to be done. He likens preaching to drag net fishing (Mt. 13:47), in which one big fishing boat drags a net which is tied to a small dinghy. God's fishing is thus dependent on us, the smaller boat, working with Him. Thus the harvest was plenteous during the Lord's ministry, but relatively few were converted due to the dearth of labourers (Mt. 9:37 implies). So the idea is that if even the Lord Jesus needs us, how much more do we need each other.

As John realized the tendency of some to think they could love God without loving His sons, so Paul here tackled the same problem at Corinth. He knew that some would want to go off on their own, and he shows that such behaviour would suggest that they alone were the whole body. He knew that some would think that they had no need of other parts of the ecclesial body; he saw that some would feel that they were so inferior to others that they had no place in the body. All these are reasons why believers push off on their own. But notice that Paul doesn't actually say 'the eye *shouldn't* say to the hand, I have no need of you'; but rather "the eye *cannot* say to the hand...". Although some may say or feel this, ultimately, from God's perspective, it's simply not valid. Christian disillusion with Christianity mustn't lead us to quit the body. The same logic applies to those who think that the body of Christ is divided; ultimately, there is one body, and from God's perspective this is indivisible. The divisions only exist in the minds of men. Those who say that they don't need fellowship with their brethren "cannot say" this, according to Paul. If they continue on this road, ultimately they declare themselves not of the one body of Christ; although I

trust there are many brethren who have done just this who may still receive God's gracious salvation.

12:22 *No, on the contrary, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary*- The context is of the "more attractive parts" (:24) thinking that they have no need of more feeble parts. The feebleness is in spiritual terms. It is the weak who are so indispensable to our overall growth, and removing ourselves from them is to our loss. I noted on 1 Cor. 1:28 that those who are spiritually "despised" are significant to God. "Despised" is a word nearly always used about someone being spiritually despised. The publican was despised by the spiritually superior Pharisee (Lk. 18:9), the Lord was despised [s.w. "set at nought"] by the Jewish religious leadership (Acts 4:11), some spiritually despised others for their position on Jewish food laws, despising ['setting at nought'] their brethren (Rom. 14:3,10), some were despised ["least esteemed"] by others *in the church* (1 Cor. 6:4), the word of prophecy was despised by some *in the church* (1 Thess. 5:20). God has this special interest not only in the economically and socially marginalized, but in the spiritually marginalized within the church. The alcoholics, depressed, mentally unwell, those who have been in many failed relationships... they are the ones who so often are the great ones in His eyes.

Many of those who ungraciously storm out of fellowship with the rest of the body, do so because they complain that other believers are weak, unloving, hypocrites, don't practice what they preach etc. And in many ways, their complaints are true (seeing that the Lord came to heal those who need a doctor rather than shake hands with the healthy). But those parts of our bodies "that seem to be weaker...that we think are less honourable... the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty... with special honour" (NIV). The private parts of our bodies are the parts we are most sensitive to, although on the outside they seem weak and hidden. And so Paul reasons that the weaker parts of the ecclesial body should be treated the same. The Greek for "feeble" (1 Cor. 12:21) is used (notably in Corinthians) to describe spiritual weakness: Mk. 14:38; Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:7,10; 9:22; 11:30; 1 Thess. 5:14. And in some ways, we are all "weak" (1 Cor. 1:27; 4:10). So those we perceive ("that seem to be... that we think") to be spiritually weak in their external appearance, we should be especially sensitive towards. Significantly, the “sick" (s.w. "feeble") in the parable of Mt. 25:44 are the "least" of Christ's brethren, the spiritually weakest; and at the day of judgment, the rejected are condemned because of their attitude towards these spiritually weakest of Christ's brethren.

Our attitude to the spiritually weak is a vital part of our salvation. Christian disillusion with Christianity ignores this at its peril. Thus "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are *indispensable*" (1 Cor. 12:22 NIV); indispensable for our spiritual development and salvation. So we shouldn't be surprised if we don't like our brethren, if there are things which unbearably bug us about the community. This irritation, this clear vision of the weakness of our fellow believers, is a God-designed feature of our spiritual experience. If the day of disillusion and disappointment with the brotherhood hasn't come for you, it surely will do. But remember how *indispensable* this all is. Consider all the miserable complaints believers make about us: they gossip about me, they actually fabricate things as well as exaggerate, she stole from me, he disregards me, her son *swore* at me, would you believe it (I would); they don't ask me to speak, he's such a hypocrite, and do you know what she did... Let's say every word is true. These weak brethren and sisters who are doing all this are "indispensable" to the salvation of the one who suffers all this, *if* he responds

properly. Just walking away from them is to effectively put ourselves outside the body. We *need* them, the Spirit says, we need all the mud, the comments and the undermining and the upstaging and the betrayal, all at the most sensitive and hurtful points.

12:23 *And those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our unattractive parts have more abundant covering*- Paul, as always, is our hero. The one who gave his life, his health, his career, his marriage, his soul, for the salvation of others. Only to have confidences betrayed, to be cruelly slandered, to be threatened, to be so passionately hated by his converts that some even tried to kill him and betray him to the Romans and Jews. He talks of how we must honour those whom we think are “less honourable". He uses a word he earlier appropriates to himself in 1 Cor. 4:10 (AV "despised"). He's saying 'OK, if you think I'm so weak, so despised, let's say I am. But you should receive me, because I'm still in the body'. And to that there was no answer (and still isn't any) by those Christians disillusioned with Christianity.

12:24- see on Eph. 5:31.

Whereas our more attractive parts have no need of this. But God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked it- God has "tempered" the whole body together, mingling together the weak and strong. That is exactly why Paul didn't seek to resolve the problems at Corinth by disfellowshipping the weak majority. He is likely writing here with an eye to comforting and explaining things for the 'strong' minority who would have wondered how they could ever retain membership in this church. The allusion is to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mingled" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that “tempering" of the body which God has made. It's like a husband and wife breaking apart their marriage, which God has joined together. It isn't only that we are missing out on the patience etc. which we could develop if we stayed in contact with our brethren. Our indifference and shunning of our brethren is actively doing despite to the Spirit of grace and unity which in prospect God has enabled His people to experience. The body “maketh increase of itself... unto the edifying of itself in love”. By remaining in the body, we are built up from what every part of it contributes to the growth of the whole. To quit from our brethren is to quit from that source of nutrition and upbuilding. The earth in the sower parable represents various types of believers; and the Lord went on to say that the earth brings forth fruit “of itself”. The community of itself brings forth spirituality in its members. Some of the most Spirit-filled brethren and sisters you can meet are those who have stuck at ecclesial life all their days, really struggled with personality clashes, with endless ecclesial storms and wrangles- but they've stuck it out. And thereby they have remained in touch with, and been moulded by, that Spirit of tempering together which is so fundamental to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“God has... *given* more abundant *honour* unto that part which *lacked*" (1 Cor. 12:24), as the husband should "(*give*) *honour* unto the wife, as unto the *weaker* vessel" (1 Pet. 3:7). God's dealings with the ecclesia are replicated both within marriage, and within the ecclesia- for we too should give special respect and sensitivity to the weaker parts of the ecclesial body (Rom. 14:1; 15:1).

The reality is that God has tempered the body together in that He has an ideal vision for the church, both local and global. This is "so that there should be no schism in the body" (:25). The reality is that there is schism in the body, and the potential for a tempered together body is not achieved. But the potential is there. And that is the great tragedy.

12:25- see on 1 Cor. 12:7.

So that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another- Paul begun his letter in chapter 1 by lamenting the schisms, and goes on to highlight their lack of care for each other in sexual matters and in the whole question of relationships with idol worship. But the composition of the community of believers had been precisely calculated by the Lord of the body for maximum spiritual functionality. The body was designed to have no schism within it, *so that* each member could care for others. This is why Paul sees schism as the first and foremost problem he must address. It is symptomatic of all the other problems, and it was this which was stopping the path of the Spirit in resolving all the other issues. The tempering of the body, the choice of composition, who was mingled with whom, was and is intended to produce an undivided community. But as we have noted so often, Corinth didn't live up to the potential made possible. And it is the same with us. It can seem that if only this or that person was not in the community of believers, then all would function so much better. But that is not in fact the case- the opposite is true. Who should be avoided are those who cause division, especially by the evil policy of cutting off members from the body.

12:26 *And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it*- In an undivided body, the situation of one member affects all. The idea of all suffering together is repeated by Paul in 2 Cor. 1:5,6: "For as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, even so our comfort is also in abundance through Christ. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer". The Lord Jesus is a member of the body, and His sufferings and exaltation are ours. But likewise our sufferings are not unique; they are so that we can find comfort from others who have suffered the same, and give comfort to them likewise. The joint rejoicing with the one member is surely alluding to the parables of the lost in Lk. 15:6,9, where the rejoicing over the finding of the lost member is a cause for inviting others to "rejoice with me".

The Lord Jesus is a yoke; He alone has the ability to unite human beings in a unity powerful and startling enough to convert the world. In this unity, we are able to feel the sufferings of others in a way that cannot be experienced by those outside the movement of the Spirit. The Greek word for "suffer with" is only elsewhere found in Rom. 8:17: "We *suffer with* Him, that we may be also glorified together". The Spirit of Christ binds us together with Him, and also therefore with His body. We suffer together with Him, and yet also with the rest of His body. Because they are all suffering with His sufferings. The sufferings of the body of Jesus are a refraction of His personal sufferings. So to be connected with the suffering of Jesus is to be connected with that suffering as experienced in His body.

12:27 *Now you are the body of Christ and each individually members of it*- This was perhaps aimed at the spiritually stronger who must have wondered whether Corinth was still part of the body of Christ. This brief statement stands as a huge challenge to all who would draw certain lines of theology or practice or morality in order to

exclude others. Paul obviously drew the lines pretty low to say this about Corinth. Again, note the emphasis upon "each [one]" of them being a member of the body.

12:28 *And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then those who do miracles, then the gifts of healing, helping, administration and various kinds of languages*- God set the apostles *first* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 12:28)- but in another sense, God set the apostles *last* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 4:9). It depends from which perspective we look at these things. Pentecostals need to note that healings and tongues are low down the list. "Administration" is likewise these days read as 'leadership'; but it is well down the list. Perhaps the idea also was that there was no use pretending to positions of apostles or prophets, because true apostles and prophets had been "set" by God in the church. Hence Paul elsewhere speaks of how he had been set or appointed as an apostle (s.w. 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11); any attempt by the agitators to talk that down was simply going against God's sovereign choice.

12:29 *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?*- Paul so often positions himself as Moses. The revolt against the authority of Moses was on the basis that "all the congregation are holy, every one of them" and therefore Moses did not really have the special authority he claimed (Num. 16:3). It seems the same was happening at Corinth.

12:30 *Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with languages? Do all interpret?*- The answer in reality was not 'No, only some do'. Because I have argued elsewhere that these gifts had only potentially been given. Those who had been struck with sickness had no healers in the church (11:30); and chapter 14 will rebuke the Corinthians for not using the gift of interpretation, and not speaking in foreign languages but rather in unintelligible gibberish after the pattern of the idol cults. Yet the Corinthians claimed to have these gifts. I have suggested earlier that they were imitating the claims made within the idol cults, but in their case, were claiming that these were Spirit gifts from God. In reality they were not. But Paul gently doesn't take direct issue with this. Instead he criticizes their desire to have the more public gifts, or at least, their desire to lay claim to them.

12:31 *But earnestly desire the higher gifts*- Although believers were "set" or appointed to have certain gifts and should not therefore aspire to others, according to the teaching in :4-11, there appears here and in 14:1 to be the possibility of desiring even "higher" ones. It may be that this reflects the openness of God to serving Him and His people- that we can move above or beyond our calling. Or it could be that Paul is treating their wrongly motivated desires for Spirit gifts in the same way as he treated their wrongly motivated desires for singleness and freedom from the marital ties that bound them. He goes along with them, by saying that indeed singleness unto the Lord is commendable; but warns them against using the church prostitutes in their single state, and against breaking up existing marriages. And so here, having said that we should receive and use the gifts we were appointed to and not pretend to others which were not intended, he now seems to say that of course, God is open to dialogue with man, and may grant even greater gifts "for the common good" if our motivation is correct. But the highest way is a way far higher than miraculous gifts- it is the way of love without exercising those miraculous gifts. We marvel that Paul does not just bluntly tell the Corinthians to stop getting drunk in church, using prostitutes, commending incest and doubting the resurrection of Jesus- but instead, along with of

course criticizing those things, he seeks to inspire them with spiritual ambitions of a very high nature.

And I will show you a still more excellent way- The "way" of love outlined in the next chapter. The "higher gifts" were those which would help others the most; but the way of love was higher. 1 Cor. 12:31-13:12 implies that Paul was faced with the higher choice of the ministry of love and the written word, compared to the lower choice of exercising the Spirit gifts. By all means compare this with the choice which he had in Phil. 1:21-26: to exit this life was made possible to him, but he chose the higher, more difficult and more spiritually risky option of living for a few more years, in order to strengthen his brethren. See on 1 Cor 7:11. The miraculous gifts were given "for the common good", and would have been given to those who truly sought the good of others. But the way of love was a better way. And that is the way open to us. We can achieve even more by that, than by possessing miraculous gifts. This is not only a stern counter to the obsession of Pentecostalism for the miraculous gifts. It means that we should never feel that we cannot serve others as we would wish because of lack of resources or gifts. The way of love, after the pattern of chapter 13, is even more effective.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

13:1 *If I speak with all the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love*- The description of love in 1 Cor. 13, the outline of the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-26, these are all portraits of the man Christ Jesus. The clearest witness to Him "therefore consists in human life in which his image is reproduced".

So far in Corinthians, Paul has been arguing that care for others is paramount. In issues like marriage and food offered to idols, the critical issue is what will edify / build up others. And the same principle is used regarding the Spirit gifts. The mere possession of material / physical ability to serve the Lord is not the same as love. At the end of chapter 12, Paul has argued that the ministry of love is more effective in helping others towards salvation than the exercise of the miraculous gifts. The Corinthian clamour for miraculous experience, especially speaking in exotic utterances, was akin to the pagan religious cults- upon which it seems they had based their church life. "If I speak..." could mean that Paul did indeed speak with all human languages- as a travelling missionary he was empowered to have the gift of languages. "Of angels" is likely hyperbole. The pagan cults experienced ecstatic utterances, and they (along with the apostate Judaists who were influencing Corinth) liked to justify their glossolalia by claiming it was in fact Angelic language. I would have been inclined to labour the point that the gift of 'tongues' was the gift of speaking and communicating in intelligible contemporary languages, in order to preach the Gospel. Their usage in Acts 2 is the parade example. But instead Paul takes a higher approach. He says that even if he speaks with every human language *and* Angelic language- it is of no use if he has no love. This is what he has argued in chapter 12- that if we are not achieving the building up of our brethren, then all we do is of no use.

I have become like sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal- These instruments soon give a headache if they just continue making the same sound for an extended period. This is another indication that Biblical tongue speaking is not making ecstatic sounds but rather is done to build up others in love. Vine writes of "the celebrated Corinthian bronze". There is a contrast between the unwrought brass or metal which was struck, and the more refined musical sound of the cymbal. Whether refined or totally unrefined, without love, the words spoken would be but noise. A clanging

cymbal contributes nothing to music unless it is within a wider context of other contributions; and likewise speaking / teaching without love achieves nothing edifying. This is a much needed caveat to the emphasis placed upon platform speaking; of itself it will produce nothing.

13:2- see on Mt. 7:22.

And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries, and all knowledge- Prophecy, knowledge and understanding "all mysteries" are nothing unless we are going to use that knowledge to profit or assist others. In the knowledge oriented world of the information age, we need this reminder as no other generation. Intellectual knowledge alone cannot save; it is only if this is harnessed for others that we can become 'profitable' and as it were find ourselves; otherwise we shall simply "be nothing". The Corinthians were modelling their church upon the surrounding idol cults, with their claims to speak "mysteries" and have exclusive knowledge. They were clearly making these claims in the name of having Holy Spirit gifts. Although they were not spiritual (3:1), Paul doesn't directly attack their false claims. Rather he argues more subtly, that even if he has all such knowledge of mysteries, this of itself is nothing if it is not rooted in the love that seeks to upbuild others.

If I have all faith so as to remove mountains- Paul appears to speak of such faith as a gift of the Spirit. Perhaps the miracles of the Spirit were done through granting the believers the gift of faith so that they could achieve the miracles. Surely Paul has in mind the Lord's teaching that faith as a grain of mustard seed could remove a mountain (Mt. 17:20). But that alone would not save the individual doing the miracle. That mustard seed had to grow into a great plant which gave shelter to others (Lk. 13:19). Faith alone will not save; it must have works, and those works relate to the blessing of others. This is the whole theme here in Corinthians. We may have the faith which enables us to eat idol food; but that is not the point. Our impact upon others and care for them is the essential thing.

The fact we copy the language patterns of those we are with was true for Paul. The Gospels were so much in his heart that he can hardly speak or write without some reference, consciously or unconsciously, to the Lord Jesus. Thus in 1 Cor. 13:2 I sense that Paul as he is writing (on a human level) was looking round for a superlative to express just how useless we are without love. And the superlative expression he picks is unconsciously taken out of the Gospels (Mt. 17:20): "Though I have all faith *so that I could remove mountains* and have not charity, I am nothing".

Even if we have faith to move mountains- an allusion to the Lord's teaching in Mt. 21:21- we 'are nothing' without love (1 Cor. 13:2). God so respects faith that He may hear the prayer of a believer, even though He considers that person "nothing" because they lack love. Rather like Elijah bringing fire down from Heaven by his faith- and yet the Lord Jesus seems to imply that this wasn't the right thing to have done, because Elijah lacked love (Lk. 9:55). In our self-examination we may perceive how God answers our prayers, our faith is rewarded... and think we're doing OK. But it could be that we are still "nothing". It's a sobering thought. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 15:2,19 to say that faith can be "in vain", and hope can likewise be merely of benefit in this life. But 1 Cor. 13:3 hits even harder home: a believer can give their body to be burned, for nothing, if they lack love. Remember these words were written, albeit under inspiration, by a believer who did give his body to die a violent death, and who had seen with his own eyes the death of Christians. Surely Paul writes with a warning word to himself; that even that apparent pinnacle of devotion to the Lord can be in

vain, if we lack love.
Note how he writes in the first person: "If *I* have all faith... but have not love, *I am nothing*" (1 Cor. 13:2). It's not only that Paul is warning himself personally; the only other time the Greek phrase "I am nothing" occurs is Paul speaking about himself, also to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:11). There's a kind of association of ideas between the "I *am* [nothing]" and "Love *is* [everything]". Unless we 'are' love, we 'are' nothing.

But do not have love, I am nothing- The same phrase is only used, also to the Corinthians, in 2 Cor. 12:11 "Though I am nothing". We are indeed "nothing" of ourselves; only if we have love for others do we become something. We are to connect "I am nothing" with the comment that "it profits me nothing" in :3. If we do not profit or benefit others, then we are ourselves nothing. This continues the theme so often touched upon in Corinthians- that our salvation is wrapped up in that of others. We cannot just focus upon our own salvation and relationship with the Lord. If we do not profit others, then we are nothing ourselves. This explains Paul's passion for the spiritual growth and salvation of the Corinthians and indeed all his converts. The whole situation is reminiscent of how the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were not allowed to have their own inheritance on the East of Jordan until they had helped their brethren to secure their inheritances in the promised land to the West of Jordan.

13:3- see on Acts 7:59.

And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing- Even making sacrifice for others does not make us anything- if it is not done with love. Even dying for our faith doesn't make us any more than "nothing" if we do so without love. See on :2 *I am nothing*. Our "profit" is to that of others. Doing good deeds of charity alone would not save, according to the Lord's teaching in Mt. 6:1-4- if there was the wrong motive; some manuscripts add here "That I may glory". And this certainly makes sense here. The burning of Christians only began under Nero's persecution, so far as history records. But perhaps such punishment had already begun in some places and Paul therefore alludes to it.

Let's not equate true love with the mere act of giving aid to charities. We can give all our goods to feed the poor, but lack true love; the life of love, the love of Christ permeating all our being (1 Cor. 13:3 may well have been written by Paul with his mind on some in the early Jerusalem ecclesia, who *did* give all their goods to the ecclesial poor, but lacked a true love, and returned to Judaism).

There is another possibility regarding giving our body to be burned. Some of the legal terms used in the NT for our redemption imply that Christ redeemed us from slavery through His death. And yet one could redeem a slave by oneself becoming a slave (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5). This is why the crucified Jesus is typified by the suffering servant / slave of Isaiah's prophesies. And Paul seems to have risen up to something similar when he speaks of giving his body to be branded, i.e. becoming a slave (1 Cor. 13:3 Gk.).

13:4 *Love suffers long*- "Longsuffering" is used in the sense of patient waiting for

response from others, or the patience required to forgive another who at this time has not made recompense (Mt. 18:26,29; James 5:7); and of God's longsuffering with us, as He awaits our spiritual maturity (Lk. 18:7; 2 Pet. 3:9). All the attributes of love in this poem have some reference to our attitudes towards others, and that is the key to understanding each term. Those who refuse to forgive until there is repentance, or who are impatient with the immaturity of others in spiritual terms, are lacking this longsuffering which is in view here. Paul's patience with the Corinthians is really a parade example of what he meant.

I find it deeply concerning that so many who have committed themselves to Christ are unable to confidently answer questions such as 'What is love?'. To expound the beasts of Daniel's visions is relatively easy- this equals that, that refers to this. But to get to grips with "love" appears to have been given all too little attention. Love is patient / long-suffering (1 Cor. 13:4). But let's not think that patience simply means how we react to forgetting our keys or spilling milk. To some extent, whether we take such events calmly or less calmly is a function of our personality, our nervous structure, the kind of cards we were dealt at birth. I suggest that the long-suffering patience Paul refers to instead has reference to our forgiving attitude to others, rather than applying to whether or not we get frustrated with ourselves. The man hopelessly in debt to his Lord begged for Him to show "patience" (Mt. 18:26). Patience is about not forcing others to "pay me what you owe me". We all have many people in our lives who are in our debt- more such people than we may realize. We have all been hurt by more people, and hurt more deeply, than we realize. Patience is about bearing long with their immaturity, waiting for them, whilst the debts remain unpaid; rather than demanding that they resolve with us before we'll fellowship them.

And is kind- The context of this great love poem is the discussion of things like marital decisions, attitudes to idol meat etc. Paul has developed the theme that our salvation is wrapped up with that of others, and therefore love for others is vital within all spiritual endeavour. "Kind" translates a very practical word, meaning useful or quite simply, 'employed' (see the root word in 7:31 "they that *use* this world", "I have *used* none of these things", 9:12,15). 'Love is practical' would be a fair interpretation.

Love envies not- The Corinthians were full of envies because they lacked the Spirit (s.w. 1 Cor. 3:3), and Paul was fearful that they would continue to have "envies" (s.w. 2 Cor. 12:20). If we love others then we will not envy them. Envy arises from a sense of inferiority and regret that we are not as the envied. But if love and care for them, especially spiritually, is our passion- then whilst we are not 'above' them, for we too are human, we shall not envy them.

It is not arrogant or rude- If we see ourselves as the servants of others, in Christ's place, then we will never act as superior over them.

Is not puffed up- Earlier in Corinthians, Paul has warned that "knowledge puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1). The Corinthians were "puffed up" in their supposed knowledge about sexual freedoms and the freedom to eat idol meat (1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2). But in those matters, Paul has argued that love thinks of others- and that is the important thing, far more significant than whatever we theoretically know. Let us never kid ourselves that because we "know" some things about God, even know them correctly, that we will thereby be justified. It's not a case of simply holding on to a set of doctrinal propositions which we received at the time of our baptism into Christ. For the day of judgment won't be an examination of our knowledge or intellectual purity.

This is not to say that knowledge isn't important. Paul had been arguing that if we truly know that God is one, that idols therefore have no real existence, that we are free in Christ to eat any meat- then this knowledge should not lead us to be arrogantly insensitive to our brother or sister who has a less mature understanding or conscience. Love is... not like that. Love therefore restrains our own superior knowledge and bears with those who don't quite 'get it' as they should. Again, our pattern is God's attitude to us who know just a fraction of His ultimate Truth.

That the rugged and at times abrasive Paul could write a poem about love, albeit under inspiration, reflects the extent to which he had thought about the utter supremacy of love. The device of acrostic Psalms (9,10,25,34,37,119,145) and the use of acrostics in Lamentations and Esther would enable the reciting of them. The repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive sentences is yet another such feature (Dt. 28:3-6; 2 Sam. 23:5; Jer. 1:18; Hos. 3:4; 1Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:12). The same phrase is also sometimes repeated at the beginning and end of a sentence with the same effect (Ex. 32:16; 2 Kings 23:25; Ps. 122:7,8; Mk. 7:14-16; Lk. 12:5; Jn. 3:8 Rom. 14:8 Gk.).

13:5 *Does not behave itself inappropriately*- This poem about love is a summary of Paul's policies so far concerning various practical issues. He has urged that in marital and relationship decisions, we are to do that which is "appropriate"; appropriate to a life dominated by the love principle (1 Cor. 7:36 s.w.). The only other occurrence of the word is again in Corinthians, when Paul speaks of the weaker members of the Christian body with the same word (1 Cor. 12:23). Such members are weak because they do not have love; and yet Paul teaches that our response to them is "necessary" and that they must be retained within the community of the body of Christ. To love the unloving is indeed hard, but it is the essence of love.

Is not self seeking- This phrase again builds on Paul's earlier argument in Corinthians- that we should act sensitively to others weaker in the faith, not doing things which may make them stumble, according to the principle "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good" (1 Cor. 10:25). This is quite something. All the time, in every decision, action, position we adopt, we are to think of what would be best for *others* rather than what's cool for ourselves. At the very least, this means that we are to act in life *consciously*- not just go with the flow, reacting to things according to our gut feeling, chosing according to what seems right, comfortable and convenient to us at that moment; but rather thinking through what import our positions and actions will have upon others. It takes *time* to think out what will be beneficial for them. And "love is..." just this. This is a way of life and thinking which it's very rare to meet in people. Almost frustrated, Paul lamented: "For all men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). 1 Cor. 10:25 spoke of seeking not our own good, but the good of our brethren- i.e. "the things which are Jesus Christ's". But according to Phil. 2:20,21, Paul felt that only Timothy understood this spirit of not seeking our own good, but that of the things of Christ, i.e. our brethren. The life of love is therefore a lonely life. So few 'get it'.

Is not easily provoked- see on Acts 15:39. Faced by the heights of such challenges, we can easily despair. We are not like this, or not like it very often nor very deeply. But Paul felt the same, even though under inspiration he himself wrote the poem. Paul too realized his failure, the slowness of his progress. When he writes that love is not "easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:5), he uses the same Greek word which we meet in Acts 15:39 describing the provocation / contention he had with Barnabas

which led to their division. Surely he had that on his conscience when he wrote that love is *not* like that.

Here we have an allusion to how slow God was to anger with Israel. As their loving husband He stuck with them for centuries, enduring what would have emotionally shattered many husbands if they endured it just for a few months, and putting up with what most men couldn't handle even for a year. God was slow to anger for centuries, and even then in that wrath He remembered mercy, even in His judgments He desperately sought to find a way to go on with Israel in some form. And we are asked to show that same slowness to anger.

Keeps no record of evil done- The mind of love imputes no evil to others, as God doesn't to us (1 Cor. 13:5; AV "thinketh no evil", s.w. to count / impute in Romans). The Greek word can also mean that love keeps no records or count of wrong done. We must forgive our brethren as God forgives us (Eph. 4:32). God expunges the spiritual record of the sin, and will not feed it into some equation which determines whether we can be forgiven. Christ "frankly" forgave the debtors in the parable. The frankness of that forgiveness does not suggest a process of careful calculation before it could be granted. God's frank forgiveness is seen too in Ps. 130:3: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?". God does not "mark" sin, as our love for our brethren should keep no record of their past sins (1 Cor. 13:5-7 N.I.V.). If we refuse fellowship people because of the *effect* of past sins for which they have repented, then we *are* 'marking' iniquity. God does not deal with us in a manner which is *proportional* to the type or amount of sin we commit (Ps. 103:7-12).

13:6 *Rejoices not in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth*- What Paul is advocating is a conscious outgiving of ourselves to love. Not just being a nice enough person, a reasonable neighbour, partner, parent, a "top bloke", real decent guy. But a love which is actually beyond even that. A love modelled on God's love, and the love of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us crucifixion. Paul's poem personifies love as a person- love, e.g., "rejoices with the truth", hopes and endures. We too are to 'be' love. Not just occasionally, not just in ways which we are accustomed to, which are convenient to us, or are part of our background culture such as occasional hospitality to strangers. "Love is...", and we are 'to be' love, as if our very name and soul and heart is '*agape*'. Love is not an option- it's to be the vital essence of 'us'.

Another possibility here is that "unrighteousness" is being put for 'punishment for unrighteousness'. We will not rejoice in the punishment of the wicked personally known to us, just as God likewise takes no pleasure in it (Ez. 18:32; 33:11). But we will rejoice with "the truth", the just judgment of God which glorifies His Name.

But the antithesis between "truth" and "unrighteousness" is common. The two Greek words used here are found in apposition quite often. Men do not obey the truth but rather unrighteousness (Rom. 2:8); the unrighteousness didn't receive the love of the truth (2 Thess. 2:10), but believed unrighteousness rather than truth (2 Thess. 2:12). This is why the book of Revelation concludes by summarizing all those outside the Kingdom of God as being those who love and create lies. It's not simply that we should love justice rather than injustice. This is a more penetrating demand. All that is untrue is the very opposite of truth. And the context here is not about intellectual theology, of wanting to find 'true' interpretations of Bible verses. it is about love of others in practice. Do not imagine wrong against people, don't fantasize about such things, stay focused on that which is right. And what is true and right is the life of radical love. If we do not rejoice in unrighteousness, then we are not to spend our time enjoying watching and listening to that which is clearly about unrighteousness.

13:7 *Carries all things*- Gk. 'is a roof over'. The idea is of covering over. Atonement means 'covering'. Because God covers our sins, we ought to cover those of others. The simple statement "love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12) comes in the context of appealing for God's people not to gossip about each others' failures. And the passage is most definitely applied to us in the NT (1 Pet. 4:8; James 5:20; 1 Cor. 13:7RVmg. "love covereth all things"). "He that goeth about as a talebearer reveals secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter" (Prov. 11:13). Our natural delight in telling or brooding on the moral failures of others, as if life is one long soap opera, will be overcome if we have personally felt the atonement; the covering of our sins. "He that covers his [own] sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). The opposition is between owning up to our sins, and trying to cover them for ourselves. If we believe in the covering work of God in Christ, then we will own up to our sins the more easily, confident in His atonement.

The idea of love bearing / covering / carrying all things is the language of the cross- the Lord Jesus bearing, carrying our sins, and covering them. If we really grasp this, it ought to make us take a deeper breath. We are being asked to personally enter into the cross of Christ. To not just benefit from it ourselves, admire it from afar, look at it as Catholics glance at a crucifix over the door, pause for a moment in unthinking respect of tradition, and then go headlong through the door. No. We are asked to get involved in the cross, to participate in it, to bear it ourselves. The mind that was in the Lord Jesus at that time is to be the mind which is in us (Phil. 2:5-7).

It could be that the sense of carrying or 'being a roof over' recalls the common Old Testament idea of God over looking sin. He doesn't only deal with sin by forgiving it upon the basis of human repentance. He also overlooks sin, and often it is our wisdom and honour to do this for others, without insisting upon repentance as a basis for forgiveness.

Believes all things- This is not a call to naivety. The Bible asks us not to believe all things but to believe what is true. Paul's approach to the Corinthians was hardly one of believing all things they said or claimed. The word *pisteuo* also carries the idea of crediting or entrusting. I have shown in the commentary on this chapter so far that the various aspects of love often allude to God's love for us, shown by His imputation of righteousness to us in Christ. This we are indeed called to reflect; and Paul for sure had to do this in order to be able to write so positively about the weak Corinthians. But this is different to naive believing of whatever facts a human being proffers to us.

Hopes all things- The idea of *elpizo* is not 'to hope for the best', nor to just take a generally positive outlook on life. It refers to a solid expectation. Again, Paul's attitude to the Corinthians was a parade example. He wrote, felt and acted towards them as if he certainly expected them to be in the Kingdom. If we are unable and not permitted to condemn our brethren, then we have to act according to our assumption that all in Christ shall indeed be saved.

Endures all things- Paul again endured all manner of slander and abuse from the Corinthians, as will anyone who sets themselves to assist others towards salvation. But love endures- and endures all things, there is nothing, no incident, however cruel, that makes us give up. "He that endures to the end" (Mt. 10:22) in practice means he that endures all unkindness, brickbats and slapdowns from those he seeks to serve. Paul uses the same word again in the context of our attitude to others: "I endure all things for the elect's sake" (2 Tim. 2:10).

13:8 *Love never fails*- This continues the idea of love enduring all things (see on :7). Love is never 'blown off course'; the end in view is our salvation, intertwined as it is with that of those whom we serve in love. All forms of burnout- a common experience in the Christian life- result from not keeping that end in view.

But whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away. Whether there be speaking in foreign languages, this shall cease. Whether there be the gift of knowledge, it shall be done away- "But whether" suggests Paul recognizes there may be false claims to the prophetic gift. He is not going to go into this, but rather makes the larger case- that whether or not, they are going to pass away and are not the essential thing. The failing, ceasing, doing away of the miraculous gifts is contrasted to the love which does not fail- because [see comment on *Love never fails*] the end view of salvation at the last day is kept ever in view. Prophecy- both in the sense of prediction of the future and the speaking forth of God's word- shall not be needed in the Kingdom. Likewise the gift of knowledge will be obviated by being with the Lord; and there shall be no need to preach in foreign languages once the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the waters cover the sea, as anticipated in the Old Testament prophecies of that age. This is not to say that this passage does not also anticipate the fading away of the miraculous gifts in the first century. That too is in view, especially in :11, but Paul is asking the Corinthians to adopt a Kingdom perspective, and not seek to display the miraculous gifts which would not play any role eternally. Love does and will play that role eternally. And this then is to be our focus. The focus on the three gifts of prophecy, foreign languages and knowledge is not incidental. These were the very things practiced and claimed in the religious cults of Corinth, and especially at the nearby shrine of Delfi. The Corinthians were basing their Christian life upon those cults, claiming to be able to do these things in the name of having the miraculous Spirit gifts. Paul could have directly confronted them over these issues- but instead he argues more subtly that the Christian life is supremely about love, about building others up so that they will enter God's Kingdom. At best, focus upon the miraculous gifts is therefore misplaced and immature- and that perhaps could be our starting point in dialogue with Pentecostals.

Paul didn't just start writing his poem about love in 1 Cor. 13. It's wedged firmly in a context, a clearly defined unit of material about the use of the Spirit gifts spanning 1 Cor. 12-14. Having clarified his own authority and personal experience of the miraculous gifts, he proceeds to shew the Corinthians "a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). He uses a Greek word four times, although most English translations render it inconsistently. It's worth highlighting the words in your Bible, maybe with a note like "s.w." ['same word'] next to them:
- "Prophecies shall *fail*" (1 Cor. 13:8)
- The Spirit gift of "knowledge shall *vanish away*" (1 Cor. 13:8)
- "That which is partial shall be *done away*" (1 Cor. 13:10)
- "Now that I am become a man [mature], I have *put away* childish [immature] things" (1 Cor. 13:11).

I read this as Paul saying that he used the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in his spiritual immaturity; but in his maturity, he chose not to use them, he "put [them] away". Paul also writes of how the miraculous gifts will be "done away" when "that which is perfect [complete, mature] is come" (1 Cor. 13:10). He seems to be saying that his personal growth from childhood to manhood, from immaturity to maturity, is a reflection of how ultimately the gifts will be no more when the mature state has come; and he wishes to attain that state now in this life, and thus he ceased using the

gifts. He asks us likewise in this context to follow his pattern, to be "mature" [AV "be men"] (1 Cor. 14:20). This connects with how he speaks in Col. 3:14 of "above all" having love, which is the seal, the proof, of the mature state [AV "the bond of perfectness"]. In his own way, John spoke of the same state when he wrote of "perfect / mature love", and how he who fears hasn't reached the 'perfected-in-love' stage (1 Jn. 4:18). Instead of flaunting the Spirit gifts, Paul sold his soul for love; he gave himself over to the life characterized by the kind of love about which he writes so powerfully in his poem. Paul laments that the Corinthians weren't mature nor Spirit filled (1 Cor. 3:1,2), and wishes to be able to speak to them as "mature" (1 Cor. 2:6). So often in the decisions we face in life, it doesn't come down to a right or wrong, a yes or no; rather it's a question of what is the mature Christian behaviour, and what isn't.

The same Greek word translated "fail… be done away…. vanish away" is used in many other places concerning the passing away of the Mosaic Law:

- "We are *delivered* from the law" (Rom. 7:6). We are like a woman *loosed* from her husband, i.e. the Law of Moses (Rom. 7:2).
- The glory of the Law was to be *done away* (2 Cor. 3:7)
- The Law *is being done away* at the time Paul was writing (2 Cor. 3:11 Gk.). It was *abolished*, *done away* in Christ (:13,14)
- Christ *abolished* the law of commandments (Eph. 2:15)

Likewise, the prophecy that "tongues shall *cease*" (1 Cor. 13:8) uses the same word as in Heb. 10:2, concerning how the sacrifices *cease* to be offered. The "perfect man" state of the church, at which the Spirit gifts were to be withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:13) is to be connected with how the Lord Jesus is the "greater and more *perfect* tabernacle" compared to the Mosaic one (Heb. 9:11). The conclusion seems to be that the ending of the Spirit gifts was related to the ending of the Mosaic system in AD70.

Closer reflection upon 1 Cor. 13 suggests that the time of the withdrawal of the gifts was in fact at the time when the Mosaic sacrifices ceased to be offered. There was an interim period between the death of the Lord Jesus and the destruction of the temple in AD70. During this time, various concessions were made to the Jewish believers; they were permitted to obey Mosaic regulations for the time being, even though the Spirit through Paul made it clear that they were unable to give salvation, and were in comparison to Christ "the weak and beggarly elements". The early believers were guided through this period by the presence of the miraculous Holy Spirit gifts amongst them, pronouncing, prophesying, enabling preaching in new areas through the gift of languages, organizing the ecclesias etc. But once the ecclesia came to maturity, the written word replaced the gifts. Most if not all the New Testament was completed by AD70, and this was around the time the gifts were withdrawn. Paul uses the same Greek word several times in 1 Cor. 13, even though it is somewhat masked in the translations. The following words in italics all translate the same Greek word: "Prophecies…shall *fail*…[the gift of] knowledge shall *vanish away*…that which is in part shall *be done away*…when I became a man, I *put away* childish things" (:8,10,11).

Paul is predicting how the gifts of the Spirit would be withdrawn once the church reached the point of maturity; but he says that he himself has already matured, and he has "put away" the things of his immaturity- i.e. he no longer exercised the gifts for himself. He presents himself, as he often does, as the pattern for the church to follow. Thus the gifts "shall be done away" in the future for the church as a whole when they are perfect / mature, but for him, he has already 'done them away' as he has himself reached maturity. In the same language as Ephesians 4, he is no longer a child, tossed

to and fro and needing the support of the Spirit gifts. He laments that the believers were still children (1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13)- yet, using the same Greek word, he says that he is no longer a child, but is mature. In Gal. 4:3, Paul speaks about how he had once been a child in the sense that he was under the Mosaic Law. But now, he has put that behind him. He is mature; and yet here in 1 Cor. 13:10 he associates being mature with putting away the gifts of the Spirit.

13:9 *For we know in part and we prophesy in part*- I have argued above that Paul is seeking to position the miraculous Spirit gifts within a Kingdom perspective. They will not then be necessary. It is the love we show to others now which shall eternally endure in that age. Any Spirit gift of knowledge or prophesy was only a small part of the final knowledge which shall be revealed in the Kingdom age. The idea of 'partial' knowledge may be understood in this sense. But it may also allude to the fact that only some parts of the body of Christ had the gifts of knowledge and prophecy (1 Cor. 12:27 s.w.). Each "part" of the body contributes a measure towards the whole (Eph. 4:16 s.w., also in the context of Spirit gifts). "The truth" refers to the Lord Jesus personally; the term is often used as if it refers to a saving body of doctrinal, theological knowledge upon which salvation is predicated. But we need to be aware that whatever truths we hold, this is just a part of the whole picture. And that whole picture, in the context of this chapter, the final maturity, is the life of love- rather than some even greater array of intellectual truths. The partial revelation of knowledge is only a part of the ultimate picture which is of the body of Christ in His maturity, "the perfect man". Eph. 4:11-13 make the same point. For He is love personified and embodied. But it is still so that only a small portion is heard of God (Job 26:14); to claim to 'have the truth' must be held always in the perspective of a rightful intellectual humility before the Almighty. The idea of knowledge being only partial connects with the figure of seeing only a hazy outline in the mirror of :12.

13:10 *But when that which is perfect comes, then that which is in part shall be done away*- The perfect / mature is the man Christ Jesus, who is the embodiment of love (Eph. 4:11-13). The coming of Christ will bring full knowledge, and all knowledge we have will then be revealed as having been so very limited and partial. But the mature or perfect state can be aspired to now, in individual life. For love is the bond of maturity- see notes on 13:8-10. In the state of mature, Christ-centred love for others, the partial ministry of the miraculous gifts fades from significance.

13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I am a man, I have put away childish things*- See notes on 13:8-10. Speaking, feeling [Gk. 'understanding'] and thinking surely connect with the three gifts Paul is discussing- speaking in languages, knowledge and prophecy. He associates the use of those gifts with his spiritual immaturity. He is confessing that the public, dramatic work associated with possession of the miraculous Spirit gifts had taken him up; yet he likens that period to his spiritual childhood (note how he uses the same figure of childhood to describe the dispensation of miraculous gifts in Eph. 4:11-16). He seems to have chosen not to use the gifts so much, because he realized that the real maturity was faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these, Paul came to realize, was love. And a true love must be the end point of our lives, as it was for Moses, as it was for Jacob. If Peter's list of spiritual fruits in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 has any chronological reference, it is significant that the final, crowning virtue is love- a love that is somehow beyond even "brotherly kindness". Love is above all things the bond of spiritual perfection (Col. 3:14).

As noted earlier on this section, "put away" is the same word used three times for the ending or cessation of the miraculous Spirit gifts. Paul was seeking to live the

Kingdom life right now. Those gifts would not figure in the future Kingdom experience; it is love, the love we show for others now, which shall be the dominant experience and reality of the Kingdom. And so he had moved on from public usage of the gifts to selling his soul for love.

13:12- see on Eph. 1:18; 4:15.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known- The reference is not strictly to a mirror but to a looking glass, polished to act as a mirror. Corinth was famous for such looking glasses. We see "dimly", literally, 'in an enigma'. Even now that the Mosaic law has ended, we see ultimate spiritual reality only through shadows and figures. This must always be the perspective in which we understand any idea of 'saving truth' if we understand that term as referring to intellectual purity of understanding. We are "fully known" to God, but we do not fully know Him. The joy of the Kingdom age will be a mutuality of understanding between us, surely comprehended in the idea of seeing God face to face.

1 Cor. 13 and Eph. 4 are difficult to interpret. A valid case can be made for them meaning that the dispensation of the Spirit gifts was partial, but the completed spiritual man was made possible once the New Testament was completed. I have outlined this in *Bible Basics* Ch.2. But Paul's description of the completed, "perfect" state is so exalted that it is hard to resist applying it ultimately to our position in the Kingdom. "*Then* face to face... then shall I know (fully, not from parts); but *now* (as opposed to then) abideth faith, hope and charity" (1 Cor. 13:12,13) sounds like the Kingdom. So I would suggest we interpret those passages along these lines: 'Now, in the first century period of Spirit gifts, knowledge is partial; a completer state will come when the written word is finished. But even this is relatively partial, only a necessary step, towards the ultimate spiritual reality and knowledge of the Kingdom'. The parable of the talents speaks eloquently of all this.
Moses is the one who saw God face to face (Num. 12:8). Surely Paul saw the depth of fellowship which Moses achieved in this life as indicative of the richness of felicity with the Father which we will all ultimately achieve. Remember that Paul so often presents himself as Moses; but at this point he says that he is like all Israel, seeing dimly through the veil, and still awaiting the status of seeing face to face.

To describe or 'know' the real self is ultimately impossible; we can't write down an inventory of who we really are. Paul perceived this when he wrote that now he only knows himself partially, and only in the Kingdom "shall I know, even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). The aorist here really means "was known"; we shall then see ourselves as God now sees us, marvelling at His patience with our immaturity. We know Him now only partially, *ginosko;* whereas He knows us thoroughly, *epiginosko.* He knows us all around [*epi*], understanding the total context of all our words and actions. This for me is one of the Kingdom's joys; to truly know myself, even as I am presently known by the Father. Until then, we remain mysteries even unto ourselves; and who amongst us has not quietly said that to themselves... The question 'Who am I?' and especially 'Who and how am I to God?' must ultimately remain to haunt each one of us until that blessed day. It would be too simplistic to argue that the new man, the real self of the believer, is simply "Jesus Christ". Our new man is formed in *His image*, but we are each a unique reflection of our Lord. He isn't seeking to create uniform replicas of Himself; His personality is so multi-faceted that it cannot be replicated in merely one form nor one person. This is why "the body of Christ" is

comprised of so many individuals both over time and space; and it is my belief that when that large community has manifested every aspect of the wonderful person of Jesus Christ, then we will be ripe for His return. This is why the spiritual development of the last generation before the second coming will hasten His return; for once they / we have replicated Himself in ourselves in our various unique ways to a satisfactory extent, then He will return to take us unto Himself, that where He 'was' as He said those words, in terms of His character and person, there we will be (Jn. 14:3; note that read this way, this passage is clearly not talking about Him taking us off to Heaven). Ps. 69:32 RV says simply: "Let your heart live". In our terms, God is saying: 'Be yourself, let your inner man, the heart, come to the fore, and be lived out'. Even if we feel we haven't got there 100% in getting in touch with our real self, one of the joys of the Kingdom is that we shall know [i.e. ourselves] even as we are now known by God (1 Cor. 13:12). We never quite get there in our self understanding in this life- but then, we shall know, even as we are known.

Paul speaks as if he has in one sense matured into "love", no longer a child but a man; yet he writes as if he is still in the partial, immature phase, seeing in a mirror darkly, waiting for the day when he would see "face to face". Likewise "Now I know in part, but then shall I know..." (1 Cor. 13:12). It's the 'now but not yet' situation which we often encounter in Scripture. In a sense we have attained to the mature state of love; in reality, we are still far from it. Paul is alluding to Num. 12:8 LXX, where God says that He spoke with Moses face to face and not in dark similitudes. Paul felt that he wasn't yet as Moses, encountering God 'face to face' in the life of mature love. He was still seeing through a glass darkly. But some time later, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he was now beholding the glory of the Lord's face [as it is in Christ] just as Moses did, "with unveiled face", and bit by bit, that glory was shining from him (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). And hopefully we feel the same- that bit by bit, we are getting there. So let's take Paul's urging seriously: to grasp the utter supremacy of the life of love, to "follow after love", to press relentlessly towards that state of final maturity which *is* love (1 Cor. 14:1). Powerfully did Paul conclude his Corinthian correspondence: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

Ps. 139 reminds us how God knows us so well, psychologically as well as physically. David's response to this is that such knowledge is too wonderful for him and he cannot attain it (Ps. 139:6). The simple point being made is that we cannot know the extent to which God knows us. Nor do we know all God knows about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is a huge comfort in a world where we beg more than anything: "Please understand me". It is common to throw in to our sentences: "Do you get what I mean? You get me?". And this desire is often ultimately not met in our human relationships. The priceless comfort of this Psalm is that this most basic human need is met in God's knowledge of us. Even our eternal future is unknown to us- "It does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2) but believing the truth expressed in this Psalm, we can be at peace about that too. We do not in fact know ourselves; God does. This is why the Psalm concludes with a request for God to "search me" and correct me- because it is outside my own ability to do so. Paul laments that he doesn't understand his own actions: "For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate" (Rom. 7:15). Paul admits that "I know nothing against myself" but he is not thereby justified (1 Cor. 4:4). We see ourselves in a darkened mirror ["through a glass darkly"] but only then, at the Lord's coming, face to face- with ourselves: "For now we see in a

mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Only then shall we see ourselves as God sees us. And that is surely the function of the day of judgment- it is for our benefit. All searching to 'find yourself' in this life is vain, because our natures are intrinsically limited so that we cannot, at least not ultimately. The wonder of salvation is that we shall find ourselves, we shall know ourselves as God knows.

13:13 *But now abides faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love-* In the future Kingdom of God, there will be no need for the miraculous Spirit gifts as they were in the first century. Love is "the greatest" because faith and hope will then have been turned to sight and will be no more (1 Cor. 13:13). A theme of Corinthians is the ability of the believer to live on different levels- e.g. 1 Corinthians 7 advocates the single life of devotion to God as the highest level, but goes on to make a series of concessions to lower levels. It seems that in the matter of the use of the miraculous Spirit gifts, Paul is again presenting a higher level upon which the believer of his time could live- a "more excellent way". He wanted to live the Kingdom life now as far as possible. We "have eternal life" not in the sense that we shall not die, but in the way that we in Christ can live the kind of life we shall for ever live- right now.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 14

14:1 *Pursue love, and in this pursuit therefore earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy*- I have suggested throughout this commentary that the Corinthians were not spiritual (3:1); they had been given the Spirit but had not allowed it to work. They were basing their church services upon the religious cults around them, replete with use of church prostitutes [in the name of being single unto the Lord], eating the Lord's supper as if it were a form of fellowship with idols, and copying the claims of ecstatic utterances, gifts of knowledge and prophecy which were rampant in the idol cults [in the name of having Holy Spirit gifts]. Paul could have directly confronted them. But He copied the style of the Lord Jesus when tackling the language of belief in demons / idols. He argued on a higher plane, with all the power which is inherent in using a subtler argument. Just as Paul doesn't mock nor condemn their idea of singleness in order to serve the Lord [but decries their divorces and usage of church prostitutes which it seems to have involved], so he encourages their professed zeal for Spirit gifts such as prophecy. But he says, following on from the argument in chapter 13, that the motive for such gifts must be love, which as defined in chapter 13 means a desire for upbuilding others so that they might enter God's Kingdom. He has explained in 13:8-11 that the way of spiritual maturity will involve a focus upon love, and a de-emphasis upon the miraculous gifts. But Paul is aware that not all have reached that level, and so encourages them in going this lower road of wanting to use those miraculous gifts. But the comments he will make upon the usage of the gifts effectively condemn the Corinthians for using the ecstatic utterances of the idol rituals in the name of true speaking in foreign languages as a gift of the Spirit. They were doing what Pentecostals and the like do today- experiencing ecstatic utterances and claiming this is the Spirit gift of speaking in foreign languages. And Paul is explaining that they are deeply mistaken in doing so.

14:2 *For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. For no one understands, but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries*- I take this to be a description of how things were at Corinth, rather than a description of what true speaking in tongues was like. It is a criticism of the situation at Corinth rather than a general statement. *The Songs Of The Sabbath Sacrifice* was a document used in the Qumran community, claiming that the Angelic choirs of praise to God were reflected in the praises of the Qumran community. They saw themselves as praising God with the "tongues of Angels". A similar idea can be found in the *Testament Of Job*, which also uses the term "tongues of Angels" to describe how the praises of Job's daughters matched those of the Angels in Heaven. These two apocryphal writings include many phrases which are used by Paul in his argument against how the Corinthians were abusing the idea of 'speaking in tongues': "understand all mysteries (1 Cor. 13:2)... in a spirit speaks mysteries (1 Cor. 14:2)... speaking unto God (1 Cor. 14:2)... sing with the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15)... bless with the spirit (1 Cor. 14:16)... hath a psalm (1 Cor. 14:26)". It would seem therefore that the Gentile Corinthians were influenced by apostate Jewish false teachers, who were encouraging them to use ecstatic utterance with the claim that they were speaking with "tongues of Angels". And Paul's response is to guide them back to the purpose of the gift of tongues- which was to preach in foreign languages. My point in this context is that even in the Gentile church at Corinth, there was significant influence from Jewish false teachers. So it's no surprise to find that in the area of the nature and person of the Lord Jesus, which was the crucial issue in the new religion of Christianity, there would also be such influence by Jewish thinking. I have noted elsewhere, especially on the letter to Titus, that immoral Gentile Christians found Judaism and legalism attractive- keeping a few

Jewish laws was felt to justify their living without any moral compass in other parts of their lives.

14:3 *But he that prophesises speaks to men, words of edification, exhortation and consolation*- Paul has previously laboured the point that building up others is love in action. Therefore the emphasis upon tongue speaking was not right. If they were keen on having the miraculous Spirit gifts, then the one they should be going for was prophecy, because through speaking God's word to illiterate people who had no Bible to read, they would be giving them the words of God which are able to build us up and give us an inheritance into the Kingdom (Acts 20:32). "Edification", or building up, was a major concern of Paul for the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:5,12,26). But is God who builds up the church (s.w. 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:1). He works through human mechanisms- in all our efforts to build others up, we have God Almighty behind us. Likewise "exhortation and consolation" are the work of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit as stated repeatedly in Jn. 14-16, the comforter (also see Lk. 2:25, where the Lord is called "the comforter of Israel"). But if we are to probe further as to *how*, mechanically, if you like, He achieves this- it is through the loving labour of others within the church. In the first century context, the gift of prophecy was a clear channel for this. And this, therefore, was the kind of gift they should be seeking if they were motivated by love.

14:4 *He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he that prophesises edifies the church*- This has been the argument throughout Corinthians so far- that they were not focused upon building others up, but were spiritually selfish, because they were not possessed of the Spirit (3:1). I have suggested above that the tongues they were speaking in were the ecstatic utterances associated with idol worship. But it could also be so that although there not Spiritual (3:1), the Lord still worked through them via the miraculous gifts. For He has worked through men who were total unbelievers, empowering them according as His purpose requires; the king of Assyria in Isaiah 10 being a parade example. Again as in :2, Paul is describing the state of things at Corinth. The gift of languages was in order to help others by preaching and teaching for them in their native tongue. Paul could have laboured that point. Instead he cuts to the heart of the matter by saying that when they speak in their ecstatic languages, in imitation of the idol cults, they were [at best] only building up themselves. This is an example of assuming for sake of argument that a false position is true- and then pointing out how if it were true then it must be wrong. The Lord did the same with His assumption, for sake of argument, that Beelzebub existed and the Jews really did do exorcisms. And so here Paul is saying that if love and upbuilding are of the essence, then one would not focus upon just taking in an ecstatic utterance; but on instead prophesying / speaking forth God's word to build up the church.

14:5 *Now I would wish that you all speak with tongues, but especially I wish that you should prophesy; for greater is he that prophesises than he that speaks with tongues, unless he interpret, that the church may receive edification*- All the Corinthian Christians could have been prophets, all could have spoken with tongues (1 Cor. 14:1,5)- but the reality was that they didn't all rise up to this potential, and God worked through this, in the sense that He 'gave' some within the body to be prophets and tongue speakers (1 Cor. 12:28-30). He works in the body of His Son just the same way today, accommodating our weaknesses and lack of realization of our potentials, and yet still tempering the body together to be functional. The fact we fail to realize our potentials doesn't mean God quits working with us. We see in all this the openness of God; He is open to our desire for particular ministries / gifts, whilst on

the other hand He sets us within the body with our particular, intended gift. There is an echo of Moses' desire that all Israel were prophets (Num. 11:29); so often Paul sets himself up as Moses. The context of Moses' comment was a challenge to his authority as if he were the only one endowed with prophetic gifts; and Paul was facing similar criticism from his wayward congregation.

14:6 *But now, brothers, if I came to you speaking with tongues, without speaking to you either by way of revelation, or of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching- what shall I profit you?*- Again and again, the question is not whether we can or cannot do something, it is whether we profit others. "If I came to you" may be referring to his earlier time in Corinth when he first taught them the things of the Gospel. If he had just spoken in ecstatic utterance, they would not have learned the Gospel. Clearly the gifts of teaching others were of paramount importance in edifying others. We can take the lesson in passing that building others up involves teaching them something- too easily, liberal minded Christian folk can assume that engaging in social activity together is all that is required to build others up. But ultimately, there has to be some teaching ministry.

14:7 *Even things without life which give a voice*- This is a rather laboured phrase if Paul means to simply refer to a musical instrument. Literally, 'Things without a soul which give a voice'. The idea was that the Corinthians lacked the Spirit (3:1); the ecstatic utterances were just noise. There was no Spirit animating them. Those utterances were no sign of spirituality.

Whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?- Again the word for "distinction" is unusual and could appear out of place, as it essentially means a charge or commandment. The noises made were not saying anything, they were giving no message. In :6 Paul has established the point that the way of love will focus upon teaching others in order to profit them. Just making sounds with no message will not edify others. Making a noise of itself is not helpful- and this is Paul's comment on the ecstatic utterances going on at Corinth. He could have baldly stated that the true gift of tongues is the gift of speaking in foreign languages so that foreigners can understand the Gospel. And what the Corinthians were doing was nothing to do with that, and was merely mimicking the pagan religious practices around them. But Paul bases his argument on a higher level, and his subtly makes his point the more powerful and persuasive.

14:8 *For if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle, who shall prepare himself for war?*- Again, the purpose of speaking or making a noise was for the benefit *of others* and not for any selfish reasons. "The battle" could refer to the day of the Lord, or the daily spiritual strife. The Old Testament use of 'trumpet' language relates to the following ideas:

- To prepare for war
- To indicate the need to move on
- Convicting others of sin (Is. 58:1; Jer. 4:19)
- Warning of invaders (Ez. 33:3-6)
- A proclamation of the urgency to prepare for the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1)
- The certainty of salvation and God's response to prayer: "Ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God (Old Testament idiom for 'your prayers will be answered'), and ye shall be saved" (Num. 10:9).

All of these elements ought to feature in the work of our twenty first century priests.

14:9 *So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech easily understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air*- This verse is

a clear enough condemnation of ecstatic utterances being claimed as Spirit gifts. The speech must be "easily understood". The principle of course goes wider- that if we have the love which upbuilds, then we will consider the style of our presentation to others. For our aim will be their understanding and subsequent growth. "Understood" translates *semaino*, usually translated "signify". There must be significance to what is spoken. The "tongue" being spoken must be significant to the hearers. Ecstatic utterance simply lacks such significance. The hearer must be able to "know what is spoken". In no way is this true of ecstatic utterances which were and are passed off as 'speaking in tongues'.

14:10 *There are, surely, many languages in the world and none is without meaning*- This is quietly making the point that the gift of tongues was the ability to speak the "languages in the world", and every language has meaning to the native hearer. The words spoken must therefore have meaning; the hearers must "know what is spoken" (see on :9). But there is a word play going on here. "Languages" translates *phonos*, and "without meaning" translates *a-phonos*, literally 'non-language'. So Paul is saying that there are many world languages, and not one of them is a non-language. This seems a pointless tautology until we consider that in saying this, he was likely answering the false claim made by ancient Corinthians and modern Pentecostals alike- that actually, even if we can't understand the language spoken, it is actually a language of some other country unknown to us. But Paul is saying that a language is a language, not a non-language. Analysis of the ecstatic utterances of Pentecostalism show them to be the same as those of pagan religions. The syntax of the utterances, the repetition of the same sounds, is not that of language. it is mere sound. Hence Paul's apparently obvious point- that a tongue language is not a non-language.

14:11 *If then I do not know the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian and he that speaks will be a barbarian to me*- "The meaning" translates *dunamis*, which has the sense of 'power'. The suggestion surely is that their speaking in ecstatic utterances was not at all by the power of the Spirit; remember that the Corinthians were without the Spirit (3:1). If speaker and hearer do not understand each other, then they will be set apart from each other. For "barbarians" and those within the Roman empire were seen as deeply opposed to each other, if not in conflict. The practice of unintelligible speaking was in fact a re-creation of Babel, acting as if under Divine curse rather than His blessing, and would result in division rather than the unity which would upbuild. The Greek *barbaros* comes from the word *barbar*, which was a reference to the perceived harshness and coarseness of language amongst those outside the empire- they were said to speak *bar-bar*. This kind of tension would be introduced within the church by talking to each other in unintelligible sounds.

14:12 *So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to excel in edifying the church*- Paul seems to want to inculcate the spirit of ambition in preaching when he told Corinth that they should be ambitious to gain those Spirit gifts which would be most useful in public rather than private teaching of the word (1 Cor. 14:1,12). In similar vein Paul commends those who were ambitious (from the right motives) to be bishops (1 Tim. 3:1). Perhaps men like Jephthah (Jud. 11:9) and Samson (Jud. 14:4) were not wrong to *seek* to be the judges who delivered Israel from the Philistines. But we must note throughout this chapter that Paul has prefaced it all with 13:8-11, where he argues that the miraculous gifts are something to be discarded as immature. But he concedes to their weakness, and urges them to at least seek those

gifts which can edify others. It was clear enough that their motive for desiring the gifts was probably in order to appear like the religious cults around them. But Paul doesn't specifically accuse them of the obvious; rather he seeks to redirect their self-proclaimed zeal to the great goal of love, which is articulated in terms of building up others.

14:13 *Therefore let him that speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret*- Paul could have baldly stated that their ecstatic utterances were not at all the Spirit's gift of speaking in foreign languages, and they should just shut up. But he gently says that if this is indeed what they claim to be 'speaking in tongues', then they ought to pray for the gift of interpretation- so that they can communicate something to others with the aim of upbuilding them. "Interpret" can indeed mean to translate from one language to another; but the Greek word more commonly means to explain or expound. If indeed God was making them speak in ecstatic utterances, then they had better make a priority of asking Him to give them the ability to explain the utterances to others. For the preface to all this teaching is the poem about love in chapter 13. To love is to build up others. It is explanation and engagement with others which does this- and not making ecstatic sounds. The GNB has it right: "The person who speaks in strange tongues, then, must pray for the gift to explain what is said".

14:14 *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful*- This is not to say that tongues are to be used when praying. For the gift of foreign languages or tongues was clearly in order to preach the Gospel to those speaking foreign languages, as witnessed by the account in Acts 2. Paul is stating the hypothetical situation- if he, as the Corinthians were doing, were to pray as they prayed, in ecstatic utterances, then [at best] his spirit would be praying but he himself would not understand what he was saying. Again the GNB has the idea right: "For if I pray in this way, my spirit prays indeed, but my mind has no part in it". The connection between tongues and prayer was because this was what happened in the surrounding idol cults; prayer was supposedly made through the ecstatic utterances. Whereas Biblically, tongues / languages were in order to spread the Gospel in public preaching [as Paul will go on to point out]. Note that the term "unfruitful" is elsewhere used of those who fall away from faith and shall not be saved finally (Mt. 13:22; Eph. 5:11; Jude 12 etc.). Even if it were claimed that such utterances were 'the Spirit praying within me', Paul says that because there is no good done for others, such behaviour is unfruitful, it does not bear the fruit of the Spirit. So the Spirit can hardly be really within the behaviour if it doesn't bear the fruit of the Spirit.

14:15 *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also*- Prayer and praise must be with the understanding, or [Gk.] the mind. Any mindless, out of control behaviour is simply not of the Spirit. But this was exactly the kind of behaviour which was going on in Corinth and which is to be seen in Pentecostalism today.

14:16 *Else if you bless with the spirit, how shall he that is in the place of the unlearned say the Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he does not understand what you say?*- We note the practice of saying "Amen" at the end of prayers. It could be that the "unlearned" sat separately from the baptized members. The Lord invited sinners and unbelievers to His table, and this separate seating arrangement reflects the pagan practice of making those not yet affiliated or initiated into the cult to sit

separately in a specific "place of the unlearned". Paul's hope was that the visitor would say "Amen", in agreement to the blessings / prayers spoken. This of itself indicates Paul's hope that the unbelieving visitor would have some participation in the worship. But if they were speaking in ecstatic utterances, it would not be possible nor legitimate for a visitor to express agreement, to utter the Amen, because the visitor would not have understood what was being said. However, the "unlearned" could refer to believers who didn't understand- they were "unlearned" in the sense that they were unlearned in the language being spoken. We note however that :23,24 speak of the "unlearned" as those entering the congregation, but they are differentiated from the "unbelievers". Perhaps they referred to those still undergoing teaching. The references there to 'coming in' certainly suggest a literal entrance to the church and having to literally sit in a particular "place".

14:17 *For you truly give thanks well, but the other is not edified*- Again, Paul is being generous. If they were uttering unintelligible sounds and calling that 'prayer', acting just as the surrounding religious cults did, then they were hardly to be commended for praying well. So I think Paul effectively means us to read in an ellipsis: 'You [may think that] you truly give thanks well, but [you would have to admit that] the other is not edified'. And the whole argument turns around whether our actions are building others up or not. Paul's whole approach here is masterful, and should be given due weight by those who believe that God's truth is best served by a belligerent, confrontational approach, ever seeking to set up a much headlined showdown between truth and error.

14:18 *I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all*- As a missionary, Paul would have used the Spirit gift of speaking in foreign languages far more than any of them.

14:19 *However in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue*- The contrast is between the tongue speaking of :18, and "in the church". Because the gift of tongues or speaking in foreign languages was not to be used within the church but in order to evangelize the unbelievers. Five intelligible words directed to building up the church, revealing an "understanding" or knowledge given from the Lord, were preferable to 10,000 words in a language which could not be understood. There may be some connection with Paul's comment that they had ten thousand would be teachers in Christ (1 Cor. 4:15); they all claimed to be teachers of each other, but there was no message.

14:20- see on Mt. 18:2; 1 Cor. 1:19.

Brothers, be not children in your thinking. Yet in malice be babes; but in thinking be men- This kind of malice has been mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:8; malice characterized their breaking of bread services. Paul sees this as immaturity; whereas we would rather consider "malice" to be something which would end our relationship with a person who is malicious. Paul here prefers to see this as immaturity, and urges their maturity. The way he has to repeatedly ask his converts to not be malicious shows this was a major problem amongst the immature churches of the first century (s.w. Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1,16). The contrast between "babes" and "men" is misleading; *teleios*, translated "men", means mature, and this is the whole thrust of the argument- that the mature state mentioned in 13:10 and Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28 really

could be attained by the Corinthians. And that maturity would have no particular use for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. "Be babes" is the same word used by Paul in describing how when he was a "babe", in spiritual immaturity, he used the miraculous Spirit gifts; but he had matured beyond them, to the maturity of love (13:11). The same figure of progressing from childhood to manhood is used of moving on from trusting in the Mosaic law for salvation (Gal. 4:3) It could be that these manifestations of immaturity were related- a legalistic trust in the Law for salvation inculcated a mindset that sought for evidence of salvation through the external and visible [possessing the miraculous gifts] rather than the internal- the things of the Spirit, culminating in the life of love as described in chapter 13.

14:21 *In the law it is written: By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak to this people, and not even thus will they hear Me, says the Lord*- The New Testament has examples of our being expected to deduce things which at first glance we might find somewhat demanding. 1 Cor. 14:21 rebukes the Corinthians for speaking to each other in languages which their brethren didn't understand. Paul considered that they were immature in their understanding because they hadn't perceived that Is. 28:11,12 states that it will be the Gentile non-believers who will speak to God's people in a language they don't understand. And this experience for Israel was part of their judgment for not having listened to God's prophetic words. So by talking to each other in language they did not understand, the Corinthians were living out their condemnation. Such an argument is subtle, but more powerful than a head on confrontation with them over the fact they were not really speaking in tongues as given by the Spirit, but were just copying the babbling of the mystery cults around them. The argument however presupposes a familiarity with the Hebrew scriptures, which would indicate that they were influenced by Judaizers.

14:22 *Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe but to the unbelieving; but prophesying is for a sign, not to the unbelieving but to those that believe*- Speaking in foreign languages was to be used for preaching to the unbelieving. The only time speaking in unintelligible language was envisaged, as explained in :21, it was a sign of condemnation to an unbelieving Israel. By doing this to each other, they were thereby proclaiming themselves to be unbelievers. But despite the logic of that position, Paul refuses to condemn the Corinthians and feels and writes towards them as if they are believers. We too may perceive that the logical position required by the behaviour of some 'believers' is that they in fact have lost faith. But all the same, it is not for us to condemn them. There is no example of Paul deciding to block disfellowship a whole group of baptized believers because of their moral or doctrinal errors.

14:23- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

If therefore the whole church be assembled together and all speak with tongues- The Greek suggests they assembled together "in one place" (AV). I suggested on chapter 1 that the church in Corinth was comprised of house churches, who at times gathered together in one place for the breaking of bread.

And there come in- The missionary drive of Paul was such that he saw in every outsider a potential insider, rather than merely a person to be separate from. Thus 1 Cor. 14:23 implies that the early ecclesial meetings were open for passers by to casually attend; indeed, the breaking of bread seems to have been used as a means of public witness "to shew [proclaim / preach] the Lord's death" and His coming again.

Unlearned or unbelieving people, will they not say that you are mad?- The "unlearned" may refer to those not fully instructed in the Lord's way; unbelievers would be those with no faith at all. If they saw a group of people babbling away, they would indeed think they were mad, and that comment is made upon Pentecostal meetings where just the same happens.

14:24- see on Heb. 11:7.

But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned- Paul will later command that the gift of prophecy should be used by only two or three at any one time (:29). But he has earlier said that he wishes they would all have the gift of prophecy: "I would wish that you all speak with tongues, but especially I wish that you should [all] prophesy" (:5). He is so eager to go along with them as far as he can. They sought the Spirit gifts for the wrong reasons, but he runs with that and suggests they seek especially to prophesy. But he envisages here, for the moment, all of them prophesying. And he imagines the great positive impact this would have upon an unbeliever. Again, he thinks in terms of the good which could be done for the edification of others- which is the essence of his poem about love with which he has introduced this section in chapter 13.

He is reproved by all, he is judged by all- The purpose of speaking forth God's word as intended was to lead unbelievers to repentance. "Reprove... judge" mean just that. The intention was to convict unbelievers of sin and lead them to repentance. Jabbering in unknown sounds would not do this. We are to note the intention of Gospel preaching- to bring others to repentance, to convict them of their moral need for the Lord Jesus. This is a far cry from the very tame profering of background Biblical information and other 'softer' approaches which characterize so much outreach work in our age.

Paul warned the Corinthians that only a church which was manifestly united, with each member using his or her gifts in an orderly, sensitive and respectful way… only such a church could convict the unbeliever of Truth. And this was all building on the Lord's clear statements in John 17- that the united church would lead to all men knowing of His grace and truth. This is why the Acts record describes the spectacular growth of the early church in the same breath as noting the intense unity and "all things common" between the believers. The mass conversions stopped after the politics of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, and the division over welfare matters in Acts 6. While that incredible and genuine unity prevailed, converts were made by the thousand.

14:25- see on 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 9:11.

The secrets of his heart are revealed- This must be understood in the context of the person having been convicted of sin by the powerful preaching of God's word (:24). The secrets of the heart therefore refer to sins, and Paul uses the phrase in that way in Rom. 2:16 and earlier to the Corinthians he has said that the secrets of human hearts will be revealed and judged at the Lord's return (4:5). But for those who respond to God's word now, they can have that experience ahead of time. Whenever we come before the call of God in His word, whenever we hear the 'judgments' of God, we effectively come before His judgment. The Lord's preaching to the Samaritan woman had the same effect- she went and told others that He had revealed to her all the sins she had ever committed.

I've pointed out elsewhere how Paul so often alludes to and further interprets the words of the Lord Jesus. In Mk. 4:22 the Lord says: "For nothing is hidden, except to

be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light". Paul's inspired allusions to this can be found as follows: 1 Cor 4.5: "who will bring to light the secrets of darkness and will make public the purposes of the heart"; Rom 2.16: "God judges the secrets of people, according to my gospel through Jesus Christ"; and, significantly for our context, 1 Cor 14.25: "The secrets of his heart are made public / revealed". The context of 1 Cor. 14 is of behaviour at the memorial meeting, following on from Paul's concerns about this in 1 Cor. 11 and 12. The point of the connections is this: As the secret / hidden matters of the heart will be judged at the last day, so they are revealed at the memorial meeting. For there, we stand before the cross, and the hidden thoughts of our hearts are revealed.

And so he will fall down on his face and worship God- The falling on the face in worship of God is because the man is having his experience of judgment day ahead of time. The same language is used in Rom. 14:11,12 of sinful man bowing before God in worship at judgment day.

Declaring that God is among you indeed- 1 Cor. 14:23-25 seem to imply that unbelievers came into house churches and ought to have been so deeply impressed that they declared that "God is in you of a truth". They were to be the living exemplification of how, as the Lord had prayed in John 17, the witness of Christian unity ought to be enough to convert the world. We need to give His words there their true weight. To see slaves and masters, men and women, Jew and Gentile, all sitting at the same table celebrating their salvation in the same Lord, with offices of leadership and responsibility distributed according to spiritual rather than social qualifications… this would've been astounding to the Mediterranean world of the first century. The way men mixed with women and the poor with the rich would've been especially startling.

14:26 *What is it then, brothers? As it is, when you come together, each one has a Psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. But let all things be done to edify*- I have suggested that what in fact was happening was that the Corinthians were imitating the religious cults around them, falsely claiming to have Spirit gifts when in fact they were just copying the ecstatic utterances and irrelevant exclamations of supposed revelations which were common in those cults. But Paul doesn't specifically say that. He instead argues for the paramount importance of doing things in love, which means with the aim of edifying others. As it was in Corinth, all the babble of supposed claims, including perhaps Judaist influenced members reciting Psalms, was not going to edify anyone and would not convict any unbeliever of their sin and need for the Lord Jesus. I noted on :2 that their behaviour was partly influenced by Judaizers, and this would explain the significance of Psalms being thrown into the terrible confusion which was going on.

14:27 *If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three; and even then in turn, and let one interpret*- The proper gift of tongues was in order to communicate in foreign, intelligible language to those who were hearing the Gospel, as happened at Pentecost. It would be most unlikely that there would be more than two or three distinct language groups present at any one church service who needed this gift. Or perhaps the "two or... three" refers to speaking only two or three sentences at a time and then waiting for the interpretation to be given. There would be no point in talking over each other- otherwise the message would be drowned out in confusion, and no edification could occur. The insistence upon an interpreter could mean that the message given in one language must be translated into the language of others present. But the Greek translated "interpret" more naturally means to expound or explain. The consistent theme is that God's word must be explained to people in

order to build them up. The practice of all speaking in ecstatic, unintelligible utterances was clearly not going to achieve that. "In turn" is a fair translation; but *meros* has been used in the context of this passage for the "parts" of the body of Christ, to whom the gifts were distributed in order to build up the entire body. Possibly the idea was that only the legitimate members of the body of Christ should be displaying this gift.

14:28 *But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God-* The true gift of tongues was that of publicly speaking forth God's word in a foreign language, intelligible to the hearers. Anything else was just a pathetic attempt to mimic the ecstatic utterances of the idol cults- in the name of having a Spirit gift. But we have repeatedly noted Paul's gentleness and wisdom in not directly confronting the Corinthians over this abuse. He seems to be saying that if, as he has established in chapter 13, love of others and concern for their upbuilding is paramount- then there is no place for speaking in an unintelligible way. And if they felt that indeed they had such a gift- well OK, speak to yourself and to God, in silence, so you don't disturb the edification of others. His reasoning is exactly as one might use to children, who appear unable to hear their cherished belief shot down. If this is what you think you have or who you think you are- then do your thing quietly and don't disturb the church. So here again we have a case of Paul allowing something which seems to go against the tenor of his previous explanation of the *ideal* use of that gift. See on 1 Cor. 7:11.

14:29 *And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern them-* The limitation of the prophets to "two or three" is similar to that concerning the limitation of tongue speakers to "two or three". Perhaps the connection is in the fact that if only two or three were giving messages from God, speaking forth His word, then there would only be the need for two or three to speak in languages, assuming each prophet has his own dedicated inspired 'translator' into other languages.

How did it come about that the early church knew which books were inspired and which weren't? Paul and Peter were aware that there would be false prophets within the early church as well as true ones (2 Pet. 2:1). These false prophets wrote down their false teachings and claimed they were inspired. So there had to be a system of deciding whether a prophet was true, or false. There was a Holy Spirit gift which enabled the early church to 'discern the spirits'- to know for sure who was inspired and who wasn't (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Jn. 4:1). 1 Cor. 14:29 suggests that as soon as a person claimed to be 'prophesying' from God, then the person with the gift of discerning spirits was to be present with them and to confirm their words. And Paul goes on to say that anyone who doesn't submit to this, doesn't really have the Holy Spirit gifts. The scenario presented here is radically different to the idea of all present speaking in ecstatic utterances out of their control- which was the picture in the surrounding religious cults at Corinth, and is the Pentecostal scene to this day.

14:30 *But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence-* This may seem to contradict the idea that the spirits of the prophets were subject to them *(*:32). Prophecy was not a gift which could not be controlled and which led to interrupting another inspired speaker. And we have just read that the prophets were to speak by turn (:29). So why then does Paul appear to contradict the spirit of these principles by saying that if a prophet has a revelation, then the first speaker should fall silent? I would suggest that he is again making concession to their weakness, despite having established the true principles; and is answering ahead of time their likely objections. In this case, the objection would be that as inspired speakers they could

not help but speak forth. Paul is saying that OK, in that case, the other inspired speaker, who likewise 'can't help but speak', should fall silent! The contradiction and tension is purposeful. Because Paul has chosen to deal with their apostacy by indirect and subtle argument, pointing out the contradictory nature of their positions- rather than by direct confrontation.

14:31- see on Eph. 1:22.

For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be exhorted- The mention of "all" prophesying connects back to Paul's wish that they would all have the gift of true prophecy (:5). The prophetic message was to be given by one speaker at a time- otherwise, the confusion would be such that learning and exhortation would not happen. And the guiding principle in all these judgments is the upbuilding of the church. "Can" is *dunamis*- the power or ability is what is in view. Although they had each been given their potential gift and part to play in the church body, Paul is open to the idea that they could seek other, higher gifts. In his view, speaking forth God's word was the highest gift. And he was prepared to accept that potentially, each member of the church could get that gift. Another angle on "you call can..." is that Paul is arguing that the true Spirit gifts are under the control of the believer. It was not good enough to claim that they were all possessed by a spirit which made them prophesy and carried them beyond personal self control. You *can* prophesy one by one- *if* of course the gifts they had were the real thing and not just the imitation of the idol cult. And this is the theme of the next verse.

14:32 *And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*- See on :31 *For you all can...* . The Corinthian idol cults claimed that worshippers were possessed by the spirit of the demon / idol, to the extent that they were not in control of themselves. And this had been wrongly imported into the Christian church at Corinth. The gift of the Spirit from the Father and Son did not remove freewill or consciousness of behaviour from those who received it. It was not legitimate to claim that their trance like behaviour was because they were out of their minds under some overpowering supernatural influence. The prophet was in control of him or her self. It could be however that the reference is to the command to the prophets to "discern" each other in :29. Any prophetic word was subject to the discernment of other prophets.

14:33- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints- If the situation in the combined church meetings was from God, then it would not be characterized by confusion. Because, as repeatedly stated in this chapter, it is God's intention to build us up towards an inheritance in His Kingdom. The building up of believers will only be achieved within a background of "peace". We should therefore strive towards peace at the local church level because this is the environment which enables growth; and building up of others is the outworking of love. "As in all the churches" may be a counter to the claim that they at Corinth were a special case and special allowance should be made for them. Paul's comment is that these Divine principles are universal across all churches.

14:34- see on 1 Cor. 7:17.

Let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak- The spirit of the prophets was subject to them (:32- see notes there). It was therefore quite possible for women to exercise silence; again the evidence would be

that the genuine Spirit gifts were not the same as the 'possession' experience of the idol shrines. This controversial verse may mean no more than that the women were not to chatter during church services- as was the habit in many synagogues. Their excuse that they were just asking for more clarification about the message is then answered in :35.

We must give full weight to the intentional contrast with Paul's discussion of women prophesying and praying in chapter 11. He clearly accepted that women should prophecy in the church. And there are New Testament examples of this. But I have noted throughout this chapter that there was a huge difference between the actual possession of the real Holy Spirit gifts, such as prophecy; and the farce that was going on in the Corinthian church, whereby they acted like the surrounding idol cults, imitating their speaking in ecstatic utterances and claims to possessing the gift of supernatural prophecy or speaking forth a supernatural, divine word. These claims were false. They didn't really have the gifts of true Holy Spirit. But this was not to say that there were no sincere Christians in Corinth. Clearly there were some; and there were some women, according to chapter 11, who did have the gift of prophecy. So the key would seem to be in the command for "*Your* women" (Gk.) to be silent. Whose women? The "you" of the context (e.g. :36) are those who in the wrong on these matters, claiming to have the Holy Spirit gift of tongues when they were merely babbling. *Their* women / wives were false claiming to speak by the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy; for in the surrounding idol cults, female prophetesses were popular. The Christian church at Corinth was clearly imitating the cult at nearby Delphi, based around the temple of Apollo. This cult was characterized by women claiming to be prophetesses. And it would seem that the women of the church pretended to the same office. This is why Paul is uncharacteristically blunt and direct on this point- they were to shut up. They were not true prophetesses. I have noted several times that the Corinthians were also under the influence of Judaizers. And so Paul now plays their own logic against themselves- he quotes Jewish scripture and Jewish synagogue reasoning back to them, as if to say: 'If you are really as Jewish and Mosaic Law compliant as you claim- well then in any case, your women should be in subjection to their husbands; "the law" says so'. They could not on one hand claim to be compliant with Judaism and the Jewish law, whilst on the other hand allowing their women to act as the prophetesses of Delphi, but under a Christian guise. I noted on 1 Tim. 2 that a similar problem arose at Ephesus, with the women in the church acting as the priestesses of Diana, but under colour of Christianity.

There are of course other possibilities. Perhaps we are to read this command about women specifically in the context of the memorial meeting, which appears the context here in 1 Cor. 14. However, it is evident that women did possess the gift of teaching by 'prophecy' in other contexts:

- To teach other women after the pattern of Elizabeth teaching Mary, and Miriam the women of Israel- both by the gift of prophecy (cp. Tit.2:3,4). The reference in 1 Tim. 2:9 to how women should “also” pray publicly in an appropriate way suggests that there was an organised ‘sisters class’ movement in the early church. It has been observed: “Where women were kept secluded in Greek society, sisters would be the only ones who could teach them. Teaching by brethren would be difficult in such circumstances”.
- To teach in 'Sunday Schools' (there is ample Old Testament precedent for women teaching children).
- To teach unbelievers. This clearly occurred in the early church. Euodia and Syntyche had “laboured side by side” with Paul in the work of the Gospel (Phil. 4:2,3

NIV). Priscilla helped Aquila teach Apollos the Gospel (Acts 18:26). At least eight of the sisters mentioned in Romans 16 are described as workers / labourers. Philip's seven daughters were prophetesses- presumably not speaking the word to baptized brethren, but either to the world or to other sisters.

There's even evidence that there was an organized women's missionary movement in the early church. Clement of Alexandria commented: "The Apostles, giving themselves without respite to the work of evangelism... took with them women, not as wives but as sisters, to share in their ministry to women living at home: by their agency the teaching of the Lord reached the women's quarters without raising suspicion".

All these references to women in the early church teaching would have been anathema to many of the surrounding cultures in which the Gospel spread in the first century: "Not only the arm, but the voice of a modest woman ought to be kept from the public, and she should feel shame at being heard…she should speak to or through her husband" (Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom* 31-32). Likewise the encouragement for a woman to "learn in silence" was a frontal attack on the position that a woman's duty was to follow the religion of her husband and concern herself with domestic duties rather than religious learning. The way the Lord commended Mary rather than Martha for her choice to learn and her rejection of domesticity similarly challenged the prevailing gender perception. There is no doubt that a 1st century Christian woman was far more liberated than in any other contemporary religion. In our societies too, our sisters mustn't concern themselves *only* with domestic duties.

But let them be in subjection, as also said the law- But the word translated "in subjection" has just been used in :32 for how the Spirit would be subject to the prophet. The question is therefore to what or whom should the woman be subject; and where does "the law" state that. The same word for "subjection" is used about a Christian married woman's subjection to her believing husband (Eph. 5:22; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1). And within this same section, Paul has taught that the head of the [married] woman is the man [husband] (1 Cor. 11:3). In this case, the Old Testament reference to female subjection to the husband would be to Gen. 3:16. This seems the obvious reference; but see my comments on *Let the women keep silence*.

14:35 *And if they would learn anything, let them ask their men at home*- A woman was to keep silent and ask her husband [Gk. 'man'] 'at [a] home' if she had any questions (1 Cor. 14:35 Gk.). Generations of mystified yet Godly women have read that verse and thought 'But I don't have a man at home to ask. I'm not even married'- or 'But my hubby doesn't know a thing about the Bible!'. Read in the context of a house church scenario, it makes perfect sense. The women weren't to interrupt the combined gatherings with disruptively asked questions from the floor. They were to ask the elders back in their house churches. And that's why the Greek in 1 Cor. 14:35 strictly makes a distinction, between the woman not speaking / publicly asking questions in the church, but asking the brethren in a house [church].

For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church- As noted above, we must balance this against Paul's encouragement of women to use the gift of prophecy in the church in chapter 11. And chapter 11 would appear to be in the context of the breaking of bread service. So we simply cannot read this as a blanket forbidding of women "to speak in the church". I earlier outlined the case for thinking that the

Corinthians were not spiritual (3:1), and their claims to speak in tongues and prophecy were mere imitations of what was going on in the surrounding idol cults. Those cults in Corinth, especially at Delphi and the temple of Apollo, featured female prophets. Paul gently goes along with the immaturity of the Corinthians on many points, but as in his attitude in other places, he will not tolerate false teaching, people claiming to speak forth God's word when they are doing nothing of the sort. He clamped down on a similar situation in Ephesus in 1 Tim. 2 [see notes there]. And so here he continues the allusion to early Genesis [see on :34 *the law*] by saying that these women were no better than Eve in her shame in Eden. They were bringing shame on themselves and others by what they were doing; those women in Corinth, at that place and time and context, were bringing 'shame' by speaking in the church. Although of course if they had legitimate Holy Spirit gifts of prophecy then Paul was happy for them to use them, as he has made clear in chapter 11. Hence he encourages the Corinthians to prophesy (:39)- but he refers to the true gift of Holy Spirit prophecy and not some imitation of the ecstatic 'prophecies' of the surrounding religions.

14:36 *What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or came it to you alone?*- God's word "went out" from those inspired by His Spirit. They were not spiritual (3:1), and their female prophets were not really speaking God's word. God's true word had gone out to many apart from the Corinthians, and they should therefore speak in accordance with it; rather than pleading they were some special case. Paul's comment about "in all churches" (:33) likewise suggests that Corinth were claiming they were a special, unique case- and could therefore do as they wished. This kind of reasoning is often encountered, on an individual and church level. But Paul is saying that God's word is universal in reference and did not come to them "alone" as some unique revelation. He has structured his sentences to allude to how the word of God "went out" from Jerusalem- not Corinth. The word of God going out is used to refer to preaching in 1 Thess. 1:8.

14:37 *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandment of the Lord*- "Spiritually gifted" is literally "spiritual", and the same word is used in 1 Cor. 3:1 where Paul says that they are not spiritual. Again Paul takes the most non-confrontational approach he can. He writes that if anyone thinks himself to be a 'spiritual', then seeing that it would be the same Spirit inspiring that person as was inspiring Paul, then he would agree with what Paul is teaching here. This is a very gentle way of approaching the terrible problems which these false prophets were causing.

14:38 *But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant*- This recalls his comment in 1 Cor. 11:16 about head coverings: “But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God”. Paul seems to allow for the possibility of some in the church remaining in disagreement with his inspired teaching. His desire, it seems, was to state Divine truth and not to cause division in the ecclesia by insisting that all he said about these procedural issues in church life should be enforced at all costs. Considering he was inspired, this is quite some concession. Paul opened this section in 12:1 by writing that he didn't want them to be "ignorant" about spiritual gifts. But now he says that if after all he has written they want to ignore it, well, ignore it. This is not coarseness nor sarcasm. It is grace really, to allow others to be ignorant of what Paul knew was inspired teaching from God. His lack of threat or consequence is noteworthy; and he certainly never threatens

excommunication or a break in relationship with them. After all, he has reasoned earlier that his salvation is bound up with theirs.

14:39 *Therefore my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues*- "My brothers" reaffirms that he is not breaking off relationship with them. And he still urges them to continue desiring to prophesy, although he means with the legitimate gifts of the Spirit and not in mere imitation of the idol cults. He is at pains to say that despite his own view that the use of the miraculous gifts was immature (13:8-11), he was not forbidding them. This is quite some insight into his wonderful tolerance, arising from the love he felt towards them.

14:40 *But let all things be done decently and in order*- This reflects the multiple appeals in this chapter to do all things with the love which builds up, as defined in the love poem which is the basis for all this teaching about tongues. An orderly rather than a random approach to church life is required, in order to achieve the end of building up others.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

15:1 *Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, wherein also you stand*- The classic chapter about the resurrection of body, 1 Cor. 15, is also about the resurrection of Jesus. And it is not just a doctrinal treatise which Paul throws in to his letter to the Corinthians. It must be viewed in the context of the entire letter. He has been talking about the correct use of the body- not abusing it, defiling it, in whatever way. And he has spoken specifically about sexual issues. And then in summary, at the end of his letter, he speaks at such length about the resurrection of the body. Seeing that God intends resurrecting our body, our body means so much to Him that Christ died and rose again to enable our bodily resurrection, therefore it matters a lot what we do with our body right now!

The material in chapter 15 stands alone in terms of style, and is clearly a discreet unit. It could be that it is a body of material which Paul had earlier preached to them, and is now as it were transcribing in written form, with a few extra comments thrown in.

"Which also you received" means that they received the same message which Paul had also received. He says this explicitly in :3. What he "received", he asked them to also "receive"; and he uses this same word and concept frequently (1 Cor. 11:23; Gal. 1:9,12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1). 2 Thess. 3:6 speaks specifically of the "tradition received from us". All this suggests a specifically defined body of knowledge given to Paul and then faithfully relayed. We therefore have here a unique transcript of the body of doctrine received and passed on by Paul as the basic Gospel. Yet that body of teaching may not be the entire chapter, but rather the simple fact that Christ had died for our sins and risen again (:3,4). For much that follows, such as the mention of unrecorded appearances of the Lord to James, Peter and 500 others, can hardly be described as core Gospel information.

15:2 - see on 1 Cor. 11:2.

By which also you are saved- We are saved *dia* the Gospel, and this presupposes knowing it. The knowledge required is hardly very detailed, but all the same there is a content to it; for faith is axiomatically faith *in* something. There has to be a content to faith.

If you hold fast the word which I preached to you- 'Holding fast the word' is a phrase used in the parable of the sower (Lk. 8:15). The word Paul preached was

therefore the seed sown by the sower- the basic Gospel. The word preached and sown by the Lord Jesus was therefore that also preached by Paul. The preaching of Jesus was largely practical and had little what we might call theological content. The Greek for "Hold fast" is related to the Greek verb for catechize; and inevitably the illiterate would have been taught the Gospel records by catechism, committing them to memory by repetition. But Paul is saying that they must as it were continue repeating those things in their minds. The wonder and reality of the Lord's death and resurrection and their own salvation was to be continually repeated or catechized within their minds- and likewise with us.

Unless you believed in vain- "Belief" can mean just that; but the Greek can also carry the idea of being entrusted with something. The Gospel is entrusted to us- and if we forget it or are no longer transformed by it, then it is been entrusted to us in vain.

15:3-7- see on Lk. 23:55.

15:3 *For I delivered to you first of all that which also I received*- As noted on :1, Paul is ever seeking to build bridges of common experience between him and his readership. What they had received, he too at one point had also received and believed. And he asks them to follow his pattern of further response to it. "First of all" means 'most importantly'. The most important aspect of the Gospel is not the Kingdom of God on earth but the fact that Christ died for our sins.

That Christ died for our sins- This was the "first" or most important aspect of the Gospel. Those who are not deeply convicted by their moral guilt and desperate need for forgiveness will never really see any urgency in the Gospel, nor behold the utter wonder of Chris's death for those sins. The Lord died "for our sins" and also "for us", as so often testified in the NT. Our identity with "our sins" must not be forgotten. We are not to see our sin as some abstraction, somehow separate from us.

According to the scriptures- It is tempting to assume that this refers to the Old Testament. But the same term is going to be used in :4 regarding how His burial and resurrection on the third day were also "according to the Scriptures". There is little direct reference to these things in the Old Testament. So I suggest that the *graphe*, the written things, may refer to the early Gospel records which were already in circulation. If indeed Paul refers to the OT, then he would be expecting them to have figured things like Christ's burial and third day resurrection from the inferences of types and shadows- surely a big ask of illiterate, newly converted Gentiles with little access to the OT scriptures.

15:4 *That he was buried, that he rose on the third day in accordance with the scriptures*- See on :3 *According to the scriptures,* where I give reason for thinking that the "scriptures" in view are the early Gospel records. They all emphasize His burial, and the third day resurrection. If we interpret "the scriptures" as the Old Testament, we are challenged as to what passages teach a resurrection on the third day. Hos. 6:2 could be appealed to, but the context seems wrong and the verse is never interpreted that way in the New Testament. However the offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, as part of the feast of unleavened bread, occured three days after the death of the Passover lamb (Lev. 23:1-11). And Paul will go on to call the Lord's resurrection "the firstfruits" (:20).

15:5 - see on Mt. 17:1; Mk. 16:9.

That he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve- Paul will go on to cite his own zeal for preaching the resurrected Christ as evidence that Christ has risen. He mentions Peter / Cephas as having also been a witness of the resurrection- because it was Peter who had also preached to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:12). The motivation for

such misisonary zeal, of both Peter and Paul, was the Lord's resurrection. That zeal was well known to the Corinthians, and they were the fruits of it. For them to deny the Lord's resurrection was therefore illogical and flying in the face of all personal evidence. The graciously unrecorded appearing of the risen Lord to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34) may have involved the Lord simply appearing to Him, without words. It was simply the assurance that was there in the look on the face of the Lord. Mary was the first to see the risen Lord (Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 20:1). But Paul speaks here in 1 Cor. 15:5 as if Peter was the first witness of the risen Jesus. From his other writings and practice, it's evident that Paul wasn't simply 'anti-women'. But here he's surely making another concession to weakness- for in the first century world, the witness of a woman wasn't acceptable. And so Paul speaks of the first man who saw the resurrected Lord, rather than mention Mary.

15:6 *Then he appeared to above five hundred believers at once*- This is not recorded in the Gospels. The inspired writers were careful to avoid any form of sensationalism, just as we should be. Were there 500 believers at the time of the Lord's death? Probably not; so perhaps these 500 became believers after His appearance to them, and remained so at the time Paul was writing. Or perhaps there were 500 who so believed His words about reappearing in Galilee that they went there, and were rewarded by an appearance. 500 people at one time is quite something- and there was no major Jewish feast at any time between the Lord's death and ascension.

Of whom the greater part remain until now (but some have fallen asleep)- One of the features of newly baptized converts is that they are generally young- often under 25. There are many Biblical examples for young people. The very first converts of the early church were comprised largely of the same age group- and yes, it's possible to Biblically prove this. 1 Cor. 15:6 states that the majority of the 500 brethren who saw the risen Lord Jesus were still alive when Paul wrote to Corinth, about 25 -30 years later. Seeing that life expectancy in first century Palestine was around 50, it would follow that the vast majority of those first witnesses of the risen Lord were under 25.

"Fallen asleep" may not necessarily refer to death, although the NT does envisage the death of believers as a sleep. The Greek term is also used about the spiritual slumbering of those who fall away. The 'remaining' would then refer to abiding in the faith, and that Greek word is also used in that context.

15:7 *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles*- Again this is unrecorded in the Gospels. James was at one stage seen as the leader of the early church; but the point is being made that he was not the first to whom the Lord appeared. The order of appearance seems significant to Paul, for he labours the fact that the very last appearance of the risen Lord was to himself, and he was the least of all. We may ask why Paul here lists specifically the appearances of the risen Lord which are not recorded in the Gospels (to Peter, James and 500 brethren at once). Maybe his point was that the risen Lord had appeared to more than they might have realized; and He through the Spirit can likewise appear [albeit in a different form] to His people today.

15:8 *And last of all*- Paul places the appearance to Peter as coming first, even though the Lord first appeared to Mary (:5). He is framing things in this way to place Peter first and himself last. He so often alludes to Peter's words and actions. Paul the intellectual rabbi shows a parade example for all time in his deep respect for Peter, the illiterate fisherman from Galilee.

As to the abnormally born- The Greek term means an abortion. Paul felt himself to have been an aborted child, who although aborted, somehow miraculously lived. The LXX uses the word for a stillborn child (Num. 12:12; Job 3:16; Ecc. 6:3 cp. Ps. 58:8). Paul's conscience had been struggling against the Lord Jesus for some time before he accepted Him in Damascus. He had surely heard the call of Christ a long time before he responded to it; the new man had been potentially formed but he had aborted it, and he saw huge grace in the fact he the self-aborted spiritual child should have come to live birth (:10). The LXX references tend to associate 'an abortion' with shame and revulsion. The term was used as an expletive to describe a despised person; it had surely been used about Paul, and he agrees with it.

The whole idea of conversion and changing, even transforming, ones basic personality was deeply unpopular in the culture against which the Gospel was first preached in the first century. Ben Witherington comments: "Ancients did not much believe in the idea of personality change or development. Or at least they did see such change- a conversion, for example- as a good thing; it was rather the mark of a deviant, unreliable person... Greco-Roman culture valued stability and constancy of character... the virtuous Stoic philosopher was one who "surmises nothing, repents of nothing, is never wrong, and never changes his opinion"". Of course, this mindset was attractive because human beings never like changing- we're incredibly conservative. And whilst we may live amidst an apparent mindset that 'change is cool', we all know how stubborn we are to changing our basic personality, or even seeing that we need to be transformed. And yet, despise the cultural background, the Gospel of conversion and radical personal change spread powerfully in the first century. The radical change in Saul / Paul's life was proclaimed by him as programmatic for all who truly are converted (1 Tim. 1:16)- and for him, this involved a radical re-socialization, seeing the world in a quite opposite manner, losing old friends and considering former enemies his beloved family. Quick, radical, 180 degree change was especially unpopular in the first century- proselytes, e.g., had to go through a lengthy process to become such. Yet Paul presents the change in him as being dramatic and instant on the Damascus road. Perhaps he alludes to how sceptically this was received by others when he answers the charge that he is an *ektroma*, a miscarriage, one born too quickly (1 Cor. 15:8,9). And he says that indeed, this had been the case with him.

He appeared to me also- Note that the same Jesus who appeared to the apostles appeared also to Paul, some time after His ascension to Heaven. He is not any fundamentally different to the literal, bodily Jesus who appeared to men after His resurrection. Paul saw that same Jesus. And truly He is the same yesterday, today and for ever. He is not now existing in some nebulous, non bodily form.

When Paul speaks of his sinfulness and weakness, it is nearly always in the context of writing about the privilege and wonder of our commission to preach Christ. He humbly wonders at the trust God places in him, to entrust him with the Gospel. He senses a privilege and responsibility in having been entrusted with the Gospel, to the extent that he can say that his preaching is done more by the grace of God he has received than by the natural Paul (1 Cor. 15:8-10).

15:9 *For I am the least of the apostles*- "Least" could as well be translated "smallest" or "shortest". Hence when Paul embarked on his missionary work, he changed his name from Saul (the tall king of Israel who persecuted David-Jesus) to Paul, 'the little

one'. Despite having withstood Peter to his face, according to Galatians, Paul still considered that he was less than them all.

Clearly perception of sinfulness grew in Paul after his conversion. He considered himself blameless in keeping the law (Phil. 3:6); and yet chief of sinners. He realized that sin is to do with attitudes rather than committed or omitted actions. I'd paraphrase Paul's personal reminiscence in Rom. 7:7-10 like this: "As a youngster, I had no real idea of sin. I did what I wanted, thought whatever I liked. But then in my early teens, the concept of God's commandments hit me. The command not to covet really came home to me. I struggled through my teens and twenties with a mad desire for women forbidden to me (AV, conveniently archaic, has "all manner of concupiscence"). And slowly I found in an ongoing sense (Gk.), I grew to see, that the laws I had to keep were killing me, they would be my death in the end". Paul's progressive realization of the nature of sin is reflected in Romans 7:18,21,23. He speaks there of how he came to *know* that nothing good was in him; he *found* a law of sinful tendency at work in him; he came to *see* another law apart from God's law at work in his life. This process of knowing, finding and seeing his own sinfulness continued throughout his life. His way of escape from this moral and intellectual dilemma was through accepting the grace of the Lord Jesus at his conversion. Here in one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he now faced his death, he wrote to Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:15 that he was "chief of sinners", the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. It could well be that this is one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- for surely he had in mid the way the publican smote upon his breast, asking God to be merciful "to me *the* sinner" (Lk. 18:13 RVmg.). Note that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is rooted in the Lord's words that He came to call sinners and to seek and save the lost (Mt. 9:13; 18:11).

Who is unworthy to be called an apostle- Inadequacy is the characteristic required for being used in the Lord's public service, and the Corinthians needed to learn from Paul's example.

Because I persecuted the church of God- The Lord had accused Paul of persecuting *Him*, and Paul would have perceived that all those in Christ were Him, and Paul's behaviour to them was his actions to the Lord Jesus personally. With his knowledge of the Gospels he would have reflected upon the Lord's teaching that whatever was done to "the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me" (Mt. 25:41,45). And it is therefore no accident that he uses this very word to describe himself now as "the least".

15:10 - see on Acts 23:6.

But by the grace of God- See on :8 *Abnormally born*. Paul saw himself as a stillborn, self-aborted child who somehow by God's grace had a live birth in his baptism by Ananias.

I am what I am- We are, in the very end, Yahweh manifested to this world, through our imitation of the Lord Jesus. Paul was alluding to the Yahweh Name (as he often does) when he wrote: "... by the grace of God *I am what I am*" (1 Cor 15:10). Paul was especially chosen to bear the Name (Acts 9:15). 'Yahweh' means all of three things: I am who I am, I was who I was, and I will be who I will be. It doesn't *only* mean 'I will be manifested in the future' in a prophetic sense; that manifestation has been ongoing, and most importantly it *is* going on through us here and now. Paul felt Yahweh's insistent manifestation of the principles of His Name through and in himself and his life's work. We are right now, in who we *are*, Yahweh's witnesses to Himself unto this world, just as Israel were meant to have been. Thus he felt "jealous with the jealousy of God" over his converts (2 Cor. 11:2); jealousy is a characteristic of the Yahweh Name, and Paul felt it, in that the Name was being expressed through him and his feelings. His threat that "I will not spare" (2 Cor. 13:2) is full of allusion to Yahweh's similar final threats to an apostate Israel. "As *he is* [another reference to the Name] so *are we* in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17). Appreciating this means that our witness is to be more centred around who we essentially *are* than what we *do*. The fact God's Name is carried by us, the righteousness of it imputed to us, should lead us to a greater awareness of His grace. Paul alludes to how he carried the Yahweh Name when he says that "by the grace of God *I am what I am*" (1 Cor. 15:10). And his response was therefore to labour abundantly. A theme of Malachi is that Israel failed to appreciate God's Name of Yahweh, and *therefore* they were half-hearted in their service. They gave the minimum to God, they were partial in their generosity, because they despised His Name. The fullness and richness of the Name, of who God is, a God *full* of grace and truth (Ex. 34:6 RV), should lead us to a fullness of response. For the sake of the Name, believers labour (Rev. 2:13). To know the name of Yahweh is an imperative to serve Him (1 Chron. 28:9). The greatness of the Name should have led to full and costly sacrifices (Mal. 1:6-8,9-11,14; 2:2). Thinking upon the Name led the faithful to pay their tithes and fellowship with each other (Mal. 3:6,10). Giving unto Yahweh the glory due to His Name is articulated through giving sacrifice (Ps. 96:8).

There is an interplay between God's calling of men, and human participation in that outreach. The case of Paul exemplifies this. Without the vital work of Ananias, he wouldn't have been able- in one sense- to come to Christ. And yet it was God who called Paul. 'Ananias' means 'the grace of God'. And several times Paul alludes to this, saying that "By [Gk. 'on account of'] the grace of God [i.e. Ananias] I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:14). His conversion was by both God and Ananias. And thus we see the seamless connection in every conversion between God's role, and that of the preacher.

And His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain- "Bestowed upon" translates the simple word *eis*, "in". The gift of grace was internal; after baptism we receive the gift [s.w. "grace"] of the Spirit, which is essentially an internal influence. But we must let it operate. Paul is setting himself up as an example to the Corinthians, who had likewise received the same gift [see chapter 1], but who were not "spiritual" (3:1). Paul is ever concerned that the Corinthians had believed "in vain" (:2), and he holds himself up to them as an example of one who had *not* believed in vain.

But I laboured more abundantly than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me- As noted above, God's grace worked within Paul's mind. But it so dominated him that it can be put for he himself personally. *Sun*, "with", can carry the idea of possession. God's grace possessed him, and brought forth the labour for others

which was the outworking of the love poem of chapter 13. Gal. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 15:10 show Paul using the phrase “yet not I but....” to differentiate between his natural and spiritual self. Perhaps he does the same in the only other occurrence of the phrase, in 1 Cor 7:10: “And unto the married I command, yet not I [the natural Paul], but the Lord [the man Christ Jesus in the spiritual Paul], Let not the wife depart from her husband”.

He surely isn’t boasting that he was worked and preached harder than others. Rather Paul sees a direct connection between the grace of forgiveness that so abounded to him to a greater level than to others, and his likewise abounding preaching work. He speaks as if a man called ‘The grace of God’ did the work, not him. So close was and is the connection between receipt of grace and labour in the Gospel (he makes the same connection in Eph. 3:8). Note that in the context of 1 Cor. 15, Paul is demonstrating the reality of the Lord’s resurrection. Because of it, he received grace and therefore he preached it.

When Paul speaks of how he laboured more abundantly than all, he seems to be making one of is many allusions back to incidents in the Gospels, this time to Lk. 7:47, where the Lord comments that Mary loved much, because she was forgiven much. It was as if the Lord didn’t need to have knowledge of her sins beamed into Him by a bolt of Holy Spirit; He perceived from her great love how much she had sinned and been forgiven. Paul really felt that Mary was his example, his pattern. And so should we feel. The much love which she had for her Lord was, in Paul’s case, articulated through preaching Him.

15:11 *Whether I or they*- If it is God's grace which motivates all preaching work, then it matters not which channel was used- whether Paul or other apostles. This is what he has already laboured in chapter 1, explaining that it matters not who preached to a person or baptized them. All was a manifestation of the essential grace of God, and the channel used should not make any difference.

So we preach and so you believed- “Our preaching” and “your faith” are paralleled in 1 Cor. 15:14. We see here the degree to which individual initiative in preaching is related to the faith and salvation of others. This is the force of the word "so". Salvation is in some sense dependent upon third party efforts (Mk. 2:5). God has delegated His work to us, and to some degree, the extent of its progress depends upon us. Note that faith or belief is predicated upon hearing the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection. Not upon following the detailed scientific arguments made for creationism, nor by any other attempt to make science 'prove God'.

15:12 *Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*- Some among them, perhaps just a minority of false teachers, were teaching that there was no resurrection at all. This sounds like a version of the beliefs of the Sadducees, the only group mentioned in the NT who denied any resurrection (Mt. 22:23); and it was a group of Sadducees who were bent on killing Paul and obsessed with destroying his work (Acts 23:7-10 and context). Perhaps their agents were influencing Corinth.

15:13 *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised*- If dead people don't resurrect, then Christ was not raised as claimed. We note here the implicit assumption that the Lord Jesus was a human being, and not some Divine 'special case', let alone God in a Trinitarian sense. And likewise if Paul had believed in an immortal soul or conscious survival of death, he would not have deployed this argument, nor insisted upon the critical importance of believing in a bodily resurrection both of Christ and those in Him.

Paul stresses that they denied the resurrection "of the dead" (also in :15,35). He was up against the preterist idea that 'resurrection' refers to some renewal in this life, but denying a future resurrection of the body. His whole argument deconstructs that position. The final making alive of the believer in Christ will be "at His coming" (:22,23); only at the final end will death be destroyed (:26). There will be a future body which will be immortal (:37), clothed with immortality in the future (:54). The physical body of the resurrected Jesus is well attested in the Gospels- He was handled, He ate boiled fish etc. And this is our pattern, to have a body like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). The resurrection of His body set in motion an inevitable chain of events that will result in the bodies of those "in Christ" likewise being resurrected and glorified. He is the firstfruits. His resurrected body is the guarantee of our resurrection. All this contrasts with the Corinthian philosophy that God wasn't interested in the body, and it could be used for personal pleasure without any moral responsibility.

15:14 *And if Christ has not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain*- He preached, and *so* the Corinthians believed (1 Cor. 15:11); his preaching and their faith are so closely related, because there is a degree to which the belief and salvation of others has been placed in our hands (cp. Mk. 2:5). Because Christ rose, we have not believed and preached "in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14). Because He rose, therefore "awake to righteousness and sin not" (15:34)- for He is our representative. We labour for Him because our faith in His resurrection is not “in vain". Our faith in His resurrection is not in vain (:2,14), and our labour is therefore not in vain (:58) because it is motivated by His rising again. The grace of being able to believe in the resurrection of Jesus meant that Paul "laboured abundantly" (:10). And he can therefore bid us follow his example- of labouring abundantly motivated by the same belief that the Lord rose (:58).

15:15 *Yes, we are found false witnesses of God*- Paul expresses this in terms of breaking the Decalogue ["you shall not bear false witness"] because of the evident Judaist influences at work. We too should try to be all things to all men, reasoning in their terms as far as we can. If Paul had witnessed that God had raised Christ, but actually He had not raise Him, then Paul had witnessed falsely about God. Note that Paul doesn't say that he had taught a wrong message; his belief in the resurrection was a matter of personal witness. For he claimed to have met the risen Lord.

Because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised- The "we" refers to the apostles and all who had seen the risen Lord. Paul again sees their witness as united and not divided; and therefore no factions should develop following various apostles.

15:16 *For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised*- A repetition of the argument in :13, so powerful is it. See notes there. The Corinthians were probably being influenced by the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which was widespread in Corinth. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 can be seen as an extended refutation of the doctrine of the soul's immortality.

15:17 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain, you are still in your sins*- Paul had earlier written of his fear that they had believed in vain if they no longer held fast to their initial belief in the Lord's death and resurrection (:2). Their profession to believe, their semblance of religion, was vain if Christ was still dead. This was the whole problem at Corinth- they were basing their Christian services upon those in the

surrounding idol cults, replete with church prostitutes, eating idol food and claims to ecstatic utterances and prophecies. But this 'faith' or religion was in vain- it was mere religion, if they didn't actually believe the core issue of Christianity, the bodily resurrection of Christ. Any who deny His bodily, literal resurrection are liable to the same rebuke from Paul- that whilst indeed they may be religious, their faith and religion is vain. The point of our faith is that we are no longer 'in our sins'. His resurrection [and not just His death] is what enabled forgiveness of sins. The implication is that the Christian faith is all about the message of forgiveness of sins made possible because of the Lord's death *and resurrection*. And any faith or religion which gives no such forgiveness of sins is vain. And the other way around, the attraction and power of true Christianity is the solid assurance of forgiven sin [and all the eternal consequences of sin] through the death and body resurrection of Christ. Such good news will not be attractive to those who are not convicted of their sins and are looking for mere religion (see on 14:24,25).

15:18 *And therefore also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished*- The reference may primarily be to those who had seen the risen Lord but had now "fallen asleep" in death (:6). Paul sees no other form of salvation apart from sharing in the bodily resurrection of Christ; for baptism into Him means that His resurrection shall ultimately be ours (Rom. 6:3-5). Paul simply would not have reasoned this way if he believed in an immortal soul going to eternity at death. Without the hope of bodily resurrection which is predicated upon the Lord's resurrection, then we have "perished". The Lord Himself had promised that those in Him would not "perish" [s.w.] but should be raised up again at the last day (Jn. 6:39). Indeed John's Gospel several times uses this word for "perish" in the context of the Lord promising eternal life instead of 'perishing'. The articulation of that eternal life will be through the resurrection of the body, Paul is arguing. And that in turn is predicated upon the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, to which we are connected by faith and baptism into it.

15:19 *If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all people the most pitiable*- "Pitiable" translates 'mercy'- the ones to whom mercy should be shown. The hint could be that they needed the Gospel again preaching to them. They were as many religious people- their 'faith' was just for this life. There was no solid connection to a hope beyond the grave, in the resurrection of the body. They were indeed no better than the surrounding religious cults which they emulated.

15:20 *But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep*- "But now" implies 'right now'. The historical resurrection of Jesus can become new and fresh in our lives. Right now, the Lord has risen. His resurrection is the guarantee that those asleep in Him shall also be raised as He was. But we are not just waiting in hope for that great day of resurrection to dawn. "We have the firstfruits of the Spirit" and therefore eagerly await "the redemption of the body" in the resurrection of the last day (Rom. 8:23). The Corinthians refused to recognize the gift of the Spirit which they had been given (3:1). This in turn led to them not realizing that there was actual proof within them that the Lord's resurrection was for real, and guaranteed their own. The new man created within us by the Spirit, which came to us through the Gospel, "the word of truth", means that we have the firstfruits already within us; we are already the firstfruits of the creation we shall become (James 1:18). And we in turn are the firstfruits of a greater harvest yet to come (Rev. 14:4)- perhaps

referring to those redeemed in some way around the time of the Lord's return, or those converted during some 'Millennial' reign. The Lord's resurrection to life eternal was the first-fruit or guarantee of our resurrection (as in Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). And our resurrection to life at the last day will likewise be first-fruit of some even greater redemption or harvest. In this we may have some hint at the resurrection of others to some opportunity of hearing the Gospel and becoming part of the harvest, if they so desire. For if we are the firstfruits (Rev. 14:4), then we must ask who constitutes the greater harvest after us. I have discussed in Revelation 20 the difficulties of the classical view of the Millennium- for that is the common answer given to this question.

Another perspective would be that because we are in Christ, and because God sees the gap between His exaltation and ours as irrelevant, we are called "the firstfruits" too. This is why Rom. 1:4 Gk. and 2 Cor. 5:14,15 RSV speaks as if ultimately there is only one resurrection: that of the Lord Jesus, in which we had a part as being in Him. The appearing of Christ is paralleled with our appearing with Him in glory (Col. 3:4)- because effectively, when He returns, we will appear with Him in the same moment.

15:21- see on Rev. 20:5.

For since by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead- Paul now makes a series of extended allusions to the events of early Genesis. This, along with references to "first-fruits", suggest there were some in his audience who were aware of the Jewish scriptures. He has alluded to them throughout his arguments to the Corinthians. I have mentioned often how Gentile, illiterate, immoral Corinthians were attracted to Judaism because it offered an apparent way of justification by a few specific works, freeing them up to be immoral in other matters. This was why Judaism was attractive to such an immature Gentile Christian audience. We must emphasize how death and resurrection both came by "a man"- Adam and the Lord Jesus. Clearly enough, the Lord was a man; we see here clearly taught the necessity of the Lord's humanity and representative sacrifice. Trinitarianism makes a fair mess of this clear teaching.

15:22- see on Jn. 5:21.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive- "In" Christ speaks of baptism into Him and abiding in Him. All in Him shall be made alive; which makes being in Him by baptism a requirement for salvation. I noted on :20 that the language of resurrection used here is not only limited to the resurrection of the body at the last day. We are to be "made alive" right now by the Spirit; for the Lord Jesus is a life giving Spirit right now to those who will accept it (:45). The "spiritual" state spoken of in :46 is true in some sense for us now who have received the Spirit; hence Paul's lament that the Corinthians were not "spiritual" when they ought to have been (3:1). The Lord had taught that "it is the Spirit that makes alive" and thus guarantees our bodily resurrection (Jn. 5:21; 6:63 s.w. "be made alive"). It is the same Spirit of Christ which now dwells in us which shall also be the means whereby our bodies are made alive at the last day (Rom. 8:11 is explicit about this). The Lord Himself was made alive by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18). So we can see how it was in fact logical that people who refused to accept the work of the Spirit within them would come to reject the idea of bodily resurrection. In this sense, "the Spirit gives life", right now, once we have rejected the way of legalism which "kills" (2 Cor. 3:6). Our Spirit is to become the Lord's Spirit; our essential personality must therefore be

immortalized, and this therefore requires the resurrection of the body. For we personally shall be saved.

15:23 *But each in his own order*- "Order" is the word used in the LXX for a troop of soldiers or people (Num. 10:14; 18:22,25). The parade starts with the Lord Jesus, then with us, and then (:24) another undefined cohort at "the end". Paul looks from the perspective of eternity upon these three cohorts. I have suggested on :20 who this last cohort might be, although it is intentionally left undefined.

Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's, at his coming- "At his coming" is proof enough that the time of glorification is not at death, which is unconsciousness, but at His return. Preterism has a big problem with this- for if His "coming" was at AD70 then all who are Christ's should have had their resurrection then. We become Christ's by baptism into Him (Gal. 3:29). and so Paul assumes that all the Corinthians "are Christ's" (1 Cor. 3:23). Even if they did not properly understand or therefore believe in the correct nature of the Christian hope, he still assumes that as baptized into Him, they would receive the promised outcome of His resurrection. This has huge implications for how we treat others who clearly have left the faith or fail to understand it, despite having earlier been baptized into Christ. We cannot condemn them ahead of the judgment seat of Christ, so we can only assume their salvation and feel towards them accordingly.

15:24 *Then comes the end*- "Comes" is not in the original. Literally, "then- the end". On :23 I suggested that we are being presented with three orders or standard bearers / troops of people. Firstly Christ, then those who in this life are His "at His coming", and now we have in view a third group. I suggested on :20 whom they might be. If indeed "the end" refers to the end of a Millennial reign (although see on :20), when He will have put down "all rule and all authority and power", He will have reigned until "all enemies" are subdued. This would mean that there will still be enemies of Christ throughout the Millennium; and there will also be human rulers and powers opposed to Him, to some degree, until they are finally subdued at "the end" of the Millennium. As Solomon's reign featured local rulers still existing in surrounding lands, so Christ's Kingdom would still feature local human rulers of some kind, who may not be forced to be subject to Him. It takes time for the little stone to destroy the kingdoms of men, and totally establish God's Kingdom. Zeph. 3:19 speaks of the Jews getting glory and praise in every nation which have persecuted them. The lands of their dispersion, Russia, Germany, the Arab world etc., will then recognize the spiritual status of God's people. This in itself implies that humanity will not be one homogeneous mass. The *nations* will decide to go up to worship God at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16); hinting at some kind of high level national decision by their leaders, as well as the individual desire of ordinary people from all nations?

When he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father- There seems an emphasis here upon the Lord's inferiority to the Father. "Even the Father" seems to stress the point, having said that He shall give up the Kingdom to God. I suggested in *The Real Christ* that wrong thinking about the Lord Jesus was already developing in the churches at this time, wishing to present Jesus as another god; which is how the pagan cults around them would have perceived Him, for they considered every cult to worship a god. This error came to full term in the doctrine of the Trinity; but Paul here is arguing against it right at its incipient stage.

When he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power- Absolutely all kinds of authority apart from that of the Father and Son will be removed. "Abolish" translates a word elsewhere used about the abolition of the Mosaic law (Rom. 7:2,6; 2

Cor. 3:7,11,13,14; Eph. 2:15), as well as the rule of sin (Rom. 6:6; Heb. 2:14). Paul has used the word in his opening chapter to the Corinthians about how all worldly structures and systems shall be "abolished" (1 Cor. 1:28; 2:6). This was a radical thing to put in writing, in a society where the "rule... authority and power" of Caesar was what structured society. All such things were to pass away right now in the experience of the believer. The words are used about sin, about the power of the Mosaic regulations, and also about the authority of Rome. The Father and Son were to be all and in all for all believers; submission to their rule, power and authority [words often used by Paul about the authority of the Lord Jesus] is the way to ultimate freedom from all the secular ties that bind. Even the authority of the miraculous Spirit gifts was to be abolished (s.w. 1 Cor. 13:8,10), and the mature believer was to likewise abolish or put away such things (1 Cor. 13:11 s.w.). Clearly, in the life of the believer right now, the Kingship of Christ is to mean the abolition of all other authorities and principles, be they of sin or the Mosaic law. The reality of Christ as Lord is to be supreme. It is this process of getting people to be like this which shall progress onwards until "the end".

15:25 *For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet*- Having things and persons 'under the feet' doesn't necessarily mean they were to be killed or destroyed. It can mean simply submission before the one enthroned. "All things", a phrase often used for all God's people, are to be placed under the feet of the Lord Jesus (Ps. 8:6- quoted here in :27; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8, which teach that it is the church who shall be under the Lord's feet. Rev. 12:8 may teach the same). I noted on Mt. 22:44 and Acts 2:35 that the making of the Lord's enemies His footstool means that they shall repentantly accept Him, rather than being destroyed by Him. "We were enemies" of God, but are now reconciled in grateful, humble submission (Rom. 5:10). This is the whole message of the preceding :24- that all things shall progressively be subjected under Christ's authority and Kingship, thereby becoming part of His Kingdom. To achieve this on a universal level, He shall have to come to earth and destroy those who refuse to submit. But the end in view is that the earth and all upon it shall be His Kingdom, under the dominion of His Kingship. And that process is to begin in the hearts of believers right now.

15:26 *The last enemy that shall be abolished is death*- "Last" doesn't have to have a chronological reference, as if death is the enemy destroyed at the end of a period. It can simply mean the one great enemy. Just as all forms of power and authority shall be abolished (:24), so shall death. The same words are used in 2 Tim. 1:10 of how the Lord Jesus has right now "abolished death"; for through His death He has "destroyed [s.w. 'abolished'] the devil which has the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). This is not only a case of 'Now but not yet'. It is the case rather that for those in Christ, death has been abolished by the Lord's death and resurrection; for our hope of conquering death is certain. That hope is to be spread progressively to others, and by the elimination of all who refuse it, there will come "the end" when death shall have been abolished not just for us but for all on this planet.

As in our own day, literature and thought of Bible times tried to minimize death. Yet in both Old and New Testaments, death is faced for what it is. Job 18:14 calls it "the king of terrors"; Paul speaks of death as the last and greatest enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Humanity lives all their lives "in fear of death" (Heb. 2:17). Facing death for what it is imparts a seriousness and intensity to human life and endeavour, keeps our sense of responsibility to God paramount, and the correct functioning of conscience all important. We see this in people facing death; but those who've grasped Bible truth

about death ought to live like this all the time, rejoicing too that we have been delivered from it.

15:27 *For He put all things in subjection under his feet*- In the end, all the enemies of Jesus will be placed "under His footstool" (Acts 2:35 etc.). Yet we were all His enemies, due to the alienation with Him caused by our sin (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). The Lord's footstool is the place where His people are figuratively located, praising Him there (Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Lam. 2:1). Ultimately, all things will be subjected under Jesus, placed at the Lord's footstool, under His feet (1 Cor. 15:27). Submission to Him is therefore the ultimate end of both the righteous and the wicked; the difference being, that the righteous submit to Him now, rather than in the rejection and final exaltation of the Lord over them in the condemnation process.

But when He said all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things to him- We may well enquire why this point is being made and so laboured. I suggested on :24 that Paul is arguing against a wrong view of Jesus as being God Himself. But Paul is arguing also against the idea that Christianity is a religion just for this life. He therefore highlights the fact that the whole work of the Lord Jesus in this age is all towards a final glorious end, when He will be subject to the one true God, who shall then be thereby fully manifested ("all in all", :28). That point has not yet come- and this is a powerful argument against Preterism as well as any tendency we may have towards living as if our 'faith' is just to ease our passage through this life, with nothing at the end. Paul picks up from this apparent digression in :29, which is again about resurrection of the body. So the argument about the Son's final submission to the Father should also be read in the context of a series of reasons why the final resurrection of the body is a necessary Christian belief.

15:28 *And when all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things to him*- Being under the Lord's feet is therefore parallel with being subjected to Him. And we are to be subject to Him now (s.w. Rom. 10:3; Eph. 1:22; 5:24; Heb. 12:9; James 4:7). The same word is used in the context of the resurrection and glorification of the body in Phil. 3:21: "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even *to subdue* all things to himself". Through the Spirit, He is now at work within us to subdue us unto Himself, and that same Spirit shall transform our bodies into immortality. This is exactly the context of 1 Corinthians 15; see on 15:20 and Rom. 8:23.

That God may be all in all- God will be "all in all" through the full expression of His Name. But Eph. 1:23 says that right now, *all* the fullness of God fills "all in all" in the church; in other words we should now be experiencing something of that total unity which will then be physically manifest throughout all creation. Eph. 4:8 states that Jesus ascended in order to give the Spirit gifts to men, as He stressed in His discourse in the Upper Room. Then Eph. 4:10 says that He ascended "that He might fill (s.w. Him that fills all in all with the fullness, Eph. 1:23) all things" (the saints). Note in passing how the phrase "all things" and "all in all" are used about the saints. "All in all" is used solely in this context of the saints (Col. 3:11 is a good example), and this is how we should read 1 Cor. 15:28 "God may be all in all"- i.e. that God may be manifested completely in all His *saints* (not just 'in all creation generally'), whenever they lived and died. So the Spirit was given in order for us to be filled, to come, to the "stature of the fullness of Christ"- which is God's fullness (Eph. 4:13).

15:29 *Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are people baptized for them?*- According to the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, baptism for the dead was practiced by the surrounding religious cults in Corinth to preserve the dead from a bad afterlife, especially at Eleusis. The practice is referenced in Homer's *Hymn to Demeter* 478-79. So again we see the Corinthian Christians emulating the surrounding religious cults (as with using church prostitutes, eating idol food at the breaking of bread meeting, making ecstatic utterances and prophecies in the name of having Holy Spirit gifts etc.). They had no personal belief in a future resurrection, yet they could not escape the nagging doubt about what fate awaits us beyond death. And this led them to baptizing themselves in the hope of giving their dead relatives a better afterlife, even a 'better resurrection'. This is a useful window into the contradictions evident within many religious people. They may personally deny any interest in a resurrection of the body, and yet they act as if they are actually concerned about these issues, especially when it comes to the loss of their loved ones.

15:30 *Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour?*- This is an allusion to Lk. 8:23. Paul felt that if he gave up his faith, he'd be like those faithless disciples in the storm on Galilee. Paul found that every hour of his life, he was motivated to endure by Christ's resurrection; this was how deep was his practical awareness of the power of that most basic fact. It could be that Paul felt he was in peril ["jeopardy"] of missing out on salvation if Christ was not raised. But he uses the same word to describe his constant "perils" whilst serving the Lord (Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 11:26). He endured these things every hour, directly because of the Lord's resurrection and the hope of a resurrection like His. This motivated him every hour to endure what he had to. Every hour of his life was a "peril", and only faith in the Lord's resurrection empowered him to endure it.

15:31 *I protest by that boasting in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord: I die daily*- By this he perhaps means that because he was daily crucified with Christ and rose with Him, he was thereby able to rejoice in them; to overcome the pain and hurt which their treatment of him would naturally give rise to, because he could be another person. That new person could rejoice in the Corinthians and view them so positively, all because Christ had risen and opened up the hope for the Corinthians to be saved, which was Paul's great hope and boast.

Baptism is in a sense ongoing; we live in newness of life, continually dying and resurrecting. Out of each death, there comes forth new life. For His resurrection life, the type of life that He lived and lives, becomes manifest in our mortal flesh right now (2 Cor. 4:11).

15:32- see on Is. 22:13; Rev. 19:10.

If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die- Paul's hometown of Tarsus had been founded by Sardanapalus, whose statue was in a nearby town with the inscription: "Eat, drink, enjoy thyself. The rest is nothing". This is incidental confirmation that the Biblical record was not made up. This kind of language usage, reciting a phrase encountered during youth, would be utterly realistic and appropriate for Paul as the author. However it seems that he is also quoting a form of Solomon's words in Ecc. 2:24 as the words of those who have no faith that there will be a resurrection. The rich fool likewise effectively disbelieved in the

resurrection, and his words also allude to those of Solomon (Lk. 12:19 = Ecc. 2:24; 11:9).

It is in the context of talking about our hope of bodily resurrection at Christ's return, Paul says that this hope was what had given perspective to his wrestling with wild beasts at Ephesus. The context surely requires that we understand this as referring to how he had been in danger of losing his physical life because of this wrestling, but he endured it with a mindset which looked ahead to the resurrection of the body. The wrestling with wild beasts, therefore, appears to be a literal experience which he had, rather than using 'wrestling with wild beasts' in a figurative sense. There was at Ephesus an amphitheatre, and we also know that there were cases where convicted criminals were forced to fight wild animals; if they killed the animal, then they went free. It seems this is what happened to Paul. He speaks in 2 Cor. 1:8-10 of an acute crisis which he faced in Asia (and Ephesus was in Asia) which involved his having been given a death sentence, and yet being saved out of it by "the God who raises the dead". This emphasis on bodily resurrection is the same context we have in 1 Cor. 15:32. As he faced his death in 2 Tim. 4:17, Paul reminisced how the Lord had earlier saved him "out of the mouth of the lion"; and the context there is of literal language, and we are therefore inclined to consider that he was literally saved from a lion in the arena at Ephesus. This also helps us better understand his earlier reference in Corinthians to having been exhibited as a spectacle, as a gladiator at a show, "appointed unto death", in the presence of God and men (1 Cor. 4:9). Note that despite this traumatic experience, Paul chose to continue at Ephesus even after that, because he saw a door had been opened to him for the Gospel, despite "many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:8,9). We who are so shy to put a word in for the Lord in our encounters with people ought to take strength from Paul's dogged example in Ephesus.

15:33 *Be not deceived*- This sounds like an appeal not to be deceived by false teachers.

Evil companionships corrupt good moral habits- This and :34 are in the midst of an argument about the importance of believing in the Lord's resurrection and focusing ourselves upon our own future resurrection at His coming. So we must understand these moral appeals in the resurrection context. "Evil companionships" is only one possibility in translation; AV "evil communications" is not too far wrong. The Greek *homilia* means literally 'homily. The communications or homilies in view would then be the false teaching against which Paul was warning them: "Be not deceived". It was this evil teaching being communicated to them which would corrupt morality. For if Christ is not raised and we shall not be, then there was no longer any binding moral compass upon Christians- for judgment day and the second coming would never happen, and there was no ultimate outcome of our moral behaviour in this life. The same word for "corrupt" will be used in 2 Cor. 11:3 of Paul's fear that false teaching would "corrupt" the Corinthians just as the serpent beguiled Eve.

These evil companionships were with the "some among you" who have "no knowledge of God" (:34). Knowing God in Hebraic thought meant relationship with Him. The same group are spoken of in :12, the "some among you [who say] that there is no resurrection of the dead". So the group in view are false teachers within the church, or possibly not even teachers but a group. As the Proverbs simply teach not to walk with the unwise within Israel, so here Paul is surely saying that we simply don't companion with those within the church who have no knowledge of God. And we note the parallel between "knowledge of God" and belief in the Lord' resurrection. His

resurrection revealed God and knowledge / relationship with Him was enabled thereby. To deny it meant no relationship with God. And we are to 'companion with' those who are in relationship with God. For that is the basis of Christian fellowship. Not an exact theology, but obvious experience.

15:34- see on 1 Cor. 4:14.

Awake to soberness righteously, and do not sin. For some among you have no knowledge of God- We died and rose with Christ, and if Christ really did rise again, and we have a part in that, we must therefore abstain from sin, quit bad company and labour with the risen, active Lord. As noted on :33, this teaching is about the result of listening to false teaching which denied the resurrection, both of the Lord and ourselves. The end result of it was sin, and not knowing God; although *agnosia* really means 'ignorance'. Belief in the Lord's awaking would result in their moral awakening. To not believe in the Lord's resurrection was to not know God. There is actually no valid belief in God, or theism, if it is not predicated upon belief in the Lord's resurrection. Nobody can come to the Father except through the Son. "Knowledge of God" may well refer to relationship with God, rather than simply a lament that they did not know the right theology.

One of the greatest false doctrines of all time is the trinity- which claims that there are three "persons" in a Godhead. Trinitarian theologians borrowed a word- *persona* in Latin, *porsopon* in Greek- which was used for the mask which actors wore on stage. But for us, God doesn't exist in personas. He exists, as God the Father. And we practice the presence of that God. The real, true God, who isn't acting, projecting Himself through a mask, playing a role to our eyes; the God who is so crucially real and *alive*, there at the other end of our prayers, pulling at the other end of the cord... What we know of Him in His word is what and who He really is. It may not be *all* He is, but it is all the same the truth of the real and living God. And this knowledge should be the most arresting thing in the whole of our existence. So often the prophets use the idea of "knowing God" as an idiom for living a life totally dominated by that knowledge. The new covenant which we have entered is all about 'knowing' Yahweh. And Jer. 31:34 comments: "They shall all know me… for I will forgive their iniquity". The knowledge of God elicits repentance, real repentance; and reveals an equally real forgiveness. It is possible for those in Christ to *in practice* not know God at all. Thus Paul exhorted the Corinthian ecclesia: "Awake to righteousness and sin not: for some have no knowledge of God" (1 Cor. 15:34 RV). The knowledge and practice of the presence of God ought to keep us back from sin. Ez. 43:8 RV points out how Israel were so wrong to have brought idols into the temple: "in their setting of their threshold by my threshold, and their door post beside my door post, and there was but the wall between me and them". How close God was ought to have made them quit their idolatry. But their cognizance of the closeness of God was merely theoretical. They didn't feel nor respond to the wonder of it. And truly, He is not far from every one of us.

I speak this to move you to shame- As in 6:5; but on other matters, Paul did not seek to shame them (4:14). We note his sensitive approach to them, taking a different approach over different issues, just as we should. The "shame" was on "you"- that their collective attitudes had led to some amongst them having "no knowledge of God". We are all in this together; it is not for us to shrug at the spiritual failure of some amongst us. Just as Ezra and others blushed at their collective shame for the behaviour of the community they were members of (Ezra 9:6).

15:35 *But someone will say: How are the dead resurrected? And with what type of body do they come forth?*- Where and when and how the salvation of the Father and Son will be finally manifested and outplayed isn't the most important thing. The *essence* of their salvation is what needs to concern us. Tragically Bible students have all too often been like the foolish questioner Paul envisages in 1 Cor. 15:35; he was preoccupied with *how* the body would come out of the grave, rather than on the essence of the fact that as we sow now, as we now allow God's word to take root in us, so we will receive in the nature of the eternal existence which we will be given at the judgment. I'm not saying that how we are raised etc. is unimportant; but it's importance hinges around its practical import for us. All too easily we can bat these questions around with no attention to their practical relevance for us.

I mentioned earlier that the only group mentioned in the NT as denying the resurrection were the Sadducees; and these objections from "someone" were typically theirs. Clearly Corinth were under the influence of Judaism, and particularly from the Sadducees who hated Paul because he had been born a Pharisee. I have mentioned throughout commentary on Titus and also here on Corinthians that such Judaism was strangely attractive to immoral, immature Gentile Christians who likely had never read the Mosaic law. Because a few acts of ritual obedience apparently freed them up to continue an immoral life in other areas.

15:36 *You foolish one*- For all his gentleness and tolerance towards the Corinthians, Paul is quite sharp with the false teachers: "You fool" translates a fairly coarse term in Greek. This should be our pattern- patience and endless gentle reasoning with the weak, but standing up to false teachers. Hence the policy of an open table but a closed platform.

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies- Death is necessary in the wider plan of salvation; the coming to life must be at some point after death, for we are but a seed sown. Death is the gateway to a 'coming to life' at the last day [not immediately after death]. The necessity of resurrection is therefore Paul's answer to the detailed questions as to how mechanically the dead shall be raised. And it is important to grasp that logical and spiritual necessity of bodily resurrection- and the details and mechanisms then become irrelevant. The Greek for 'come to life' is used of our being spiritually quickened now after baptism (Jn. 5:21; 6:63), when we figuratively die and rise again. The Lord Jesus is now a life giving Spirit (:45; 2 Cor. 3:6). Hence Paul can write of how he dies daily (:31). Note that a seed does not die in the earth, but Paul is using this as a figure of death, a burial in the ground. The external body of the seed decays but the germ within lives. Paul is not teaching here the immortality of the soul, but rather than the very essence of a believer, which is the spirit, shall determine the nature of our resurrected existence. See on :22. It is the same Spirit of Christ which now dwells in us which shall also be the means whereby our bodies are made alive at the last day (Rom. 8:11 is explicit about this). It is of the Spirit that we reap eternal life at the last day (Gal. 6:8). The Lord had likened Himself to a seed falling into the ground and dying, and then bringing forth much fruit when it rises from the earth (Jn. 12:24). Paul is alluding to this because his whole argument is that baptism makes the Lord's death and resurrection a pattern for our own.

15:37 *And what you sow is not the plant body that shall later be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or some other grain*- The allusion is clearly to the Lord's parables of sowing; the requirement is that there shall come a harvest when the seed comes out of the ground. It is not the mature plant which is sown and then reappears. The seed sown is "bare", or "naked". Paul uses the same figure in 2 Cor. 5:3, where he

likens the immortalizing of our bodies to our naked [s.w. "bare"] body being clothed upon with immortality. But there is something in common with our life now, just as there is a connection between the seed and the plant. And just as there are different types of crop, so there are different types of people who shall be immortalized- grain, wheat or some other crop which gives the bread of life to others. This may assist us in coping with the widely differing types we find within the church- one may be wheat, another grain.

15:38 *But God gives it a body just as it pleases Him; and to each seed a body of its own*- There is a connection between the seed we are in this life, and who we shall eternally be. In this lies the eternal consequence of the personality we develop now. And yet on the other hand, the body given us, the nature of our eternity, will be a gift from God according to His will or pleasure. Those two elements are brought together in this verse. We shall each be unique- each seed has a body of its own, just as each plant is unique. The word of God / the Gospel is as seed (1 Pet. 1:23); and yet we believers end our lives as seed falling into the ground, which then rises again in resurrection to be given a body and to eternally grow into the unique type of person which we are now developing (1 Cor. 15:38). The good seed which is sown is interpreted by the Lord both as the word of God (Lk. 8:11), and as "the children of the Kingdom" (Mt. 13:38). This means that the word of the Gospel becomes flesh in us as it did in our Lord.

15:39 *All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes*- Paul labours this point over the next verses. He has introduced the idea of the unique, individual nature of our reward in writing of how each plant has a unique body (:38) and how there are different types of grain. The diversity of the natural creation will be reflected in the spiritual creation, and therefore there is going to be diversity amongst us within the church now- a point which needed making to a group as diverse as Corinth.

15:40 *There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one and the glory of the earthly is another*- Perhaps Paul is referring to Angels as the "heavenly bodies", and in so doing making another stab at the teaching of the Sadducees who denied both resurrection and Angels (see on :35; Acts 23:8). We shall become as Angels at the resurrection (Lk. 20:35,36), and their varying glories shall be reflected in our own. The supreme heavenly body is that of the Lord Jesus, and we shall receive a body like His heavenly body (:48,49). An alternative is to understand the heavenly bodies as the planets which will now be listed in :41. Just as there are varying glories amongst the diversity of earthly bodies which comprise the natural creation (:39), so there are amongst the heavenly bodies (:41). This variation of glory will be reflected in the diversity seen amongst the glorified believers after their resurrection.

15:41 *There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory*- The different types of glory will be reflected in the diversity of believers both now and eternally. Clearly Paul envisaged a gradation of glory amongst the believers. Some make more of God's truth than others. This would have been a most necessary point to labour in a church which was so diverse, with some strong and committed, and others extremely weak. The stronger ones could only relate to the weaker ones by understanding that they would be saved, although their glory might be less than that of others. The Lord

likewise taught that some would have more cities to rule over than others; some will trade His talents better than others.

15:42 *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption*- By "the dead" Paul understands "the dead in Christ", for he is predicating resurrection upon association with Christ's resurrected body. "Corruption" has moral undertones- see on :43 and :44. In this case, we have in view not an emergence in immortal form, but rather the idea would be that the corruptible, the prone to sin, will be raised in a form which cannot sin, which is incorruptible. This is another of many implications that we don't attain perfection in this life. We die sinful and imperfect. This is comfort to us in our frustration with our lack of total moral change, and also inspiration to patience with our brethren's similar lack of total maturity. Paul is teaching not merely the resurrection of the body, but the total transformation of the person into the nature of the risen Lord Jesus. Phil. 3:21 likewise speaks of how the body of our [moral] humiliation will be transfigured into the body of Christ's glory, by the same power of the Spirit which enables him to make all things subject to Himself, His own person and character. This apparently negative view of the human body, physically and morally, was in strong contrast to the Greek culture of glorifying and developing bodily prowess.

15:43- see on 1 Cor. 8:9

It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power- "Dishonour" has moral connotations, the same word being translated "vile affections" (Rom. 1:26), and used of the "dishonour" of condemnation at the last day (Rom. 9:21; 2 Tim. 2:20). Paul has recently used the word about the weaker members of the church whom we might consider to be dishonourable (12:23). "Weakness" is likewise used of moral weakness (Mt. 8:17). These spiritually weak ones will be resurrected in power; yet the same words are used in Heb. 11:34 of how the [spiritually?] weak are "made strong", literally 'made of power', in this life. This theme of morally weak being raised spiritually strong is continued in :44, and in :42 the idea of 'corruptible' being raised incorruptible is introduced. Paul's reasoning here connects with one of the hardest issues posed by the Corinthian correspondence: Paul writes as if all the Corinthians shall be saved, for they are "in Christ". He feels warmly towards them and believes in their final salvation- for he will not ever state they are to be condemned at the last day. And yet he clearly reveals that their behaviour was in serious denial of basic Christianity, in doctrine and practice- and he urgently pleads with them to change lest they lose their salvation. Paul and those who were 'spiritual' in Corinth must have struggled hard over these issues. Paul is speaking in this section of the resurrection of the body at the last day, but he clearly does so in terms which refer to the moral weakness of the weaker ones at Corinth. He can only assume that if they are to be saved, then they shall die in moral weakness and dishonour but be resurrected in a spiritually stronger form. Even though those changes in a moral sense ought to be happening now. This speaks powerfully to us today. For we too wonder at the apparently non-Christian behaviour and beliefs of those who have been baptized into Christ and we therefore have to assume are "in" Him and in hope of salvation. For it is not for us to say they are non-Christian or have fallen from grace to the point they shall not be finally saved. For we are not to judge in that ultimate sense. We can only therefore assume their salvation. And that will mean they at their deaths are sown in moral corruption and dishonour but shall be saved at the resurrection, when they shall be changed. And this of course is a question we have likely asked ourselves too- is the resurrection just going to mean a change of physical

nature for me, so that I shall be immortal? Or shall I be changed morally, spiritually, as well? Such change is sadly necessary for us all. But we wonder to what extent it shall be possible... will character and personality be totally transformed by the resurrection process? Or just as it were touched up? And if we hope for such a change in our own cases, to what extent can we deny such hope to weak believers who die in Christ whilst still so terribly immature in faith and behaviour? Paul's approach here is indeed a comfort. The transformation from weakness to power, from corruption to not corruption, in moral terms, must of course be happening now. But we need the resurrection to make it complete. And like Paul with Corinth, we have to assume that resurrection shall mean moral as well as physical transformation for our brethren. And this frees us from the need to condemn and separate from our brethren in this life. We must assume that resurrection shall transform them to how the must be- as it will us. For none of us surely can claim that we are perfect now and just need immortality to get us to salvation.

15:44 *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body*- See notes on :43 regarding the element of moral transformation which will be part of the resurrection process. Paul has drawn the tension between natural and spiritual in 2:14; the Corinthians were still natural when they ought to be spiritual, and Pail laments they are not spiritual (3:1). Jude 19 speaks likewise of weak believers as being "sensual [s.w. "natural"], having not the Spirit" as they ought to have. The transformation from natural to spiritual ought to be now; but the final transformation at the resurrection will also have to include this element for us all, and shall not solely be a changing of our nature from mortal to immortal. This is great comfort for those who feel their transformation is not complete and that they go to their grave not fully transformed in moral terms.

15:45 *So also it is written: The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*- Be aware that the original writers didn't have quotation marks or brackets (consider where Paul might have used them here!). The quotation is from Gen. 2:7. But Paul goes on to say that the Lord Jesus as the last Adam is a life-giving spirit. He will be this in a literal sense at the resurrection of the last day. But His Spirit is about moral transformation; we should receive that Spirit now and be transformed. And the resurrection of the last day will also feature an element of moral transformation as well as physical- see on :43.

There was a first century Jewish speculation that Adam would be re-incarnated as Messiah. Paul's references to Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:45-47 are very careful to debunk that idea. Paul emphasized that no, Adam and Jesus are different, Jesus is superior to Adam, achieved what Adam didn't, whilst all the same being "son of man". And this emphasis was effectively a denial by Paul that Jesus pre-existed as Adam, or as anyone. For Paul counters these Jewish speculations by underlining that the Lord Jesus was *human*. The hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is really a setting out of the similarities and differences between Adam and Jesus- and unlike Adam, Jesus did not even consider equality with God as something to be grasped for (Gen. 3:5). The record of the wilderness temptations also appears designed to highlight the similarities and differences between Adam and Jesus- both were tempted, Adam eats, Jesus refuses to eat; both are surrounded by the animals and Angels (Mk. 1:13).

15:46 *But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and only then the spiritual*- See on :44 for how the Corinthians were natural when they ought to have

been spiritual. Again Paul is encouraging them to make the change now, but also comforting the 'spiritual' ones that the immaturity of the others had to be, because the natural comes first. The transformation of resurrection will not only be physical, but also moral. And that is what all of the body of Christ so desperately need.

15:47- see on Mt. 3:7.

The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is heavenly- I have noted elsewhere Paul's fondness for allusion to the words of John the Baptist, from whose lips he likely first heard the Gospel. Here Paul clearly has in view the words of Jn. 3:31: "He that comes from above is above all. He that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaks. He that comes from heaven is above all". I have noted on previous verses in this section that Paul is speaking of the resurrection of the body at the last day, but he does so in language which is equally applicable to the moral 'resurrection' and transformation of the believer today. John's words reflect that the Heavenly man, the Lord Jesus, is speaking words of transformation right now. For Jn. 3:32-34 continues: "What he has seen and heard, of that he testifies... He that has received his witness has certified that God is true. For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give him the Spirit by measure". The transforming ministry of 'the Man from Heaven' operates through His Spirit and the words of His gospel. I have noted elsewhere that there was a problem with Judaist influence in Corinth. Heb. 12:25 contrasts Moses as the man who spoke on earth, and the Lord Jesus who speaks from Heaven. So loaded into this verse is a challenge to the exaltation of Moses above Jesus, as well as the teaching that we must be transformed now by the words of the Man from Heaven- and this transformation will seamlessly continue in the resurrection process at the last day.

The apocryphal Jewish *Book of Enoch* held that the "Son of man" figure personally pre-existed (1 Enoch 48:2-6; 62:6,7). The idea of personal pre-existence was held by the Samaritans, who believed that Moses personally pre-existed. Indeed the idea of a pre-existent man, called by German theologians the *urmensch*, was likely picked up by the Jews from the Persians during the captivity. Christians who believed that Jesus was the prophet greater than Moses, that He was the "Son of man", yet who were influenced by Jewish thinking, would therefore come to assume that Jesus also personally pre-existed. And yet they drew that conclusion in defiance of basic Biblical teaching to the opposite. Paul often appears to allude to these Jewish ideas, which he would've been familiar with, in order to refute and correct them. Thus when he compares Jesus and Adam by saying: "The first man is of the earth, the second man is from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:45-47), he is alluding to the idea of Philo that there was an earthly and heavenly man; and one of the Nag Hammadi documents *On The Origin Of The World* claims that "the first Adam of the light is spiritual... the second Adam is soul-endowed". Paul's point is that the "second Adam" is the now-exalted Lord Jesus in Heaven, and not some pre-existent being. Adam was "a type of him who was to come" (Rom. 5:14); the one who brought sin, whereas Christ brought salvation. Paul was alluding to and correcting the false ideas- hence he at times appears to use language which hints of pre-existence. But reading his writings in context shows that he held no such idea, and was certainly not advocating the truth of those myths and documents he alluded to.

15:48 *As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly*- The present tenses ["Such *are* they"] suggest that those who shall become as the Man from Heaven at the future resurrection shall be transformed right now into His image. Just as we should be spiritual and not natural

right now (see on :44 and :46), so we should now be heavenly rather than earthly. We are to be focused upon heavenly things rather than earthly things (Col. 3:2). The unspiritual "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19), reasoning with the wisdom that is "earthly, sensual..." (James 3:15). And yet at the point of death, we are here described as still "earthly". As discussed on :42-44, we die imperfect, and the ultimate spiritual as well as physical tranformation is at the resurrection. Only then will the earthly man take on the image of the heavenly (:49), even though we are to live as in the "heavenlies" now.

15:49- see on :48 and Col. 1:15.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly- Verse 48 has spoken of how we should now be "heavenly", so that we shall then at the resurrection bear the image of the heavenly One, the Lord Jesus, in every way, physically and morally. We are now being conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus through the transformation of the Spirit (Rom. 8:29); and this moral transformation shall continue through the resurrection process. That process will not solely change our physical nature. We are being progressively changed by the Spirit into His image (2 Cor. 3:18) and this shall continue through the resurrection. We are putting on the Lord's image through putting on "the new man" (Col. 3:10). Yet Paul says this shall happen supremely at the resurrection. The image of Jesus is not something physical, it refers primarily to things of the spirit and personality. Again (see on :43,44,45), the change at resurrection will be moral as well as physical.

When Paul writes of our being transformed into “the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) he seems to have in mind Ez. 1:28 LXX: “The appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord”. “The glory” in Ezekiel is personified- it refers to a person, and I submit that person was a prophetic image of Jesus Christ. But Paul’s big point is that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the Lord’s glory (2 Cor. 3:16- 4:6); just as he did on the Damascus road, and just as Ezekiel did. It follows, therefore, that not only is Paul our example, but our beholding of the Lord’s glory propels us on our personal commission in the Lord’s service, whatever it may be. See on Acts 9:3.

15:50- see on 1 Cor. 5:5.

Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption inherit incorruption- Flesh and corruption refer both to our physical constitution as well as our moral state. There has to be a change of both those aspects for us to inherit the Kingdom, and therefore resurrection has both a moral and physical aspect. Paul has warned the Corinthians earlier that their immoral behaviour is of a character that shall "not inherit the Kingdom" (6:9,10, as Gal. 5:21). But here he says that it is the resurrection process which shall transform those who cannot inherit the Kingdom into those who shall. See on :43,44 and :45 for discussion of this.

15:51 *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all remain asleep, but we shall all be changed*- What is so mysterious here, what new revelation is there in this teaching of the resurrection of the body? Paul is after all re-stating the basics of the Gospel, as he has stated at the beginning of the chapter. I suggest that the new mystery revealed is that resurrection is additionally going to be a moral transformation. He has rebuked them earlier for having members who were 'sleeping' spiritually (1 Cor. 11:30). Some of them even would be changed by resurrection. See on :43,44 and :45 for discussion of the implications of this. The "change" in view is more than physical immortality- for "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we

shall be changed". The change is in addition to being made immortal. It is specifically associated with being made "incorruptible", unable to be morally corrupted, unable to sin.

15:52 *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet*- See on 1 Thess. 4:17. "A moment" is literally 'in an atom'. The idea is of time that cannot be divided further, and may be a way of signalling that the meaning of time will be changed around the judgment and coming of the Lord. There are references to a trumpet sounding at the Lord's return (Mt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16), but the *last* trumpet suggests a series. This is reason for thinking that the Apocalypse was given at an early stage and the vision of the trumpets (Rev. 10:7) was known to the initial readership.

For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed- For the difference between the "change" and being made "incorruptible", see on :51.

"In a moment... the dead shall be raised incorruptible (i.e.) we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). "The dead" here refers to the group of dead believers who will be found worthy. Their immortality will be granted to them together, as a group, "in a moment". Yet in a sense we will each receive our reward immediately after our interview with the Lord- another powerful indicator that the meaning of time must be collapsed at the day of judgment. The words of Mt. 25:34 are spoken collectively: "Come, *ye* (not 'thou', singular) blessed... *ye* gave me meat... then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, When saw *we* thee an hungered...". The corruption and incorruption may refer to the sense that we are now corruptible, we can sin and be corrupted. But the resurrected [i.e. glorified] believers who experience the "resurrection to life" will not be corruptible, they will be unable to sin. See on :42, :43 and :44.

However, this verse has been misread as meaning that all who are resurrected shall emerge from the grave immortal, meaning that the judgment is only for the dividing up of rewards rather than the granting of immortality to mortal bodies. There are a number of objections to this interpretation from other parts of Scripture:
- "We shall all be *changed*... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is *swallowed up* in victory" (1 Cor. 15:51-54). The rebuilding / raising up incorruptible is the "change", the mortal putting on immortality, death being swallowed up. All these phrases are rather uncomfortable within a scenario of immortal emergence from the grave. If the mortal bodies of saints are even further humbled before the piercing analysis of the judgment seat and *then* swallowed up in victory, clothed upon with immortality- these words find their natural fulfilment.
- Paul speaks of us being *clothed upon* with immortality at the judgment (2 Cor. 5:2,4,10 RV), as if we exist in a form which lacks the clothing of immortality, but is then 'clothed upon'.
- At the Lord's coming, our vile body will be changed to be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20,21).
- God will quicken our *mortal bodies* (Rom. 8:11). The mortal bodies of Paul and the Romans have yet to be quickened; therefore they must be resurrected mortal and then quickened. However, it could be that Rom. 8:11 is one of several expectations of the second coming within the lifetime of the first century believers.
- At the judgment seat, we will receive a recompense for the things we have done, in a

bodily form (2 Cor. 5:10). Of the flesh we will reap corruption, of the spirit: life everlasting (Gal. 6:7,8).
- We *will be* justified and *be* condemned by our account at the day of judgment- not at resurrection (Mt. 12:36,37).
- The nobleman came, called his servants, reckoned with them, and only then was taken from the slothful servant even that which he seemed to have- at the judgment, not the resurrection (Lk. 19:12-26). The unprofitable are cast into outer darkness at the judgment, not the resurrection.
- The sheep go away *into life eternal* and the goats *go away into* death- after the judgment process. It is hard to square this with immortal emergence before the judgment.
- "Come, inherit the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34) is spoken at the end of the judgment process. Only then will the faithful inherit the Kingdom and thereby receive immortality.
- The Lord will raise up the dead and quicken (i.e. immortalise) whom He will of those He has raised up (Jn. 5:21).
- 1 Thess. 4:17 teaches that the dead are raised and go with the living to the judgment, where sheep and goats are divided finally. It seems inappropriate for already immortalised believers to be judged and rewarded.
- When a man is tried (always elsewhere translated "approved") he will receive the crown on life- the crown which will be given at the last day (James 1:12 cp. 2 Tim. 4:8). The approval is surely not in the physical fact of resurrection- for the rejected will also experience this.
- If immortality is given at the resurrection rather than at the judgment, we would have to read 'resurrection' as a one off act; and yet it evidently refers to a process, something more than the act of coming out of the grave. The fact there will not be marriage "in the resurrection" is proof enough of this- it refers to more than the act of coming out of the grave. Also, if immortality is not given at the judgment, this creates a problem in respect of those who are alive at the Lord's return. Are we to believe that they will just be made immortal in a flash when the Lord comes, with no judgment?
- Immortal emergence inevitably means that men live with no fear of judgment to come. And yet the very fact of future judgment is an imperative to repentance (Acts 17:31; 2 Pet. 3:11). Admittedly, there is the danger that judgment can be over-emphasised to the point that God seems passive now, reserving all judgment until the last day. Both extremes must be avoided.

Taking the passage as it stands, it is quite possible to place it alongside several other Pauline passages which speak of the whole process of resurrection-judgment-immortalization as one act. This may be because he sometimes writes as if he assumes his readership will all be worthy of acceptance into the Kingdom, and will not be rejected. If we see our brethren as truly in Christ and therefore acceptable with Him, clothed in His righteousness, and seeing we cannot judge in the sense of condemning them, this ought to be a pattern for us. Judgment in the sense of condemnation will not pass upon those who will be in the Kingdom, although this doesn't mean that therefore they will not stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The Gospels likewise speak of both the resurrection and the judgment process as occurring at "the last day" (Jn. 11:24; 12:48); as if the "resurrection" includes the judgment process. The way 'the resurrection' can be 'better' or 'worse' (Heb. 11:35) and of two kinds (Jn. 5:29) further indicates that the term cannot be limited to just the emergence from the ground.

However, there is another reason why Paul wrote as he did. I have shown elsewhere

that the meaning of time will be collapsed at the period of the Lord's return and judgment. It is therefore quite possible that in terms of time as we know it, the resurrection-judgment-immortalization process will take place in a micro second. To an onlooker, there would appear to be immortal emergence (cp. how the record of creation is described as an onlooker would have seen it). But if we were to break the process down, there would be the resurrection, coming forth as a mortal body, gathering to judgment, discussion with the judge, giving of reward, immortalization. Paul saw the trumpet blast as the signal of both the call to judgment (1 Thess. 4:17) and also the moment of glorification (1 Cor. 15:52).

Against the proposition that "raised incorruptible" in 1 Cor. 15:52 means an immortal emergence in theological terms, the following points should be considered:
- Paul doesn't say 'the dead are *resurrected* incorruptible', but rather that they are *raised* (Gk. *egeiro*) incorruptible. If he referred to actual resurrection, he would surely have used the word *anastasis*. But he doesn't. *Egeiro* is used of rising up from sickness (Mk. 1:37), rising in judgment (Mt. 12:42), the raising up of men as prophets (Mt. 11:11), raising up a Saviour (Lk. 1:69), the raising up of Pharaoh to do God's will (Rom. 9:17), to rise up against, to raise up a building. These are all processes leading to a completed action, not a simple one time action. Therefore it is not unreasonable to interpret Paul's words as does John Thomas: 'the dead shall be rebuilt incorruptible', referring to the whole process rather than just the coming out of the ground.
- The seed is sown "a natural body" (1 Cor. 15:44)- a *psuchikon soma*, a living body. This raises a question as to whether Paul is really talking about a *dead* body going into the grave and then coming out immortal. 1 Cor. 15:36 speaks of the seed as being sown, being scattered, right now (*speiro* in the active voice). This is almost certainly one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- this time, to the parable of the sower. The seed is being sown now, and we respond to it. The seed is sown in the corruption, dishonour and weakness of this present nature (15:42,43). But that seed ("it") will be raised / rebuilt in an incorruptible, glorious body; this is the power of the seed of the Gospel.

All this reasoning is in the context of 1 Cor. 15:35,36: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool...". To max out on the exact form in which we emerge from the grave is *foolish*, Paul says. And yet some of us have done just that. Surely Paul is saying 'Don't get distracted by this issue as a physicality *in itself*. The point is, as the seed of the Gospel is sown in you day by day, so in a corresponding way you will be rebuilt in the glory of the resurrection. So sow to the spirit, for as you sow you will reap (cp. Gal. 6:7,8)'.

15:53 *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*- When the Lord spoke of how the faithful will be clothed by Him in a robe (Mt. 22:11; Lk. 15:22), He is connecting with the usage of “clothing" as a symbol of the covering of righteousness which He gives, and which also represents the immortality of the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:53,54; 2 Cor. 5:2-5). The choice of clothing as a symbol is significant; the robe covered all the body, except the face. The individuality of the believer still remains, in the eyes of Christ. What we sow in this life, we will receive in the relationships we have in the Kingdom; there will be something totally individual about our spirituality then, and it will be a reflection of our present spiritual struggles. This is Paul's point in the parable of the seed going into the ground and rising again, with a new body, but still related to the original seed which was sown.

Immortality is spoken of as being "put on" our current body; this mortal will be clothed upon (2 Cor. 5:2-5), He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21), "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies... we wait eagerly for... the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:11,22). All these verses speak of our current body not being destroyed but being somehow transformed. This meets man at his greatest need- for both transformation of who I am, and yet not losing myself into the ether or nirvana. There will be both continuity and change. It is worth reflecting that our body was designed to be immortal; Adam's sin led to the curse afflicting our bodies, but all that shall be changed in a moment, and our bodies will become immortal.

15:54- see on Rom. 1:3.

But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality- Note the difference between the mortal and the corruptible. I have argued above that the resurrection transformation will have both a physical and moral aspect; perhaps these two aspects are comprehended here.

Then shall come to fulfilment the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory- The same words for "put on", "mortal" and "swallowed up" are found later to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 5:4: "Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life". "Swallowed up in victory" is matched by "swallowed up by [immortal] life". The eternal life is the victory- the thrill of victory shall be eternal, rather than a momentary buzz of kudos at the moment of resurrection. The quotation from Is. 25:8 is surrounded by a context which speaks of a very literal manifestation of God upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and the Messianic banquet being held there, which the breaking of bread meeting looks forward to: "In this mountain Yahweh of Armies will make to all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of choice wines, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined choice wines. He will destroy in this mountain the surface of the covering that covers all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces. He will take the reproach of His people away from off all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it. It shall be said in that day, Behold, this is our God! We have waited for Him, and He will save us! This is Yahweh! We have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation! For in this mountain the hand of Yahweh will rest". The victory upon Mount Zion had its first application to the salvation of Judah from the Assyrians at Hezekiah's time. This looked forward to the latter day salvation of all God's Israel from death itself.

15:55 *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*- We have noted from :43 onwards that resurrection is going to be both a physical and moral transformation, and that the spiritually incomplete shall be transformed to perfection by it. This quotation from Hos. 13:14 LXX is also in this context. For the book of Hosea is about Hosea's desperate hope for the redemption of his prostitute wife Gomer, in which we see God's loving hope for the salvation of His wayward people. The book contains paradoxical statements about how God on one hand notices and shall judge the unfaithfulness of His people; and yet mixed within those judgments is a tender desire to save them all the same. This was reflected in Hosea's love for his faithless wife. This is exactly what we see in Paul's feelings for the Corinthians.

15:56 *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law*- Again we see Paul addressing the problem of the Judaizers in Corinth. It was law which gave power and

actuality to sin, as Paul noticed in his own experience throughout Romans 7, e.g. "I had not known sin, except through the law. For I had not known coveting, except the law had said: You shall not covet" (Rom. 7:7). The "victory" given against sin was through the abrogation of law; for we are now "not under law" (Rom. 6:14). If there is a cosmic 'satan' responsible for sin and death, now would be the time, surely, for Paul to refer to it. But instead we see a reference only to sin and death. Death is personified, as a snake, which achieves its kill by the venom of sin.

15:57 *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*- This is the language of Rom. 7:25, where Paul rejoices that despite our sin and its power, we are delivered through our Lord Jesus. We lost... but we are given victory, on account of being in the Lord Jesus. His victory is therefore legitimately counted as ours. Again we note the present tense: "Gives us the victory", not "Will give us the victory". The essence of resurrection is to be felt and known in our lives right now.

There were in the early church standard acclamations or doxologies which may reflect common phrases used in prayers throughout the early brotherhood- just as there are certain phrases used in prayers throughout the world today. “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” is an acclamation that crops in up in some form or other in 1 Cor. 15:57; Rom. 6:17; 7:25; 2 Cor. 2:14; 8:16; 9:15. Likewise “God… to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 3:15; Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:18; 1 Tim. 1:17).

15:58- see on 2 Cor. 8:7.

Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmoveable- "Beloved brothers" is the language of endearment, and given their known weaknesses, could only have been possible because Paul believed that they would ultimately be changed from their weaknesses. All the angst about separating from apostate brethren dissipates once we accept that since we cannot condemn baptized believers, we are to rejoice in the reality of resurrection meaning both moral and physical transformation. The sure hope ahead ought to inspire stability; nothing, no false teaching, no temptation, no depression at failure, should be able to move us away from that hope.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain- We are to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord” Jesus, knowing it is never in vain. And yet it is the work of preaching which has just been defined as not being in vain (:14); the more abounding labour is in the work of preaching (:10). Preaching is the work of the Lord Jesus in that He is working through us to do His saving work, and therefore we ought to be constantly active in His cause. Paul's preaching ministry was proportional to the grace he had received, and in this he saw himself as a pattern to us all (1 Tim. 1:12-16). He makes the connection even more explicit in his argument in 1 Cor. 15:10 and 58: “His grace which was bestowed upon me was *not in vain*; but I *laboured* more *abundantly* than they all” is then applied to each of us, in the final, gripping climax of his argument: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be *ye* steadfast, unmoveable, always *abounding* [as Paul did] in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your *labour* is *not in vain*”. Paul says that God’s grace to him “was not in vain”, in that he *laboured* more abundantly than any in preaching. Yet within the same chapter, Paul urges us his readers that our faith and *labour* is also “not in vain”; the connection seems to be that he responded to grace by *labouring* in preaching, and he speaks as if each of the Corinthians likewise will not *labour* in vain in this way (1 Cor. 15:2,10,58). He clearly sees himself as a pattern of responding to grace by preaching to others.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 16

16:1 *Now concerning the collection for the saints, do as I instructed the churches in Galatia-* "The collection" with the article refers to Paul's almost obsessive plan to raise money from his Gentile converts in order to support the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem in time of famine and persecution. Throughout my commentary on Acts I make the point that this plan was forced through by Paul at all stages, and never really came to fruition nor is there any record of the collection being accepted. Paul wanted those at Corinth to do as the churches in Galatia- because he wanted the collection to be a uniform gift from as many Gentile churches as possible. Whether Paul's 'instruction' about this matter was inspired or simply from himself... makes an interesting question to contemplate.

16:2- see on Acts 2:45.

Upon the first day of the week let each one of you, as your income allows, put some money aside and store it up so that no collections are needed when I come- Paul didn't want them to take up one big collection when he was personally present, because this might mean that their motivation was emotional. Giving should be from the heart but also not on the cusp of emotional or personal pressure. "Each one of you" may suggest that Paul was wanting each of them, even the very poor, to donate something- and not to leave the giving to a few. "As your income allows" suggests giving should not be irresponsible. And it is emotional, cusp-of-the-moment motivations which lead to irresponsible giving. "Lay by him in store" (AV) suggests they were not to put money into a church collection bag which was then held by a treasurer, but were to save the money themselves, and then donate it when Paul arrived in person. The giving envisaged was therefore all very personal. The two Greek words in this phrase "lay by him in store" are taken exactly from the Lord's teaching in Lk. 12:21 about the man who "lays up treasures for himself" but was not rich towards God. The same word for "put... aside [money]" is translated "lay up" in the Lord's appeal to lay up wealth in Heaven and not on earth (Mt. 6:19,20). Paul is clearly teaching that such 'saving up' of their pennies in order to give to the poor Jewish brethren was indeed building up wealth before God in Heaven.

16:3 *And when I arrive, whomsoever you shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your generosity to Jerusalem-* The approval was to be from them, and not of Paul's appointment. He was very wise in these things. They were to individually save their spare cash each week (see on :2) and then it would be gathered together when Paul arrived; and then it was to be transported by people other than Paul to Jerusalem, even if Paul accompanied them (:4). Paul was after all under false accusation of fraud, and he acted appropriately. "Generosity" is *charis,* "grace". God's gift or generosity to us elicits grace / generosity from us to others. Paul opened his letter by reminding them of the grace given them (1:4); their grace to others was therefore an appropriate response. And he will conclude with the desire that the Lord's grace will continue with them (16:23).

16:4 *And if it be fitting for me to go also, they shall go with me-* As noted on :3, Paul asked for the gathering together of everyone's individual donations to be made when he arrived, and for the church to appoint brethren to carry it to Jerusalem. Paul was carefully separating himself from handling the cash. He considered this entire project such a holy thing that he would only accompany the bearers of the funds if he were felt worthy [a better translation than "fitting"] to travel with them. He felt his

worthiness to be part of the project [even though it was of his own devising] was in question; he felt he would accompany the gift it he were worthy of doing so.

16:5 *But I will come to you, when I shall have passed through Macedonia (for I plan to pass through Macedonia)*- Paul's travel plans were not dictated to him by the Lord or direct Spirit inspiration. He had to make his own plans in response to his perception of the Lord's calling and what he thought was best for the progress of the Lord's work. And sometimes his intentions didn't work out- for 2 Cor. 1:15-17 imply that this intended visit didn't happen, leading to the accusation that Paul was fickle and not serious in his promises. The reason he gives in 2 Cor. 1:23; 2:1 was that he wanted to spare them, as if he knew that if he came to them and they had adequately repented, then the Lord would use him through the Spirit to judge them severely in some way.

16:6 *And perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey*- He planned to "pass through" Macedonia (:5), but to for an extended period "stay with you" (as :7). Because of their evident weaknesses and the possibility they would miss the path to salvation, Paul wanted to make a special effort for them. 2 Cor. 1:16 says he intended to visit them twice, on the way to and from Macedonia; and that he wanted to go from Corinth directly to Judea. "Help me on my journey" refers to the practice of accompanying a departing visitor for the first part of their journey and wishing them God's blessing- as in :11.

Wherever I go further- This not to be read as a vague wish; rather is it clear from :3 and 2 Cor. 1:16 that he intended to go from them to Jerusalem with the brethren who were carrying the collection money. Perhaps one reason he changed his plans because he knew the collection money was not going to be ready, and he would feel the need to discipline them for this.

16:7 *But I do not wish to see you just in passing; I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permit*- See on :6. His special concern for Corinth is apparent, because he intended to "pass through" Macedonia (:5), but not just pass them by, but rather stay longer with them. He explained in 12:23 that the weaker parts of the body require the greatest attention; and he put this into practice in his own attitude to the very weak church in Corinth.

16:8 *But I will stay at Ephesus until Pentecost*- Paul was writing to them from Ephesus (which was in Asia, hence the greetings sent from the churches in Asia, :19).

16:9 *For a great door for effective work has opened to me, but there are many adversaries*- An insight into Paul’s attitude is revealed in the way he speaks of how a door of preaching opportunity had been opened to him at Ephesus. Surely he is alluding to the Lord’s words about knocking in prayer, and a door is opened. He had presumably prayed for the opportunity to spread the word in Ephesus, and he was given the positive answer. We likewise should be praying systematically for the people in our lives, for unreached nations and peoples. Yet the language of a door being opened sends us to Acts 14:27, where the response of the Gentiles to Paul’s missionary work is likewise spoken of as a door being opened- presumably, meaning that here was an answer to prayer for response. A door was opened at Troas, we assume also because of sustained prayer beforehand (2 Cor. 2:12). We must ask whether we really desire the Gospel to spread; if we do, it will be reflected in our prayer life. Paul intended to stay longer in Ephesus rather than just passing through

(see on :6) because there were many adversaries. He didn't reason that because there was opposition, this was a 'sign' that he should move on.

16:10 *Now if Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear while he is with you. For he does the work of the Lord, as I do*- The "if" continues the theme of the plans of these early Christians not being at all set in stone or somehow set in stone by God's will. They used their initiative in planning as they thought best, and those plans were therefore at times open ended. The basis for acceptance of Timothy was that he did the work of the Lord Jesus- the Lord was working through him, and that was a good enough reason for believers to work with Timothy. This sets a powerful challenge to the parochialism of many in the Lord's body today. Paul writes to Timothy urging him not to fear, and yet he tries to pave the way so that Timothy would have no reason to fear. Paul's "work of the Lord" was the Corinthians (9:1 "Are you not my work in the Lord?"), and Timothy was sharing in this.

16:11 *Let no one despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come to me. For I expect him with the brothers*- Paul told Timothy to let no one despise him (see on 1 Tim. 4:12). But again Paul was at pains to remove the experience from Timothy; his sensitivity towards Timothy is truly brotherly. The practice of 'setting forward on a journey' implied spiritual blessing- see on :6. Paul expected Timothy to accompany "the brothers" whom Corinth would appoint to carry the collected money to Jerusalem (:3). I get the impression of Paul making elaborate plans, 'expecting' things to happen- when in fact the whole thing barely got off the ground. For he has to delicately write to them in 2 Corinthians about the fact they have not in fact raised any money to send. As explained in the commentary on Acts, I get the impression that time and again, Paul is trying to force through his pet project, and he became obsessive about it, when there was no real enthusiasm for it.

16:12 *But as touching Apollos the brother, I pleaded with him to come to you with the brothers; but he was unwilling to come right now, but he will come when he shall have the opportunity*- "The brothers" are surely those of :11- the brothers whom Corinth were to appoint to bring the collected funds to Jerusalem (:3). The translation "come to you" could as well be translated 'to accompany with', as if Apollos was intended to hover around them, *pros* them. Again we see Paul running ahead of himself. The funds had not been collected, and in fact would not be, so it seems from 2 Corinthians. But he asks the church to appoint brothers to carry the funds to Jerusalem, asks the church to send Timothy with those brothers, and now laments that he had asked Apollos to also accompany them, but he had declined. Not surprisingly- for it was evident that Corinth would unlikely raise the funds, and by the time of 2 Corinthians they had not done so, despite Paul's enthusiastic boasting to others about their willingness to do so. The whole impression is of a single individual obsessed with a pet project, and it doesn't quite work out. Apollos was unwilling to give in to Paul's pleading to join in this project. And yet Paul claims that "he will come when he shall have the opportunity". It is logical to assume that Apollos would have declined an invitation to go to Corinth and accompany brethren to Jerusalem with money which had not been collected, probably never would be, and without the blessing of the Corinthian church, who were surely known as being anti-Paul and a difficult group. But Paul likes to interpret this as 'He can't come at this moment, but he will come when he gets half the chance'. If Paul pleaded with Apollos to come but he declined, then Paul obviously considered that Apollos could make the journey, he could find the time if he wished. But Paul over generously concludes that Apollos does in fact want to come, 'it's just that he's busy right now'. This kind of obsessive even autistic focus can be detected in the sentence structure and path of logic Paul

employs in some of his writing. He was inspired and indeed a wonderful brother, but this didn't make him anything less than human.

16:13 *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong*- These are all military metaphors. Keeping awake, standing still as if on parade, fight as true men, be strengthened. But these metaphors are purposefully juxtaposed with doing all things in love (:14). The true manliness, the real bravery and strength- was to live in love. "Be strong" is literally 'be strengthened / empowered'. This has been the whole theme of the letter- they had been given the Spirit, but were refusing to let it work and empower them. The same word is used in Eph. 3:16: "*Be strengthened* with power through His Spirit in the inner man". This refers to the internal gift of the Spirit "in the inner man" which is available to this day.

16:14 *Let all you do be done in love*- See on :13 for the purposeful juxtaposition with the military metaphors just used. The real strength is in the life of love. Chapter 13 has underlined the utter supremacy of love and Paul repeats this in concluding the letter. Perhaps the immediate reference is to the collection for the poor Jewish brethren which Paul wished them to make; this whole project was to be done in love and from no other motive.

16:15 *You know the family of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia*- It depends how we define Achaia or "Asia", because Rom. 16:5 says that Epaenetus was the first-fruit of Achaia. Perhaps Epaenetus was one of the extended family of Stephanas, perhaps a slave within it. The first convert in Asia, therefore, was an obscure slave. This is typical of how God works with the small things in human eyes.

And that they have devoted themselves to serving the saints; now I beseech you, brothers- There is a word play here, masked in the translations: the household of Stephanas 'devoted' themselves to the Lord's service (Gk. *tasso*), and the ecclesia is bidden "submit" (Gk. *hupotasso*) to them (:16). Enthusiastic service by individuals truly influences the whole community. "Serving the saints" is literally "the ministry of the saints", and this term is used specifically about the Jerusalem poor fund project (Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12). Paul speaks highly of the family of Stephanas because they have devoted themselves to Paul's project; perhaps that is why he calls them "the firstfruits of Achaia" when in fact Epaenetus was (Rom. 16:5).

16:16 *You also be in subjection to such, and to everyone that helps in the work and labours*- See on :15. As noted on :10, all who help the Lord's work are to be respected. "The work" has been defined in :10 as the Lord's work. On one hand, 'God requires not help from man'. And yet He limits Himself, or allows Himself to be limited, in that He has genuinely delegated His work to men. In this sense the men of Meroz were cursed for not 'coming to the help of the Lord' (Jud. 5:23). Here too, those who help the Lord's work are to be respected and supported. But the specific work of the Lord was "the ministry" of the Jerusalem Poor Fund- see on :15. Paul asks the Corinthians to be obedient and submissive to Stephanus as the enthusiast and local coordinator. Anyone who assisted in that ministry, Paul considered worthy of respect and being obeyed.

16:17 *I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. For what was lacking on your part they supplied*- Paul says elsewhere that he did not take material assistance from Corinth. The Stephanas is surely the same of :15 who had devoted himself to Paul's pet project of the Jerusalem Poor Fund. So perhaps Stephanas brought with him some donation for the fund- and thus caused Paul much

joy. We could also assume that these three from Corinth came to visit Paul in order to carry the Corinthians' letter to Paul.

16:18 *They refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge those that are such*- Paul sees his spirit as being that of the Corinthians'. He felt at least potentially a unity of the spirit between him and them. If the visitors had refreshed Paul's spirit, then they had refreshed the spirit of the Corinthians. Paul has earlier mentioned this in 5:3: "For I truly, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him that has done this thing". There was a Spirit gift of knowledge which resulted in Paul being as it were virtually present; he was not therefore judging from a distance on the basis of gossip. Hence he can write in 5:4 that "when you are gathered together (and my spirit is present with you when you do)". And he alludes to the same phenomenon in 2 Cor. 13:2 "I tell you as if I were present". This ability to be virtually present is used supremely by the Lord, whose presence is to be found in our lives and where two or three are gathered together. If Paul knew this case by the Spirit and was spiritually present in their gatherings to discuss the matter; how much more the Lord Himself. And as his spirit could be united with that of the Corinthians, how much more can the Lord's spirit intertwine with ours.

However one surely detects in the whole reasoning here a position whereby whoever was supportive of Paul's Jerusalem poor fund project was going to be commended. And it seems that on that basis, Paul asks the Corinthians to "acknowledge" or respect those three brothers. Paul assumes that his joy at their donation towards the project should be the joy of all the Corinthians. He is very imposing of his enthusiasm upon others.

16:19- see on Acts 20:20.

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house- These churches in Asia were presumably where Paul was located when writing the letter. It would seem more logical to assume he was in Ephesus, where Aquila and Prisca were (cp Acts 16:6; 18:26). This means we should reject the note appended to the KJV to the effect the letter was written from Philippi.

16:20- see on Rom. 16:16.

All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss- Given the sexual immorality in the church (see on chapters 5 and 6), Paul had to emphasize a *holy* kiss. But greeting by kissing was only acceptable in the first century between those of the same social class. To suggest church members all kissed each other was radical- for a slave to kiss a master, a Jew to kiss a Gentile etc. Justin Martyr (Apology) claims that it was a well known and strange characteristic for the early Christians to kiss each other in their religious assemblies. We ask whether our love and unity leaves such a noticeable impression these days.

16:21 *The greeting of me Paul with my own hand*- Perhaps suggesting there had been false letters supposedly from Paul (2 Thess. 2:2).

16:22 *If anyone loves not the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha*- Those who departed from the faith didn't just drift away; they were formally pronounced *anathema* ("accursed"), delivered unto the satan of this world. Perhaps Paul had in view those in the church who claimed they had Spirit gift revelation to pronounce Jesus accursed (Gk. *anathema*, 1 Cor. 12:3). Those who said this of the Lord would

themselves be accursed. The appeal for the Lord to come, "Maranatha", follows straight on. It is a willing of the Lord's judgment to come, just as David in the Psalms was eager for judgment day to come and resolve all issues of apostasy amongst God's people. "Anathema" was a synagogue term for total excommunication. Yet Paul was very open to fellowship with all at Corinth despite their apostasy. So I suggest he is saying that those who were in the church but didn't love the Lord would be anathema, "accursed", when the Lord returns; and the Corinthians were not to follow the synagogue pattern of labelling some as *anathema* according to their own judgment. "Maranatha" was likely a watch word used amongst the believers when parting with each other. They greeted with a "holy kiss", and parted with the term "Maranatha", a longing for the Lord's coming.

16:23 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you*- "Grace", *charis*, is used so often to refer to the gift of the Spirit. Paul wished that the Spirit's work of internal transformation would continue with them. For this really was his only answer to all their moral and doctrinal problems.

16:24 *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen*- Given the major moral and doctrinal problems in Corinth, it is highly significant that Paul does not pronounce himself in fellowship with only some of them. He assures *all* of them of his love.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2 CORINTHIANS

2 CORINTHIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don’t fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understood the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

And Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia- The addition of "all the saints" in Achaia could be because the Gospel had spread there since the time of the first letter. But I suggest that 2 Corinthians is largely concerned with the issues surrounding the Jerusalem poor fund, and Paul wished that all the Gentiles in all Achaia would contribute to this fund.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- Grace, *charis*, or gift, refers often to the gift of internal spiritual strengthening which the Father and Son wish to share with their people. And knowing the unspirituality of many at Corinth, Paul truly wishes the operation of the Spirit in their hearts.

1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort*- The reference to comfort being sent from the Father is surely a reference to the promise of the Comforter, a personification of the Holy Spirit given by

the Lord Jesus, for the internal strengthening of believers. The comforter was to operate within the hearts of the Lord's people (Jn. 14:17). The theme of 'comfort' which Paul now develops may also be a reflection of his gratitude to gracious Barnabas for all he had done for Paul- he was "the son of comfort", a human form of God's comfort (Acts 4:36).

1:3-7 is in poetic form. It seems that hymns developed in the early church, fragments of which are found in the poems of 2 Cor. 1:3-7; Eph. 1:13,14; 5:14; Phil. 2:6-12; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:4 and elsewhere.

1:4 *Who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those that are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*- Our experiences elicit "comfort" spiritually from God, which we are then to mediate on to others who suffer our same afflictions. Paul could therefore speak of how "we were comforted in your comfort" (2 Cor. 7:13). But we must allow the intended flow of the Spirit to occur. Paul concludes the Corinthian correspondence by appealing for them to "be comforted" (2 Cor. 13:11), to allow the operation of the process of comfort, the flow of the Spirit, the work of the Comforter through the members of Christ's body.

This principle is why experiences repeat between the lives of God's children. Our experiences connect with those of Biblical characters- and thus the Biblical records become alive and intensely personal for each of us. And we see similarities in patterns and experiences between our lives and those of others contemporary with us. This is surely to enable the principle of 2 Cor. 1:4- that if we suffer anything, it is so that we can mediate comfort to those who suffer as we do. To go into our shells and not do this not only makes our own sufferings harder, but frustrates the very purpose of them. This is the whole purpose of fellowship, of getting to know each other, of meeting together. The repeating similarities between our lives and those of others also reveal to us that God at times arranges for us to suffer from our *alter ego*- persons who behave similarly to us, and who through those similarities cause us suffering. In this way we are taught the error of our ways, both past and present. It seems that Jacob the deceiver suffered in this way from Laban the deceiver- in order to teach him and cause his spiritual growth. For example, as Jacob deceived his blind father relating to an important family matter, so Laban deceived Jacob in the darkness of the wedding night. Esau once begged food of Jacob, and he deceived him cruelly. As an old man, Jacob twice had to beg food from the estranged brother, his own son Joseph. No wonder he so tried not to have to send his sons to Egypt to beg for food. He was being taught- even after all those years- how Esau his brother had felt.

Job was a “perfect” man before the afflictions started; and he is presented as a ‘perfect’ man at the end. The purpose of his trials was not only to develop him, but also in order to teach the friends [and we readers] some lessons. The purpose of our trials too may not only be for our benefit, but for that of others. If we suffer anything, it is so that we

might help others. Consider too how the palsied man was healed by the Lord in order to teach others that Jesus had the power to forgive sins (Mt. 9:2-6).

So if we suffer anything, it is so that ultimately *others* may be comforted in our comfort. True Christianity, authentic relationship with God, simply can't be lived out in isolation, with us asking God for things and Him giving them to us just for us. We need to discern how *others* will be affected by our experience of answered prayer, and bear this in mind when formulating our prayers. And all this is surely the answer to the cynic's complaint that prayer is essentially selfish. It can be, it too often is; but Biblical prayer is not at all. In words which need reading twice, Elizabeth O'Connor drives the point home in *Journey Outward*: "If engagement with ourselves does not push back horizons so that we see neighbours we did not see before, then we need to examine the appointments kept with self. If prayer does not drive us into some concrete involvement at a point of the world's need, then we must question prayer... the inner life is not nurtured in order to hug to oneself some secret gain". The Psalms have all this as a major theme.

1:5- see on Acts 9:16.

For as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, even so our comfort is also in abundance through Christ- Our trials are specially designed so that we *may* give comfort to others who suffer in essence the same experiences- and this is how "our comfort aboundeth through Christ" (2 Cor. 1:4,5 RV). He is the comforter insofar as His brethren minister that comfort which He potentially enables them to minister. As we partake in the Lord's sufferings, so we partake of the comfort which is in Him- but which is ministered through the loving care of those in Him (2 Cor. 1:7). This is why any attitude of insularity is totally impossible for the true brother or sister in Christ. Behind every human face, there is a tragedy behind the brave façade which is put up. Almost everybody has been bruised by life, and is feeling the pressure of temptation or defeat, depression, loneliness or despair. It's true that some need to be disturbed from their complacency, but the vast majority need above all else to be given by us *the comfort of God's love*. People, all people (not just our brethren) are desperate for real comfort and compassion. And it is up to us to mediate it to them.

1:6 *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer*- It could be argued that *all* our experiences are in order that we might be able to give out to others from our own experience of God's grace (2 Cor. 1:4-6). Paul will use the same words to say that he "begs" [s.w. "comfort"] the Corinthians to "comfort" the disciplined brother by receiving him back (2 Cor. 2:7,8). Paul uses the same word to say that God was begging or comforting the Corinthians through him (2 Cor. 5:20; 6:1). "The same sufferings" doesn't necessarily mean that we shall have identical sufferings to

each other. The sufferings in view are those of the Lord Jesus mentioned in :5. Both Paul and the Corinthians were enduring the same sufferings- in that all their sufferings were those of the Lord Jesus. But the comfort, the power of the Spirit, is only mediated if there is some desire for it by those receiving it. The Spirit "comfort" is made effective (Gk.; NEV "which works") only if we patiently endure and participate in the Lord's sufferings. 1 Corinthians opened by stating that Corinth had received the Spirit; but 1 Cor. 3:1 and the rest of the letter is clear that they were "not spiritual". The Spirit is given- but it must be made effectual, the potential must be released, by our willing acceptance of it.

1:7 *And our hope for you is steadfast*- The Greek idea of *elpis*, "hope", is not a hope for the best, a kind of optimism that perhaps all might turn out all right. The idea is rather of a confident expectation; and considering the apostasy of the Corinthians, that is quite something. Paul refuses to condemn anyone who has been baptized into Christ and is therefore a partaker in His death and the Spirit-comfort which He makes available. And because Paul will not pre-judge the final judgement, his hope / expectation for them was "steadfast"

Knowing that, as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort- The idea may be that *if* or *insofar* as they shared in the Lord's sufferings (:5), willingly understanding their experiences as part of His- then they would share in "the comfort", the Comforter, the gift of the Spirit, His life now mediated into the hearts and lives of those open it. If we share in His death, we share in His life. That is the basic significance of baptism, but the principle is ongoing throughout our lives. The association with His life is not simply in that we have hope of a future bodily resurrection, but in that His living, His life, becomes manifest in our mortal flesh right now (2 Cor. 4:11); we live in new*ness* of life after baptism (Rom. 6:4).

1:8 *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant in regards to the hardships which we encountered in Asia*- Paul reminds them of his sufferings in the context of wanting to comfort them. For he has just outlined God's principle of how suffering is experienced in order that we might comfort others. His affliction is for their comfort (:6) and so he doesn't wish them to be ignorant of how much hardship he encountered in Asia.

We were weighed down exceedingly- This is the term used by the Lord in predicting what would happen to the believers immediately prior to His return (Mt. 24:9,21,29). Some of the preconditions for the Lord's return in AD70 were indeed fulfilled, and so Paul eagerly anticipated it. But there were other preconditions which were not fulfilled, and therefore His coming was delayed until our last days.

Beyond our power- The phrase is only used again in the NT in 2 Cor. 8:3. The Macedonians were generous to the Jerusalem Poor Fund beyond their natural power or

ability. Paul is urging the Corinthians to learn from his example, and theirs too- that in the power of the Spirit we can do what would be beyond our own *dunamis*. In Paul's thought, what is beyond *human* power is the Holy Spirit, the power of God. The Holy Spirit and the power [*dunamis*] of God are paralleled in Lk. 1:35; 4:14. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the source of *dunamis*, power (Eph. 3:16; Rom. 15:13; 2 Tim. 1:7). In these passages the Spirit gives psychological, internal power.

So much so that we feared even for our lives- "Feared" is better "despaired", and the Greek word is only again used when Paul writes that through the power of the Spirit he does not despair despite all sufferings (2 Cor. 4:8). He is describing here in this opening chapter his natural powerless situation, but with the implication that the power of the Spirit changes all that. And although the Corinthians had received potentially the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), they were not making use of that potential. And Paul urges them to follow his example in doing so.

1:9 *Yes, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in the God who raises the dead*- The standard interpretation of this seems to be that when Paul asked himself as to whether he would die, he found the answer ["sentence"] that he would. But this is a very odd way of putting it; and why use the language of the courtroom, let alone a phrase taken from Jewish commentary and midrash on Genesis 3. This sentence of death can be read as an allusion to the sentence which passed upon all men as a result of Adam's sin. Paul is saying that all our sufferings are common in that we each have the same sentence of death. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves ["in our hearts we felt the sentence of death", NIV], *that* we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9 AV). The fact we are going to die, relatively soon, and lie unconscious... drives the man who seriously believes it to faith in the God of resurrection. It seems that at a time of great physical distress, Paul was made to realize that in fact he had "the sentence of death" within him, he was under the curse of mortality, and this led him to a hopeful faith that God would preserve him from the ultimate "so great a death" as well as from the immediate problems. Death being like a sleep, it follows that judgment day is our next conscious experience after death. Because death is an ever more likely possibility for us, our judgment is effectively *almost upon us*. And we must live with and in that knowledge. The tragic brevity of life means that "childhood and youth are vanity", we should quit the time wasting follies of youth or overgrown childhood (and the modern world is full of this), and therefore too "remove anger from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecc. 11:10 AVmg.). Ecclesiastes uses the mortality of man not only as an appeal to work for our creator, but to simply have faith in His existence.

1:10 *Who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver. On whom we have set our hope, that He will also still deliver us*- The "great death" from which Paul was delivered refers to the death sentence received in Asia, apparently to fight to the death with wild

animals in the arena, which sentence Paul was miraculously delivered from (see on 1 Cor. 15:32). He uses the same Greek word for "deliver" in reminiscing how there "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim. 4:17). "And will deliver" would then refer to Paul's hope of resurrection. For as noted on :9, he is reasoning that no matter how dramatic are our brushes with death in this life, we all have the sentence of death within us. Paul hopes that the Lord will continue to 'deliver him from evil' in this life (s.w. Mt. 6:13). But his greater hope is for the deliverance which will come at the resurrection, when we shall be delivered "from the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24).

1:11 *You also helping together on our behalf by your prayers, so that it works out that for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf-* Paul has in view an upcoming evil that he needed deliverance from. He asks them to pray for him, on the basis that the gift of salvation would then lead to all who had prayed for it then thanking God for it, and thus God would be glorified. But to describe his hoped for deliverance as a "gift" may seem strange- until we realize that Paul is framing all this in language he would later use of his pet project, the Jerusalem poor fund. His idea was that if there were many contributions towards that "gift", then there would be many praises given for it. And he paves the way for that by asking them to pray for his deliverance, that he may be given a gift of deliverance, and they would all praise God for it afterwards.

The idea of “helped… by prayer for us” (2 Cor. 1:11 AV) sounds as if Paul’s unaided prayers had less power than when the Corinthians were praying for him too. Stephen believed this to the point that he could pray for the forgiveness of his murderers, fully believing God could hear and grant such forgiveness. Job believed this, in that he prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn’t.

1:12 *For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and Godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world- and more abundantly toward you-* "Holiness" is a poor translation; most manuscripts read "simplicity". And this is the word Paul will later use about the 'simplicity' required to support the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The word means both simple and generous. I’ve always sensed that the more complex a person, the harder it is for them to be generous. But we are all commanded to be generous to the Lord’s cause, knowing that nothing we have is our own. And I am not only talking to wealthy brethren. *All* of us have something, and all of us can give something to our brethren. Consider

how the poor believers of the first century such as Corinth [amongst whom there were not many rich or mighty, Paul reminds them] collected funds for the poor brethren in Judea. The Greek word translated "simplicity" occurs eight times in the NT. Five of these are in 2 Corinthians, written as it was in the context of Corinth giving funds for the Jerusalem poor. Consider how the word is translated:
- Paul had "*simplicity* and Godly sincerity" (2 Cor. 1:12)
- They had "*liberality*" (2 Cor. 8:2)
- "*Bountifulness*" (2 Cor. 9:11)
- Their "*liberal distribution*" (2 Cor. 9:13)
- He feared lest they be corrupted from "the *simplicity* that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Evidently Paul saw a link between generosity and the simplicity of the faith in Christ. It doesn't need a lexicon to tell you that this word means both 'simplicity' and also 'generous'. The connection is because the basis for generosity is a simple faith. Not a dumb, blind faith, glossing over the details of God's word. But a realistic, simple, direct conviction. This is why Paul exhorts that all giving to the Lord's cause should be done with "simplicity" (Rom. 12:8- the AVmg. translates 'liberally'). Give, in whatever way, and don't complicate it with all the ifs and buts which our fleshly mind proposes. Paul warns them against false teachers who would corrupt them from their "simplicity"- and yet he usually speaks of 'simplicity' in the sense of generosity. Pure doctrine, wholeheartedly accepted, will lead us to be generous. False doctrine and human philosophy leads to all manner of self-complication. Paul was clever, he was smart; but he rejoiced that he lived his life "in simplicity…by the grace of God" (2 Cor. 1:12). If our eye is single (translating a Greek word related to that translated 'simple'), then the whole body is full of light (Mt. 6:22)- and the Lord spoke again in the context of generosity. An evil eye, a world view that is not 'simple' or single, is used as a figure for mean spiritedness.

Our fear of what others think of us, of their reactions and possible reactions to who we are, to our words and our actions; our faithless worry about where we will find our food and clothing, how we will be cared for when we are old, whether our health will fail… all these things detract us from a simple and direct faith in the basic tenets of the Gospel, which is what should lead us to humility. "The *simplicity* that is in Christ… in *simplicity* and godly sincerity… by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world… [doing our daily work] with *singleness* [s.w. 'simplicity'] of heart, as unto Christ" (2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5,6). Worries about the material things of life, or deep seated doubt developed during years of atheism or wrong belief… these all so easily distract us from the simplicity of a true and humbled faith.

1:13 *For we write no other things to you, than what you read or even acknowledge, and I*

hope you will acknowledge to the end- This sounds like a reference to the letters being circulated in Paul's name which were not really from him. Hence he concludes some of his letters by signing "with my own hand". Any who feel they have suffered from slander and abuse within the church should take encouragement from what Paul suffered from the Corinthians. But still he loved them because they were in Christ. Just consider what he was suffering from Corinth alone at this time:

Paul: Victim Of Slander In The Church

· Too physically weak to do the job (2 Cor. 10:10)

· Underhanded, cunning (2 Cor. 4:2 RSV)

· Tampering with God's word (2 Cor. 4:2 RSV)

· Not preaching according to the sanction of the Lord Jesus, but inventing things for himself (in the context of Gentile liberty, Gal. 1:1).

· Preaching himself as the saviour, not Christ (2 Cor. 4:5)

· Commending himself, showing himself to be so spiritually strong (2 Cor. 3:1)

· Trying to build up his own self-image with his listeners as he preached the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:5)

· Trying to domineer over his brethren (2 Cor. 1:24; 8:8 Gk.)

· Mentally unstable (2 Cor. 5:13)

· Causing others to stumble (2 Cor. 6:3)

· An imposter (2 Cor. 6:8- in the context, Paul is saying that the fact he is so maligned is a kind of proof that he really is a genuine worker for the Lord!).

· Wronging, corrupting, financially defrauding brethren (2 Cor. 7:2)

· Demanding so much money from others that they would become impoverished themselves (2 Cor. 8:13,14 J.B. Phillips)

· But not a real apostle, seeing that if he was then he would do as the Lord had bidden and receive “hire” for being a “labourer”; if he was worthy, he would have accepted it. The fact he didn’t showed he wasn’t a hard labourer. This was so untrue. It's a real cruel example of slander in the church.

· He only threatened ecclesial discipline but never did anything in practice- he was all talk and no do (2 Cor. 10:1-6)

· What he wrote was in his letters was a contradiction of the person he was in practice (2 Cor. 1:13)

· He kept changing his mind over important issues (2 Cor. 1:17-19)

· They were offended that Paul didn't take money from them (2 Cor. 11:7 RSV), and yet also grudged giving money for the Jerusalem Poor Fund because the Corinthian church slandered Paul that he claimed he was only trying to get the money for himself.

· Crafty and a liar, not opening his heart to his brethren (2 Cor. 12:16 cp. 6:11)

· Preaching that we can be immoral because God's grace will cover us (Rom. 3:8)

· Preached in order to get money and have relationships with women (1 Thess. 2:3-12)

· Still secretly preached that circumcision was vital for salvation (Gal. 5:11).

If you can imagine where Paul might have used quotation marks, this helps to reveal certain phrases which he was probably quoting from their claims. Most of the above slander in the church was from just one ecclesia (Corinth): one can be certain that there were many other such slanders.

1:14 *As also you did once partially acknowledge us, that we are your boasting, even as you are also ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus*- Paul saw his reward as proportionate to the quality of his brethren (2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:19,20; Phil. 2:16; 4:1). The nature or quality of his eternal life was bound up with whether or not they would be accepted at the day of judgment- and that surely was why Paul kept on keeping on with the Corinthians, and why we endure the whole dysfunctional story which is 'church'. With what measure we give to others in spiritual terms, we will be measured to at the judgment (Mk. 4:24 and context). 1 Cor. 3:9-15 likewise teaches that the spiritual "work" of "any man" with his brethren will be proportionate to his reward at the judgment.

1:15 *And in this confidence I had decided to come first of all to you, that you might have a second benefit*- The neat maps in our Bibles notwithstanding, it is clear that Paul had no such clear plan of where to found ecclesias. He preached in Galatia because illness required that he spend some time there, against his original intention (Gal. 4:13). He was forbidden to preach in Bithynia as he had planned, he fled to Athens for safety and ended up preaching there, then he fled from there to Corinth (Acts 16:6,7). And it seems that he was only in transit through Ephesus, but found the people responsive and therefore continued working there (Acts 18:19). Indeed, his movements were so uncertain that he was open to the charge of vacillating about his plans (2 Cor. 1:15,18). And yet it has been shown that the places where Paul founded ecclesias were strategic points, in that they were centres where different nationalities mixed, where trade routes crossed, where social and religious conditions were better than elsewhere for the spread of the Gospel. Yet this was not due to any conscious desire of Paul for this; the Lord overruled this, so that, e.g., from Thessalonica the message sounded out throughout Asia, due to the many mobile people who heard the Gospel there.

The second benefit or grace / gift may suggest that on each visit, Paul would give them a spiritual gift, just as he promised to do with the Romans in Rom. 1:11. Perhaps his physical presence was necessary because the particular Spirit gift in view would be passed on by the laying on of hands. The two gifts would have been a result of his intended two visits to Corinth- on the way both to and from Macedonia.

1:16 *And by you to pass into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and from you proceed on my journey to Judea*- This plan was it seems changed because he decided to go Macedonia via Troas, because a great opportunity in the Gospel had opened there (2 Cor. 2:12). The journey planned to Judea was in order to take the collection money there. Hence Paul's urging of the Macedonians to contribute. "Proceed on my journey" is literally as AV "to be brought on my way [by you] toward Judea". This alludes to the practice of walking with a departing visitor for the first part of their journey as a sign of support for the journey undertaken. And Paul says that his intention is that Corinth would in this way bless his Jerusalem mission. This was an almost obsessive interest.

1:17 *When I planned this, did I show fickleness? Or the things that I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, so that in the same breath I say, Yes, yes and then No, no?*- The change in travel plans, going to Macedonia via Troas rather than Corinth, was because of an opening for the Gospel in Troas (2:12). Yet Paul's critics interpreted this as fickleness. Any commitment to the Lord's work immediately opens us up for criticism and wilful misinterpretation of our motives. "Yes, yes" is the language of :20 about the preaching of the Lord Jesus. Not only must we preach because our Lord preached. We must witness *as He witnessed*. Paul understood us to have been anointed in a similar way to who Christ was anointed; and thereby we become witnesses of Him. In this context, he explains that he wasn't vague and uncertain in the matter of preaching; he didn't keep vacillating between yes and no because this was not how Jesus preached- in Him was "yes!" (2 Cor. 1:20,17).

1:18 *But as God is faithful, our word toward you is not yes and no*- Paul's preaching was an exact transmission of the person of Jesus; He was not indecisive, He was positive; and likewise Paul's preaching of Him had the same marks. He quotes this as a counter to the criticism that he was "yes and no", a man with no sense of truth or decision. 'If I am a man in Christ, then I will axiomatically act like Him, and therefore this criticism of me *cannot* be true'. The only other references to the faithfulness of God in the NT are also in Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13). Because "God is true", therefore it ought to be axiomatic that our words are true, as those bearing His Name (so Paul argues in 2 Cor. 1:18; 11:10). It could be that although baptized, the Corinthians were still as it were testing out God, and were tempted to feel that He was not consistently reliable or trustworthy. This mentality can be found amongst many new converts today.

1:19 *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no; but in him is yes*- The preaching of Paul meant that the person of the Lord Jesus was preached amongst the Corinthians. The message was not only Christ-centred, but the preachers were themselves the manifestation of the Christ they preached. We are “in Christ” to the extent that we *are* Christ to this world. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us. “The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you through us, even through me and Silvanus” (2 Cor. 1:19 RVmg.). Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians (Gal. 3:1 Gk.); to the Corinthians he was “the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV). Just as the Lord Jesus is always "yes" with regard to the salvation of others, so was Paul because he was in Him; and so should we be.

1:20 *For no matter how many and whatever be the promises of God, in him is the ultimate Yes!*- We know that the promises to the Jewish fathers were confirmed by the death of the Lord; and yet “all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). “In him" is put for ‘on account of His death which confirmed them’. ‘He’ was His death and His cross. In the preceding verse, Paul has spoken of “Christ crucified". He was brought to the cross a man who had already died unto sin; and the very quick time in which He died reflected how physically worn out His body was, in reflection of how sin had virtually already been put to death in Him.

Therefore also through him is the Amen, to the glory of God through us- The connection between the atonement and faith in prayer is brought out in 2 Cor. 1:20 RSV: “For all the promises of God in him are yea. That is, we utter the Amen through him". The promises of God were confirmed through the Lord’s death, and the fact that He died as the seed of Abraham, having taken upon Him Abraham’s plural seed in representation (Rom. 15:8,9). Because of this, “we utter the Amen through [on account of being in] Him". We can heartily say ‘Amen’, so be it, to our prayers on account of our faith and understanding of His confirmation of God's promises. But why this laboured aside about the utter certainty of God's promises, because they have been confirmed in Christ? It is in the context of Paul urging that *his* promises are to be taken seriously and that he is not unstable or fickle. If he- and we- have had such experiences of God's word of promise made even more sure, then one outflow of this will be in behaviour which is likewise solid and not fickle, changed at the last moment because of our own whims.

1:21 *Now he that establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God*- As noted on :20, the confirmation of God's promises through Christ's death are part of His stabilizing of us. Paul would not have lied to them about his travel plans because he has been established or confirmed, just as they had been ("with you"). This confirming or

establishment is paralleled to having been anointed by the Spirit. The language of very special people in Jewish history- prophets and kings- is used of each believer. For no longer are just a few significant individuals anointed. Now, every believer is likewise significant and is similarly anointed; see on Acts 13:9. The Greek translated "establishes" has been used by Paul in 1 Cor. 1:6,8, where he reminds the Corinthians that they have been 'confirmed' by the gift of the Spirit after their initial believing into Christ. Yet they were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1); they had not made use of that Spirit gift, just as many fail to today. The same word is used of the psychological confirmation of believers after their baptism and belief in Christ (Col. 2:7; Heb. 2:3). Heb. 13:9 is more specific, saying that the heart [or mind / psychology] is "established with grace", *charis*, the gift- of the Spirit. This is how I understand 2 Pet. 1:19- the word of prophecy, the word spoken forth by the early preachers, is confirmed / established [AV "made more sure"]. Now in 1 Cor. 1:22, Paul will go on to state specifically that the arena of the Spirit's establishing / confirming operation is within the hearts / minds of believers. The same word is found in Mk. 16:20, where the Lord promised to confirm or establish the believer in the Gospel by miracles. This function of the Spirit has passed away, but the essential confirmation of the Gospel by the Spirit gift in human hearts remains.

But the Greek for 'establish' can also mean to validate, and this was a relevant concern of Paul at this time. This same word keeps cropping up in Ignatius, who uses the Greek *bebaion* in the sense of 'valid'. Ignatius [and others] taught that for service of the Lord to be valid by a believer, it had to be validated through obedience to the church leadership. *They* gave his or her service its validity. "Whatsoever [the Bishop and presbytery] shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God; that everything which ye do may be sure and valid [*bebaion*]" (*Smyrneans* 8.2). Significantly, Paul here addresses this very issue, using the very same Greek word, and in precisely this context- of justifying his service to God even though it was not approved / validated by others who thought they were elders: "He who validates us [*bebaion*], along with you [the ordinary members of the flock]... is God, who also sealed us" (2 Cor. 1:21,22). God has validated and called each of us to His service. We don't need approval / validation / authorization from anybody on this earth. Of course we should seek to work co-operatively with our brethren, for such is obviously the spirit of Christ; neither Paul nor myself are inciting a spirit of maverick irresponsibility. But he *is* clearly saying that the idea of needing authorization / validation from any group of elders in order to minister, preach, break bread and baptize [which is a context of his writing to the Corinthians] is totally wrong.

1:22- see on 2 Cor. 3:3.

Who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts- "Also" doesn't have to mean that the statement following is an additional truth to preceding one. Literally "and...", this "and... and" structure can be used [as it is in several Eastern

European languages] to express a series of parallel truths or descriptions of the same reality. As noted on :21, Paul has in view the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism- a transforming power within the human heart. Any claim that the Spirit only worked through miraculous signs is made null and void by this specific statement that we have been given the Spirit in our hearts. After we believe, we are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). The promised Holy Spirit is surely a reference to the Comforter, a force which would be *within* the believer to make the Lord Jesus as real as if He were physically with us. The same gift of the Spirit is promised to all who would be baptized in Acts 2:39. The sealing is therefore "in our hearts". Perhaps this is why the 'sealing' of the faithful in Rev. 7:3 was "in their foreheads"- in their minds. This internal, psychological experience is the foretaste, the guarantee, of our future total transformation at the last day. 2 Cor. 5:4,5 present this "down payment" as the precursor to the literal transformation of the body at the Lord's return: "...that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing [the ending of our mortality by immortality] is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee". Eph. 1:13,14 speak of this same gift coming after belief: "In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is a guarantee [s.w. "down payment"] of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession, for the praise of His glory".

1:23 *But I call God for a witness upon my soul*- David speaks of God enthroned in the court of Heaven judging him and yet also maintaining his right; and yet in the same context, David speaks of how God's throne is prepared for future judgment, He *will* minister judgment (Ps. 9:4 cp. 7,8,19). The court of Heaven that was now trying him would sit again in the last day. Paul shows the same understanding when, under 'judgment' by his brethren, he calls God as a witness right now (2 Cor. 1:23 RSV), several times saying that he spoke "before God", as if already at judgment day.

That to spare you I came no more to Corinth- In 2:12 Paul seems to excuse his change of travel plans by saying that a great door of opportunity for the Gospel had been opened at Troas. But it could be that this was an outcome of his knowledge that if he were to come to Corinth whilst they were still unrepentant of their gross immorality, the Spirit may have led Paul to severely judge them. Remember that in the first century, the Holy Spirit empowered the judgment of apostate believers with physical sickness or even death. Knowing this, Paul chose to give them more time to repent. We see here how the work of the Spirit through men was not [and is not] irresistible; Paul knew what the Spirit would urge or force him to do if he went there again and he chose not to allow that to happen. God is in dialogue with man, never forcing but always open to working with us.

1:24 *Not that we have lordship over your faith but are helpers of your joy. For in faith you must stand fast*- Nobody, not even faithful brethren, can have dominion over our faith; by our *own* faith we stand (2 Cor. 1:24, filling in the ellipsis). Solomon exhorts his son to get wisdom, for "if thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it" (Prov. 9:12). The understanding of God we gain from His word, and the result of rejecting it, is so intensely personal. "Helpers" translates *sunergos*, a co-worker. As so often noted, the salvation of the Corinthians was related to Paul's own salvation. His joy at the last day would be their joy- if indeed they were accepted. And yet despite this close inter-relationship, it was by their own faith that they would stand acceptable before the Lord at the last day.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow*- As noted on 1:23, Paul changed his travel plans so as to avoid visiting Corinth until they were repentant. For he feared that if he did, the Spirit would compel him to bring judgment upon them for their gross immorality. Such judgment would however be a result of Paul's sorrow that they were as they were. Any form of church discipline must therefore be motivated and accompanied by genuine sorrow. In the whole saga with the immoral brother whom they had disfellowshipped, Paul had earlier written that his discipline should have been an outcome of their mourning for him (1 Cor. 5:2). Paul says he is determined that he will not come with sorrow- i.e. he is determined that they shall put things right. It was this willing of things through which perhaps explains the contradictory emotions he displays later in the letter- on one hand, rejoicing at the news of their apparent repentance, and yet threatening judgment for the major issues which were still unresolved. We cannot 'determine' others' changes, no matter how strongly we would wish for them.

2:2 *For if I make you sorry, who then is he that makes me glad, but he that is made sorry by me?*- "You made us sorry / upset us by your letter" is the typical stuff of church politics. And Paul tries to turn it round with a positive twist. But it seems no more than a playing with words: 'I made you sorry? Well if you are sorrowing *really,* unto repentance, then you will make me glad'. Paul writes later that they had sorrowed to repentance, and that his sorrow had been turned to joy by the news from Titus that they had changed (2 Cor. 7:9). But at this early stage of the letter, Paul writes as if they are still not made sorry to repentance. We can assume therefore that these early chapters were written before the news came of Corinth's repentance. My own take however is that Paul loved them with all the love of the lover who is over eager to interpret any news from the beloved in a positive way. For he has to conclude the letter with threats of major judgment upon them.

2:3 *And I wrote this very thing, lest when I came, I should receive sorrow from those in whom I ought to rejoice- having confidence in you all, that my joy is in you all*- What "thing" did he write that supposedly made them sorry? Presumably, from the later context, he refers to his command in 1 Cor. 5 for the immoral brother to be removed from their company. Corinth's response had been that they found Paul's demand most upsetting or 'sorrowful'. And he tries to make a play on the idea of

'sorrow' by saying that their sorrow could lead them to Godly repentance. In 2 Cor. 7 he rejoices at the news that their Godly sorrow had led to repentance; but I suggest this is an over eager desire to see the best in them, for he concludes 2 Corinthians lamenting their continued immorality and threatening major judgment to come. Yet he was 'confident' that his joy- the joy that would come from their repentance- is their joy. This all seems to reflect an over eagerness to see them as more than they really were. Perhaps that was the outcome of true love for them, imputing goodness to them; yet it was surely mixed with the same kind of over enthusiasm which Paul displays for the Jerusalem Poor Fund project.

2:4- see on Rom. 9:3.

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears. Not that you should be made sorry, but that you might know the love that I have more abundantly for you- As Paul expected them to remove the immoral person from a motive of sadness (1 Cor. 5:2), so he too had made the request for the excommunication from many tears. He suggests he wrote with tears dripping from his cheeks as he wrote. His motive was therefore one of abundant love, not to make trouble for the sake of it, nor to intentionally upset them. "Anguish" suggests 'restraint' in the original Greek; perhaps Paul could have taken a harder line with them over the matter than he did, and his request for the offender to be removed was a restrained position, restrained by love. The "affliction" may refer to the great affliction he endured at the time of writing (s.w. 2 Cor. 1:8); as if whilst surrounded by great personal affliction, he still had emotional space to worry deeply about the situation in Corinth. It was at that very time of personal crisis that he had written to them about the matter, and that was a sign of his deep care for them.

2:5 *But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not so much to me but in a sense (not to put it too severely) to you all*- Paul blames the sorrow on the behaviour of the immoral brother. The "any" is the "one" of :6. Paul is seeking to make their sorrow his sorrow, just as he envisages his joy as being their joy (2:3). This again seems a rather forced way of reasoning; for they were claiming that his letter had made them sorry and calling him to account over it.

2:6 *Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority*- There is no hint here that there was repentance by the immoral person. "Sufficient" can carry the sense of 'It has gone on for long enough now'. The disfellowship was intended to be temporary, Paul is saying. But that is not at all how he reasons in 1 Cor. 5 when commanding them to exclude the brother. It would seem that he is getting out of the situation by saying 'OK well he has been excluded long enough, have him back then'. He is so desperate to resolve the matter so that he and they are all at one on the matter.

2:7 *So that to the contrary you should rather forgive him and comfort him*- This command to "forgive him" suggests that he may not himself have been repentant. One would rather expect his penitence to be mentioned, both here and in 1 Cor. 5, if that were an issue. But there is no mention of it. Paul seems to want to move on, to put this issue behind them, so that they can focus on his pet project of the Jerusalem Poor Fund. "Forgive and comfort" are words full of association with the gift of the Spirit. *Charizomai* is not the usual word translated "forgive"; it means literally 'to gift', and *charis* is usually associated with the gift of the Spirit. Likewise "comfort" recalls the Spirit gift of the Comforter. Paul consistently appeals to the Corinthians to take the way of the Spirit in dealing with their issues. The receipt of the *charis* of the Spirit should lead us to likewise 'give'- both of our forgiveness, and also [as Paul will soon develop] in literal giving to the poor.

Lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his excessive sorrow- The psychological impact of disfellowship must be carefully considered. These words have been proven true time and again; those who are ejected from communion end up in spiritual shipwreck and with psychological issues as a result of being consumed, swallowed up, by the psychological trauma of rejection. And yet despite this, disfellowship of whole blocs of believers is practiced so freely by those who ought to know better. It is death and our mortality which is to be "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54; 2 Cor. 5:4). This 'swallowing up' in sorrow may be a reference therefore to the opposite outcome- condemnation at the last day. This is the end product of keeping a believer 'out of fellowship', no matter what they have done. And our history is littered with examples of shipwreck of faith brought about by disfellowship. The mention of "sorrow" uses the same word used throughout the chapter so far, in dealing with the Corinthian complaint that Paul had made them sorry by asking them to disfellowship this individual. He has responded that their sorrow should morph into a Godly sorrow that led them to repentance, and he likes to think that the immoral man has this same Godly sorrow of repentance.

2:8 *Therefore I beg you to confirm your love toward him*- This was far more than an on paper re-admittance of the brother to church fellowship. They were to assure him that they loved him, which would suggest that it is the sense of love withdrawn which leads the excommunicated into the mire of "excessive sorrow" which swallows up faith (:7). It could be that "love" here is a reference to the *agape*, the love feast; they were to re-admit him to fellowship at the breaking of bread.

2:9 *For to this end also did I write, that I might know, by putting you to the test, if you are obedient in all things*- Again I would say that Paul is trying to defuse the situation by saying that his commandment to withdraw from the immoral man was a test of their obedience, and since they had done it, they could now resume fellowship with the brother. That, however, hardly seems a good reason to disfellowship someone, given the psychological shattering which it would have upon the person concerned. So I would again conclude that Paul is seeking by all means to defuse the tension, taking as much guilt on himself as he can.

2:10 *But to whom you forgive anything, I also. When I also forgive- if I need to forgive- then I do it for your sakes*- Paul wants to move on from their complaint about his insistence that they separate from the immoral brother. With no mention of the man's repentance, he says that if they forgive him, then so does he. And his own forgiveness of the man was "for your sakes". Paul forgave the brother and moved on for the sake of peace with the Corinthians. This raises the interesting question of whether forgiveness can be granted or not granted for the sake of issues other than the actual behaviour or repentance of the offending individual.

In the presence of Christ, so- Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians (Gal. 3:1 Gk., see note there); and likewise here to the Corinthians he was “the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV).

2:11 *That no advantage may be gained over us by the Satan. For we are not ignorant of his devices*- As noted repeatedly above, Paul appears to be backtracking from his position concerning the immoral man, for he sees that he is at loggerheads with the Corinthian church over it. He had commanded them to withdraw from the man, they had done so, but were now complaining that he had manipulated them to do this and they were "sorry" or upset with him about it. Paul could see that a rift between him and his converts in Corinth would be used by critics in order to damage the overall work of the Gospel, and particular his project of raising funds for the

Jerusalem poor. The 'satan' was some organized opposition to Paul's work which troubled Paul's converts and made capital over any tensions between him and his convert. I'd guess the reference is to 'the Jewish satan', the Judaists who dogged Paul's steps around the mission fields of the first century. I have given more detail about this theory in *The Real Devil*. "Devices" translates a Greek word used almost exclusively in 2 Corinthians, translated "mind" with the sense of 'perception'. Paul knew that the adversary would perceive the tension between Paul and the Corinthians, and use it. Most of the references are to the "minds" [s.w. "devices"] of the Corinthians being brainwashed by Judaist false teachers (2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3). This would rather confirm a Judaist reference for "the Satan".

2:12- see on 1 Cor. 16:9.

Now when I came to Troas for the sake of the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened to me in the Lord- As noted on 1:23, Paul changed his intention to visit Corinth on his way to Macedonia. He travelled via Troas- and that decision was blessed because a door was opened to him there in the Gospel's work. Frequently Paul uses the word "Gospel" as meaning 'the preaching of the Gospel'; the Gospel is in itself something which *must* be preached if we really have it (Rom. 1:1,9; 16:25; Phil. 1:5 (NIV),12; 2:22; 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:5; 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:8). The fact we have been given the Gospel is in itself an imperative to preach it. “When I came to Troas for the Gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:12 RV) has the ellipsis supplied in the AV: “to preach Christ’s Gospel” [although there is no Greek word in the original matching ‘preach’] .

2:13 *I had no relief for my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went into Macedonia*- Not only on a personal level, but also collectively, we can limit the amount and extent of witness. Thus Paul had a door opened to him to preach in Troas, but the ecclesial problems in Corinth that were so sapping his energy meant he had to leave those opportunities inadequately used (2 Cor. 2:12,13 RSV). He had been expecting Titus to meet him there with good news from Corinth, but Titus didn't come. So he left the Gospel opportunities there in order to hurry on to Macedonia and then get to Corinth as soon as he could because he was worried by the lack of news from them.

2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and makes manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place*- Despite all the setbacks with the Corinthians Paul felt that somehow we are "always", time and again, caused to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14), participating day by day in the daily grind (and hour by hour at times) in His triumphant victory procession (so the allusion to the Roman 'triumph' implies). The spirit of ambition shouldn't just be an occasional flare in our lives; it should characterize our whole way of living and thinking. All things work together for good- and the changed plans necessitated by the weakness of the Corinthians led Paul to Troas and an opportunity for preaching there, and thus the knowledge of Christ was made manifest in another place, Troas. So despite all discouragement from the weakness of others and church politics, we are actually being led in triumphal procession behind Christ the victor. This passage invites us to see the Lord Jesus after His victory- which can only refer to His victorious death on the cross- leading a victory parade.

It could be argued that in that triumph, we are the triumphant soldiers, carrying with us burning incense. "More than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom.

8:37). This represents our preaching of the Gospel, as part of our participation in the joyful glory of the Lord's victory on the cross. And yet that incense is used as a double symbol- both of us the preachers, who hold the aroma, and yet we are also the aroma itself. We are the witness. The light of the candlestick is both the believer (Mt. 5:15) and the Gospel itself (Mk. 4:21). But the motivation for it all is our part in the victory procession of the Lord, going on as it does down through the ages, as He as it were comes home from the cross.

But it was captive, defeated soldiers who were led in a Roman triumph, and led to death at the end of it. It was called "the march to the scaffold", and is clearly to be connected with the call to pick up our cross and follow the Lord on His "last walk" to the place of crucifixion. Paul has already used this figure in 1 Cor. 4:9, where he considers himself and the apostles as the chief, most significant prisoners of war on display in the triumph: "God has set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men". And again the 'march to the scaffold' is in view in 2 Cor. 4:10-12, where again the word "always" is stressed: "*Always* carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who live are *always* being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us". We can see ourselves as the defeated, being led to death by the Lord's victory, which was His death on the cross. And yet also as the triumphant soldiers. For our death is "working" for us; through that death with Him, we live, the servant becomes the master. And this process of losing now that we may also win, death that life might come, is "always" being experienced by us. Because the idea here is of the "magnificent defeat". The image of defeat merges into that of victory, just as the cross was the ultimate defeat in secular terms, and yet the 'lifting up' on the cross was the lifting up of the Lord in the glory of victory. We too may appear defeated in this life, through domestic, financial or health crises. But through those defeats, we are in fact being led behind the Lord. The image of the Lord leading us in a triumph thus merges with His own image of us following Him in His 'last walk' to the place of crucifixion- bearing our crosses, walking towards our own death.

The savour of knowledge being made manifest refers to how incense was burned during the triumph in honour of the gods who were thought to have given the victory. Our witness, our savour to others, is therefore to be deeply motivated in a sense that the Lord Jesus is the source of our victory, and this triumphal procession. And it was the conquered captives who were to hold the incense in honour of the gods who had conquered them. No wonder Paul sees in the Roman triumph a fruitful source of metaphor. It all hangs together with strong appropriacy.

2:15 *For we are a sweet savour of Christ to God in those that are saved and in those that perish*- Note the present continuous tenses. Men are in the process of being saved or perishing. We are making the answer now, as we encounter the "savour" of the Gospel call. The same arresting use of the present continuous tense is common when it comes to salvation or perishing: "The Lord added to them daily those who were being saved... the word of the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... our Gospel is veiled to those that are perishing" Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:3). The preacher is his message; if the doctrines of the Gospel are truly in us, then we ourselves will naturally be a witness to it in our lives. The Gospel is the savour of Christ; and yet we personally are the savour (2 Cor. 2:14,15); *we* are the epistle and Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 3:3). The

"saved" were the Corinthians, in the first context; the perishing were those new ears at Troas who had heard the message. They each had the choice as to how to perceive the savour coming to them.

2:14-17 2 Cor. 2:14-17 seems to have a series of allusions back to Mary's anointing of the Lord:

2 Cor. 2	Mary's anointing
Maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (:14)	The house filled with the smell of Mary's anointment
For we are the smell of Christ (:15) in our witness of Him to the world	Mary must have had the same smell of the same perfume on her, as was on Jesus whom she had anointed with it
Making merchandise of the word of God (:17 RVmg.)	As Judas coveting the anointing oil for mercenary gain

The simple point of the allusions is that we like Mary are spreading the smell of Christ to the world; she is our pattern for witness.

2:16- see on Mt. 3:11.

To the one a savour from death to death; to the other a savour from life to life- The smell of the incense, representing the truth of Christ manifested by Paul in his work with both the Corinthians and unbelievers, was variably received. For some it had the putrid smell of death; and those who received it that way would be led to eternal death. Perhaps the savour arose from the death of Christ, but led disbelievers to death; or it in one sense leads to death, because we are pictured as captives being led to death in the Lord's triumph. But in another sense, death has the smell of life. Because for us, "to die is gain". The ultimate game over becomes our greatest win. The savour arising from His resurrection would lead believers in it to eternal life. For them, the smell was pleasant and was perceived as the message of life, leading to eternal life. Paul is here alluding to Rabbinic views of the Law. *Debarim Rabba*, sec. 1, fol. 248: "As the bee brings home honey to the owner, but stings others, so it is with the words of the Law." "They (the words of the Law) are a savour of life to Israel, but a savour of death to the people of this world". Or in *Taarieth*, fol. 7, 1, "Whoever gives attention to the Law on account of the Law itself, to him it becomes an aromatic of life, but to him who does not attend to the Law on account of the Law itself, to him it becomes an aromatic of death". Paul is writing of the Gospel of Christ in the same terms as the Law of Moses. For these allusions to have been appreciated, we can only conclude that there was significant Judaist influence at Corinth, which was leading some to reject the "savour of Christ" in favour of the Law. Gentile, immoral and immature Christians were attracted to the Judaist argument because it freed them up to live immoral lives, with their conscience salved by tokenistic, legalistic obedience to a few laws.

And who is sufficient for these things?- As if to say, 'We simply don't appreciate the power and the implications of the logic we are putting before men'. There is no third way.Their encounters with us are a matter of life or death. They face in our preaching the ultimate issues of the cosmos. And this is what we love about Christianity; the eye of the tiger is to be faced, the cosmetic cover of religion is cut through, and we face the ultimate issues raw and in stark relief. Before all those who smell the savour of the Gospel is the choice of eternal death or life. The choice of life

is, however, the choice of death. Bonhoeffer got it right in a way only a man who was facing death for his faith could do: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die". And Paul, like any serious preacher of the Gospel, felt insufficient to be the one bringing this message of such ultimate importance. It is our sense of insufficiency which is our sufficiency as preachers; it is the most vital qualification. He is here quoting from the LXX of Ex. 4:10 [and also Joel 2:11], where Moses likewise feels he is not competent or "sufficient". Moses was presented in Judaism as an icon to be respected from a distance, rather than imitated. And Paul chooses a point of Moses in weakness, and bids us feel the same. And yet be used as he was, to save others. He will answer this question in 2 Cor. 3:5,6: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant".

2:17 *For we are not as most, corrupting the word of God; but as of sincerity and as of God*- "Corrupting" in Greek can mean 'pedalling'. The false teachers in Corinth demanded payment for their teaching- and received it. The message was a corruption of God's word, and not some totally pagan set of teaching. It was the word of God in a corrupted form. And that would fit exactly with the Judaizers, who were corrupting God's word in the Law of Moses- and selling their teachings. It could be that the allusion to pedalling continues the picture of the Roman triumph which has been such a source of allusion in the previous verses. For it was common at the triumphs for pedallers to line the route selling cheap incense which could be then burnt in honour of the gods who had supposedly given the victory. Paul would therefore be saying that we are burning the true unadulterated incense in the Lord's victory train, and he is not just a peddlar selling cheap, adulterated incense; for "we do not tamper with God's word" (2 Cor. 4:2).

In the sight of God we speak in Christ- Or, "presence of God". Paul is using language which the Jews applied to the Angels. I take this to suggest that Paul felt himself to be so at one with his guardian Angel that he can appropriate such Angelic language to himself. Paul twice assures his readers that he speaks the truth because he is speaking in the sight / presence of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 12:19). The fact God is everywhere present through His Spirit, that He exists, should lead us at the very least to be truthful. In the day of judgment, a condemned Israel will know that God heard their every word; but if we accept that fact now then we will be influenced in our words now. And by our words we will be justified (Ez. 35:12). Reflection upon the omniscience of God leads us to marvel at His sensitivity to human behaviour. He noticed even the body language of the women in Is. 3:16- and condemned them for the way they walked. Paul says that he does not personally profit from his preaching, but in the sight of God does he preach (2 Cor. 2:17 RVmg.). Our motivation in preaching, whether it be to demonstrate intellectual prowess, or to sincerely save somebody, or merely to look good in the eyes of our brethren, is all weighed up; and so we must preach in the sight of God, knowing He watches.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Are we beginning again to commend ourselves?*- This is likely to be a quotation from the Corinthian criticism of Paul: 'Here he goes again, commending himself!'. The lack of quotation marks in ancient Greek makes interpretation difficult.

Or need we, as do some, letters of commendation to you or from you?- The subverters of Corinth ecclesia came with “letters of commendation” (2 Cor. 3:1 cp. 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 10:12,18; 12:11), and one wonders whether these letters were not from Jerusalem; for in the synagogue system upon which the early ecclesia was based, the Jerusalem rabbis issued such letters. Recall how Saul had such letters to authorize him to persecute the Damascus Christians. Their tactics were political and aggressive- they made Peter so scared that he forgot all the lessons the Lord had taught him through the conversion of Cornelius, that from fear of them he refused to break bread with Gentiles when their representatives were present. It would seem that the Corinthians were demanding Paul have letters of commendation before they would listen to him; and they thought they had authority to issue a commendation of Paul, or not. And the lack of such documentation would affect Paul's credibility and authority. This is all the stuff of power brokering and politics. We note that in chapter 7, Paul will rejoice that the Corinthians are onside with him after the visit of Titus. But that outburst is at variance with the consistent impression that the Corinthians were against Paul and did not respect him. Perhaps it was Paul imputing righteousness to them; or maybe it was the overstatement which is typical of those in love, ever hoping for the best and extrapolating from everything into an unreal position.

3:2 *You are our letter of recommendation, written in our hearts, known and read by all*- The Corinthians themselves were hardly much commendation of Paul. It was not any letter written by them which would recommend Paul, but rather the fact that Paul so loved them in his heart was visible to all. His love and care for them was his recommendation to missionary service, rather than any letter from them. I suggest that this verse is that which Paul refers to in 2 Cor. 7:3: "For as I have said before [here in 3:2], you are in our hearts, to die together and live together".

Jesus ‘came down’ to this world in the sense that He was the word of the Father made flesh, and ‘all men’ saw the light of grace that was radiated from His very being. And that same word must be flesh in us, as it was in the Lord. We too are to be a living epistle, words of the Gospel made flesh, “known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2).

3:3 *Being revealed before all that you are as it were a letter from Christ, delivered by us; written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God*- Just as Paul needed no recommendation letter from Corinth because they were written in his heart, so they needed no letter of commendation. Because the commendation was in the spirit and not in the letter; in their hearts and not on tables of stone. Their desire for letters of commendation betrayed a lack of the Spirit. If they really knew that the new covenant was engraved on their hearts by the Spirit, there would be no interest in any letter of human commendation. And this must be remembered by us too. The letter from Christ was "delivered by us" in that Paul had brought the Spirit to them through preaching the word to them which led to their conversion. The Corinthians had been given the Spirit, but were not possessed of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:1). They failed to feel and live according to the potential spiritual strength they had been given.

Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh- The reference is to Jer. 31:33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people". Yet the new covenant that was made with us by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Heb. 8 proves that we are under the new covenant by quoting from Jer. 31, which is a prophecy of

how in the future, Israel will repent, and will enter into the new covenant. Twice the Spirit uses Jer. 31:31 to prove to us that we are under the new covenant now (see Heb. 8:6-13 and 10:16-19); yet Jer. 31 is a prophecy of how natural Israel in the future will enter into that covenant, after their humiliation at the hands of their future invaders. So we are being taught that our entering of the covenant now is similar to how natural Israel will enter that covenant in the future. The point is really clinched by the way the Spirit cites Jer. 31 as relevant to us today. The reasoning goes that because Jer. 31:34 speaks of sin forgiven for those who accept the new covenant, therefore we don't need sacrifices or human priesthood now, because Jer. 31:34 applies to us. So therefore God writing in our hearts is going on now, too. This is confirmed by Paul's allusion to Jer. 31 in 2 Cor. 3:3. God wrote with His Spirit on our hearts, He made a new covenant on the covenant-tables of our heart. Likewise 2 Cor. 1:22: "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the spirit in our hearts". There are several prophecies which speak of Israel entering that new covenant, and what it will mean to them. All of them, in some sense, apply to us who are now in the new covenant. All of us should be earnestly seeking to appreciate the more finely exactly what our covenant with God means, exactly what covenant relationship with God really entails. 2 Cor. 3:16 reasons that when Israel's heart shall turn to the Lord Jesus, then the veil that is on their heart will be taken away. But now, through the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, we each with unveiled face can behold the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). The clarity of vision concerning Christ which Israel will eventually come to should be ours now; our hearts should turn to Christ now, as theirs will do. For this reason, the Old Testament gives us much information as to how Israel's heart will turn to Christ.

3:4 *And such confidence have we toward God, through Christ*- "Confidence" means the certain expectation which comes from faith. Paul has used the word in 1:15 of how he was "confident" in the Corinthians; and he will use it again in this context in 2 Cor. 8:22. It is the confidence he himself expresses of how "in Christ", righteousness has been imputed, and he himself stands boldly before the judgment seat of Christ, both now and in the last day (Eph. 3:12). The ideas of being right *pros* God *dia* Christ are found in the classic explanation of imputed righteousness in Rom. 5:1: "Being justified [made righteous] by faith, we have peace with [*pros*- toward] God, through [*dia*] our Lord Jesus". This explains how on one hand he can be so critical of the Corinthians, fully aware of their gross immorality and lack of faith in the Gospel. Therefore his confidence was "toward God", in His presence both now and at judgment day; and *dia,* on account of, Christ- and not of themselves. And yet on the other hand he can speak and write so positively of them; as he cannot condemn them, he [like us] can only confidently assume that any baptized into Christ shall indeed be accepted at the last day. The idea of imputed righteousness continues in :5. This approach takes away all the angst associated with the perceived need to separate from any who depart from the one faith in doctrine or practice. The platform of course should not be open to such people, but in terms of continued association and fellowship- Paul's example with the Corinthians is crystal clear. He had "confidence" towards them whilst stating that some of them had no knowledge of [relationship with] God (1 Cor. 15:34).

However, as mentioned elsewhere in this commentary, Paul also seems prone to obsessive mindsets, he so wanted the Corinthians and his Jerusalem Poor Fund to work out succesfully that he speaks and thinks of things and people in far more positive terms than is realistic.

3:5- see on Mt. 3:11.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God- "Account" is the same word as "impute" [see on Rom. 2:26], and I explained on :4 that Paul believes that the Corinthians are counted righteous, they have righteousness imputed to them, and so he strives to see them likewise. The Greek for "sufficient" is also translated "worthy". Our worthiness is from God, for Paul has just said that none of us of ourselves are worthy or sufficient (2 Cor. 2:16). But he now clarifies that it is not that he is of himself counting them righteous; he does so because God has done so. He will proceed to explain that this is possible through the ministry of the Spirit; we are being made in reality what we are in status, which is "in Christ". Because *our* face / image is being changed into *His* image, "even as by the spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:3,5,18). We look in the mirror, and see Christ in us. This looking in the mirror is used by James as a figure for self-examination (James 1:18,22-25). By doing the word of truth, we find we will live lives of looking in the mirror, of self-perception. This is the essence of self-examination; to perceive the Christ-man within us, and that all other behaviour is our being unfaithful to our true self, living out a persona. We are to see ourselves as being Christ; we are to have a high view of ourselves in this sense, whilst despising and seeking to dismantle the personas we so often act out which are unfaithful to Him. See on 2 Cor. 11:5.

3:6 *Who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit*- The imputation of righteousness mentioned in :4 and :5 is a result of the new covenant. Under the new covenant, the Spirit is ministered. As explained in Romans 8, believers are transformed by the Spirit in practice into what they are by status. The idea of "servants [ministers] of a... covenant" makes us parallel with the Angels under the old covenant. The Law of Moses (and the whole Pentateuch? Consider Acts 7:38,53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2) was given by Angels. That the Angels ministered the Word in the past is picked up by Paul in 2 Cor. 3 when he says that because we have taken over the role of the Angels in this respect, we should teach the word boldly: "...Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech"(:12). The context refers to our preaching, that it should not be with the "enticing words of man's wisdom". See on Rev. 22:9. However, the reference to being ministers of the covenant may be an allusion to the Lord Jesus, in whom we are, and to Joshua / Jesus (Rom. 15:8; Heb. 8:2; based on Joshua / Jesus who was the minister of the Tabernacle, Ex. 24:13; Josh. 1:1). Our sufficiency, our sense of adequacy and competence, is of God (:5). Without this positive confidence we are unable to do any task well, and this is especially true of spiritually ministering to others. But that confidence is not of ourselves; it is a confidence in God's confidence in us.

For the letter kills but the spirit gives life- Faced with baldly stated commandments, we will fail. The letter thereby kills. It is the ministration of the Spirit which leads to eternal life. This highlights the importance of the Spirit in our lives. It is a matter of life or death. Paul writes from personal experience; for he had been 'killed' by the attempt to obey the law (Rom. 7:11 s.w.). "Gives life" is the language of future resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:22,36,45); but clearly in view is the new life given within the believing heart right now. It is the presence of the Spirit within our minds now which is the basis upon which our mortal bodies shall be made eternally alive (Rom. 8:11).

3:7 *But if that which ministered death, written, engraved on stones, came with glory (so that the children of Israel could not look continually upon the presence of Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this glory was)*- The allusion here and in :10 is to the LXX of Ex. 34:29,35: "Moses knew not that the appearance of the skin

of his face was glorified... The children of Israel saw the face of Moses that it was glorified". The LXX in Exodus makes it clear that Moses veiled his face so that the Israelites would not perceive that the glory he received faded. This contrasts with the open, plain declaration of Christ's glory, which was reflected in Paul's plain and open speaking (:12). The glory which came from the old covenant was blinding, whereas Paul will develop the contrast with the glory of the new covenant, which is transforming, not blinding.

3:8 *How shall the ministry of the spirit be without glory?*- The repeated use of the word 'ministry' is preparing for Paul's later appeal for the Corinthians to support the ministry to God's people in practical ways (3:9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8). God's ministry to us, involving the glory of His grace in Christ articulated to us by the work of the Spirit, must become reflected in our ministry to our poorer brethren. Paul's idea was that the ministry of the Spirit would be exemplified by their participation in the Jerusalem Poor Fund project. Paul saw this as likewise bringing forth glory to God, as he states specifically in 2 Cor. 8:19: "in this act of grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord".

3:9 *For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory*- The contrast is not between condemnation and salvation, but between condemnation and righteousness. The context in :4 and :5 is of imputed righteousness being the basis of salvation. The blinding glory associated with the theophanies on Sinai and the tabernacle was nothing compared to the glory which was manifested in the Lord Jesus.

3:10 *For truly, that which has been made glorious*- Referring to the face of Moses, Ex. 34:29,35 LXX speak of how "the appearance of his face was glorified". God's glory is more permanently and supremely seen "in the face of Jesus", 4:6. We are to look at the invisible things of God's glory in Christ (4:18); all else is temporal compared with the moral glory, the characteristics of God, as they are perfectly revealed in the face of Jesus. The things of God's Name, His glory, His characteristics, are the only things which are truly eternal; all else will fade.

Has not been made ultimately glorious in that the other glory is simply so surpassing- There is no diminishing or deprecation of the Mosaic system in itself; it is rather that the glory in Christ "is simply so surpassing" that the Mosaic glory literally fades into insignificance.

3:11 *For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains permanently is yet more glorious*- Note that the Mosaic system is described as being then in the process of fading away. The Greek tense definitely demands such a translation. The reference is not only to the fact that the Mosaic glory began fading as soon as it was on Moses' face- it's just that the veil hid that fact from the Israelites. It's also a hint that the Mosaic system did not end at one moment, but there was a process of passing away. God and Paul could have taken a hard line: the Law is finished. This is why Jesus bled and lived as He did. But they are so sensitive to the difficulty of others in accepting what we know to be concrete truth. And we must take our lesson. In our witness to the world, we mustn't give up at the first sign of wrong doctrine or inability to accept our message. See what is positive and work on it.

The Greek translated "fades away" is used about the ending of the Mosaic law (Rom. 7:2,6), and also about the ending of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor.

13:8,10,11). It could be that the miraculous gifts and the Mosaic system all ended at the same time. In this we see God's patience and grace in not demanding that believers immediately accepted the end of that system at Christ's death; they were given a period in which to accept it, confirmed by the miraculous Spirit gifts, all presumably ending in the destruction of the temple in AD70. We too must accept that other believers will not always immediately grasp the truths which are obvious to us- Christ's patience with ideas of 'demon possession' is a parade example. We should note too how the obvious command to take the Gospel to the Gentiles was only so slowly grasped by Peter and the early brethren; yet God patiently worked with them through their slowness to understand the obvious. He does the same with us, and we should be likewise tolerant to our brethren, rather than rigidly defining some finer points of Biblical interpretation and refusing to fellowship them until they reach that level of understanding.

3:12 *Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech*- See on :7. Paul exhorts us to speak 'freely' or boldly in our preaching just as he himself 'spoke freely' in his witness to Agrippa (Acts 26:26 s.w.). Our salvation is through faith in God's absolute grace; but if it is *real* faith, we will preach it on the housetops, we simply can't keep the knowledge of *such* grace, such great salvation, to ourselves. "Having, then, such hope, we use much freedom of speech" in preaching (2 Cor. 3:12 YLT). It is also exemplified by how Peter preached "freely" (Acts 2:29 s.w.). If we are certain of our hope, we should not only be bold in preaching it, but also plain and direct in our interactions with others, including our brethren. For Paul is writing with a view to the criticisms made of him that he was somehow unstable and deceitful in his words and actions. He is saying that the greatness of the hope, the wonder of the glory we behold with unveiled face, makes him not at all like that.

3:13 *And are not like Moses, who put a veil upon his face so the children of Israel could not gaze to see the outcome of that which was fading away*- The LXX in Ex. 34:30-35 clarifies that *when* Moses ceased speaking, he put a veil over his face. Israel therefore didn't perceive that his glory was fading. What was the "outcome" or the *telos*, the end, of the fading glory of the Mosaic law? Rom. 10:4 uses the same words: "Christ is the end of the law... to every one that believes". The Mosaic law lead those who have believed in Christ *to* Christ once they re-read it with Christ in view. But the law itself was given in order to stop Israel at the time from perceiving Him. The Law only made sense from the perspective of one who had believed in Christ. Rather as Bible prophecies, in the sense of predictions of future events, do not of themselves give rise to faith in God and the Bible. Once the step of faith is taken, then they (and many other things such as archaeology, types and shadows) all make perfect sense in confirming the faith that has been expressed. Romans and Gal. 3:19 likewise argue that the Law was given in order to enslave people under sin- rather than to be decoded as a hidden picture of a future redeemer figure.

3:14 *But their minds were hardened*- There is a strong Biblical theme that the judgments upon the Gentile world came upon an apostate Israel. The hardening of the hearts of the Egyptians was experienced by Israel. And the Mosaic law, "holy just and good" as it was, became the mechanism God used to effect this.

For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is made redundant through Christ- The Mosaic law is not therefore an obvious path that leads to Christ. Those who trust in it and practice it actually find it veils their hearts to Christ. See on :13. "Made redundant" would be better translated "is fading away". The obvious connection is with the temple veil

being torn down at the Lord's death. But it was re-erected. The Law itself, as it was read, veiled their hearts from seeing the glory of Christ. There was therefore something in it which was designed to hide Christ rather than reveal Him. God uses similar devices with humanity generally- the problem of suffering, the lack of scientific, Euclidean evidence for God's existence or the truth of the Bible. It is not until Christ's encounter is accepted, and the heart opens to the work of the Spirit, that all starts to make sense. As discussed on 1 Cor. 1, no amount of intellectual, logical, scientific, archaeological study will bring a heart to Christ. Neither will a similar analysis of the Mosaic law. God is not as it were covering His face with hard cards which we have to guess or decipher before we get to see His face; the Bible is not a riddle which a few astute, lucky or fortunately positioned people happen to figure or crack, and then get rewarded with the vision of His glory. Indeed it is this rational, academic approach which according to 1 Cor. 1 *hides* Christ from men, and likewise with a similar approach to the Mosaic Law. The Jews searched these scriptures daily, but did not come to Christ that they might have life.

3:15 *But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart*-The reading of Moses was designed to veil their hearts- see on :14. Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did not appreciate God's glory. He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant. Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; "if *our* preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

3:16 *But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away*- When a [Jewish] man turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil of obedience to the Law is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16 RVmg.). Yet the Law also led men to Christ; and yet it also veils Him from them- depending whether they read it as God intended. But the "it" which turns to the Lord could refer to the hearts of Jewish people. The veil is the Law; the veil is not taken away by intellectual purity of understanding. It is taken away when the heart turns to the Lord Jesus, and this is the realm of the spirit or heart. *Epistrepho*, "turn to", is a form of *strepho* which is the usual word for conversion. But it is often used of what is done to a person by the Lord- we are converted by Him. 'To be converted' suggests the conversion is done to us. The Lord's wish is to heal and convert human hearts (Mt. 13:15); that they might be healed and converted. John the Baptist's mission was to convert hearts to Jesus as Christ, to turn or convert Israel to the Lord (Lk. 1:16,17). When a heart is turned to the Lord by the Lord, then the veil is taken away. But the person must allow the process to happen, and not harden their hearts against it. If they do, then they shall be confirmed in that by being hardened the more- as :14 has just stated. It is an openness to the leading of the Lord in the spirit which is so important. It is response to that leading which brings about conversion, rather than decades of poring over ancient Hebrew and Greek words. Verse 17 will go on to speak explicitly about the work of the Lord Jesus as the work of the Spirit.

Whenever the Jews read Moses, they have a veil over their minds, but when a Jew turns to the Lord, that veil is removed. Paul is perhaps alluding to the Jewish

practice of covering their head and even face with a prayer shawl or *tallit* when reading or hearing God's word (Mk. 12:38). And this perhaps is behind his demand that brethren should not cover their heads in ecclesial meetings in 1 Cor. 11:4. They are like Moses, hiding his face behind a veil. But when the veil is removed by conversion, then the glory of Christ will shine forth from them. The implication surely is that a true Jewish convert to Christ will in turn radiate forth the Lord's glory to others. We *each*, with unveiled face, have like Moses seen the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). When Moses saw the glory, he was immediately given a ministry to preach to Israel, to share that glory with them (Ex. 34:34). And Paul drives home the similarity; we *each* have had the experience of Moses, and so "therefore seeing *we* (too, like Moses) have this ministry", "we each" are to exercise it to Israel.

3:17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*- Where, in the context, is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus? The preceding verses speak of the human heart. Hence F.F. Bruce offers the paraphrase: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free". This freedom or liberty in the heart is what Paul so often exults in, comparing it to the bondage of legalism (Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:29; Gal. 2:4; 5:1,13).

The Jews believed that the *shekinah*, the physical light of glory associated with the tabernacle, was somehow a personal being associated with a Messiah figure. Paul deconstructs this idea in 2 Cor. 3:17,18, where he says that the *shekinah* seen on the face of Moses was a *fading* glory of the Old Covenant, having been made insignificant by the glory of Christ. Thus Paul is attacking the common Jewish idea by saying that the Lord Jesus was *not* the *shekinah* but is *superior* to it. Indeed, he so often makes the same point by stressing that the glorification of the Lord Jesus was at His resurrection and ascension. He *became* "the Lord of glory" by what He suffered, and received this glorification at the resurrection and ascension. If the Lord's glory was somehow pre-existent before that, the wonder and personal significance of the resurrection for Jesus is somehow lost sight of; the idea of suffering and *then* being glorified, as a pattern for us, is quite lost sight of. And yet this was the repeated theme of Paul's inspired writings. Note in passing how when describing the *shekinah* cloud in which the Angel dwelt, Paul comments that the cloud was mere water, for at the Red Sea it played a part in symbolizing Israel's baptism "into Moses in the cloud [water above them] and in the sea [water on both sides of them]" (1 Cor. 10:2). Moses and not the *shekinah* cloud was the type of Christ. Yet Justin Martyr and many other careless Bible readers, coming to Scripture in order to seek justification for their preconceived Trinitarian ideas, have interpreted the cloud as being the Angel which was supposedly Jesus. Hebrews 1 clarifies that God spoke in Old Testament times through Angels and prophets- but *not* through His Son. This He began to do in the ministry of the human Jesus. That path of thought alone should remove all possibility that any Old Testament Angel was in fact the Lord Jesus.

3:18- see on :5 *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves;* Jn. 11:40; Ex. 33:11.

*But we, with an unveiled face and reflecting the glory of the Lord- "*Beholding as in a mirror" (RV). In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Christ-centeredness, regularly thinking of

Him, grabbing a few verses from the Gospel records in the course of the day- this is the essence of the Christian life, of beholding Him with unveiled face. Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

2 Cor. 3 speaks of our beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus in a mirror; and this process slowly transforms us into that same image of Him which we see. The "glory" of God was revealed to Moses at Sinai in Ex. 34 as the declaration of His character. In this sense, the Lord Jesus could speak of having in His mortal life "that glory which was with [the Father]" when the [Jewish] world came into existence at Sinai (Jn. 17:5 Ethiopic and Western Text). It was that same glory which, like Moses, He reflected to men. But according to 2 Cor. 3:18, the very experience of gazing upon the glory of His character will change us into a reflection of it. There is something transforming about the very personality of Jesus. And perhaps this is why we have such a psychological barrier to thinking about Him deeply. We know that it has the power to transform and intrude into our innermost darkness. I have given reason elsewhere for believing that the Gospel records are in fact transcripts of the Gospel message preached by the four evangelists. The 'Gospel according to Matthew' is therefore the Gospel message which he usually preached. And it's significant that at least three of them start and end where many of us would- starting with the promises to the Jewish fathers, and concluding with an appeal for baptism. Actually John's Gospel does this too, if you decode the language he uses. This is surely the explanation of the Lord's otherwise strange remark that wherever the Gospel is preached, the anointing of His feet by Mary would be part of that message. And this is one of the few incidents that all four Gospel writers each mention. What this shows is that the Gospel message is in its quintessence, the account of the man Christ Jesus- with all that involves. It has truly been commented that "the central message of the gospels is not the teaching of Jesus but Jesus himself". This is true insofar as Jesus is the word made flesh.

A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have *really* seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will *inevitably* reflect it to others. Jesus didn't say 'Do good works so that men may see the light'. He said "*let your light shine*" - and *then* men will see your good works and glorify the Father. Paul puts the same principle another way when he says that we're all mirrors (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). We naturally reflect to others what has been reflected into us by the Lord Jesus. A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have *really* seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will *inevitably* reflect it to others. Many of the Lord's parables portray the [preaching of] the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a kind of secret force: treasure hidden in a field, the tiniest seed in the garden, wheat growing among weeds, a pinch of yeast worked into dough, salt on meat... these are all images of something which works from within, changing other people in an ongoing, regular manner.

Are all transformed into his likeness from glory to glory- The "all" is in contrast with Moses, who alone saw the glory of the Lord God. But we are all in his position. No longer was Moses to be perceived as some unreachable hero of faith, as a saint in a stained glass window, to whom we poor sinners can never attain. We in Christ have attained *far beyond* him. This was a rebuke to the Judaizing element in Corinth, as

well as a huge challenge for Jews of all ages. "From glory to glory" suggests an ongoing upward spiral. The glory is not fixed, as it was with the Angel whose face Moses beheld. It increases the more we behold. We are progressively changed into greater reflected glory; in contrast to the fading glory on the face of Moses.

The new man / person created in us at baptism by the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) is essentially a character; or at least, the potential for a character, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus. For Christ is said to be "formed in us". As we gaze into His glory, we are changed bit by bit into His image. His glorious character is a mirror, Paul says; as we look into it, our image comes to reflect His glory (2 Cor. 3:18). He doesn't subsume us beneath Himself. Self-expression, or even self-manifestation, is one of God's features, and so He intends it to be in us who are made after His image. God manifestation doesn't in that sense mean the destruction or ignoring of the individual human person; rather, the very opposite, in that the real character, the new life, will be eternally developed and preserved. This is where Hinduism is so wrong, as wrong as any monolithic, apostate Papal or Protestant Christianity- the person disappears into the great Whole. Joash understood where 'God manifestation' can be taken too far; he told the Baal worshippers to let Baal plead for himself, rather than them pleading for him (Jud. 6:31). This needs thinking through. He was saying that they were assuming that they had to 'play God' for Baal; they had to mindlessly, unthinkingly manifest the god they thought existed. Joash says that if Baal really exists, he himself will act for himself, openly. And this of course is where the One True God excels; He does act for Himself, and doesn't rely *solely* upon manifesting Himself through men in order to achieve anything.

The fact that God is a person means that who *we* are as persons, our being as persons, is of the ultimate importance. It has been observed, in more sophisticated language: "To predicate personality to God is nothing else than to declare personality as the absolute essence". Thus who we are as persons, who we develop to become, is indeed the ultimate issue. And further. Having a personal relationship with a personal God means that we in that process develop as persons after His image; for there is something magnetically changing about being in relationship with Him. We are changed from glory to glory, by simply beholding His face and inevitably reflecting the glory there, which glory abides upon us in the same way as it stuck to the face of Moses even after his encounters with the Angel of Yahweh (2 Cor. 3:18-21). And yet we live in a world which increasingly denies us ultimate privacy or isolation; the loudness of the world is all permeating, all intrusive, to the point that Paul Tillich claims: "We cannot separate ourselves at any time from the world to which we belong". And at times, we would all tend to agree with him. We just can't seem to 'get away from it all' and be with God, no matter where we go on holiday, with whom we go, even if we slip off for an hour to be quite alone in the local park. But ultimately, I believe Tillich was wrong. We *can* separate from the world's endless call and insistent pull, even if we're stuck with an unbelieving or unhelpful partner, sniffy kids, long hours at work, the TV always on, the phone always ringing. Because we as unique and individual persons can *personally* relate to the *personal* God and His Son, thus finding the ultimate privacy and isolation which being human in this world appears to preclude. But further, it's actually in the very razzmatazz of our mundane, frustrated experience in this world that we can come to know God, and in which God reveals Himself to us.

By the Lord the Spirit- The Lord Jesus is "the Lord the spirit"; and "the Spirit" is one of Jesus' titles in Revelation, so closely is He identified with the work of the Spirit. It is He, through His Spirit, who effects this transformation of character, this

progressive reflection of Him in human personality. Romans 8 has argued likewise; we who are counted as "in Christ" by status are transformed in practice into Him by the work of the Spirit. The Lord's activity is intense. The Lord calls men and women to Him, having first prepared their way to Him, guiding the preachers of His word. He brings people to baptism, enters into a husband-wife relationship with them (Eph. 5:24), has children by them (i.e. spirituality develops in our characters, Rom. 7:4), strengthens them afterwards, keeps them in Him, "in everything... co-operates for good with those that love God" (Rom. 8:28 NEB), saves them in an ongoing sense, develops them spiritually, and then finally presents them perfect at His return. He is actively subduing "all things", even in the natural creation, unto Himself (1 Cor. 15:27,28 Gk.). However, the NT focuses on His work amongst us, the ecclesia. Where two or three are gathered, He manifests Himself in the midst of them (Mt. 18:20). He is like a priest constantly on duty, bringing His people to the Father (Mt. 26:29 cp. Lev. 11:9).

Jesus Himself is described here as “the Lord the Spirit”. “The Spirit” is a title of Jesus (Rom. 8:16,26,27; Rev. 2:7,11 etc.). To walk each day in the Spirit is to live in Him, to act as He would act. It is this “Spirit” which will be the basis of our new life. Living life in that Spirit is living the life we will eternally lead. If we don’t like the righteous, clean life in Christ, if we find it limiting and boring, then we are signing ourselves out of the eternal life. There will be no point in our receiving it. The eternal life is there to be lived. It’s there for the taking in the sense that it is there to be lived. If we live it, we have it. And our bodies will be changed at the Lord’s coming so that we can eternally live it.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we do not give up*- The emphasis is on *this* [kind of] ministry. The not giving up is in proportion to the ministry of the Spirit [just spoken of] ever increasing in glory, whereas the Mosaic ministry fades away. What keeps any ministry going, what stops us all from giving up, is the Spirit- which is the dynamic of our service. All talk of burnout, lack of staying power or disillusion is an indicator that the Spirit was never really there in the ministry. The constant obtaining of mercy [in response to our ongoing sins] is what energizes us to not give up. Paul seems to ascribe his own unflagging zeal for preaching to his experience of God's gracious forgiveness of him. And further, he speaks in the third person, suggesting that his fellow preachers had a like motivation: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry (of preaching), *as we have received mercy*, we faint not" (2 Cor. 4:1). The Greek suggests that as we have received mercy, so we have received the ministry- to share that mercy to others. Our witness to the Gospel and our ministry of caring for others are motivated by our own awareness of having received grace personally. Any other motivation simply isn’t enough to inspire us to keep on keeping on. See on :14. "We do not give up" is repeated in :16, where it is cited as an outworking of living under grace and is part of our inward man being progressively renewed daily. Giving up, fading away, is a common experience of many religious people including Christians. The parable of the sower speaks of it. It is only the involvement with the Spirit which will stop this happening in real terms- for even if someone maintains their religious commitment to attending meetings, the question is whether we are spiritually alive within. And that is the realm of the Spirit.

4:2 *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor*

handling the word of God deceitfully- What had Paul personally renounced? Surely, the things of Judaism. He speaks about them with very hard language, leading up to his description of them as the great satan in :4. "The hidden things" connect with Moses' face being hidden behind a veil; and Paul now twists the idea of a covered face towards the concept of shame. He presents the revered Moses as it were covered in shame. He considered that the Jewish rabbis handled God's word deceitfully (an allusion to Jer. 8:8?). "Craftiness" is the same word used about the Jewish opposition to the Lord's ministry (Lk. 20:23); it was the characteristic of the Jewish false teachers in 2 Cor. 11:3.

But by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God- By showing that we are real men and women, who are desperate sinners thankful for the real and true grace we have so wonderfully come across, we will persuade men. The more real, the more credible. Paul described the genius of his preaching thus: “By the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience” (2 Cor. 4:2). It is our very transparency which strikes a chord in the heart of those who hear us. Paul didn't need letters to commend himself; he says that in their spirit, in the heart, they know that he is sincere. And he uses the same approach here. There is an intuitive sense that a person is manifesting God's truth. This again is the realm of the Spirit. "In the sight of God" or as the phrase is often translated "before God" is a common phrase of Paul's. He was ever aware that life is lived, even in our deepest hearts, in His eyes and presence.

4:3 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those that perish*- The limitation of salvation to those who accept Christ couldn't be more clearly stated. Belief in *God* is not enough. The Jews strongly believed in "one God" but they would still perish without Christ. Liberal Christians seem to think that belief in God is somehow a saving grace; but salvation is in His Son. It was the face of Moses which was veiled, and Paul hereby identifies himself and all Christian preachers with Moses. This was radical stuff for Judaists, who considered Moses the acme of spiritual attainment and effectively unreachable and devoid of equal amongst subsequent generations. The implication is also that "our Gospel" was the message of the glory of Christ, it was and is totally Christ centred. The veil was belief in the Law of Moses for salvation; this in fact led to their 'perishing' in that it prevented them seeing the glory of the Lord Jesus.

4:4- see on Eph. 1:20.

In whom- The problem was internal; the minds of the unbelieving were blinded. 3:14 has said that their minds were hardened or blinded because the veil of Judaism lay upon their minds. "The god of this world" is therefore sure to be related to Jewish, legal influences.

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving- The Eastern (Aramaic) text reads: “To those in this world whose minds have been blinded by God, because they did not believe”. It is darkness which blinds men’s eyes (1 Jn. 2:11), i.e. not walking according to the light of God’s word. There is only *one* God – not two. And it’s also noteworthy that Is. 6:10 speaks of *God* as having the power to blind Israel. The New Testament repeats this. Rom. 11:8 says that *God* (and not Satan) blinded Israel to the Gospel; 2 Cor. 3:14 says that their minds were blinded or “hardened” (RV) as Pharaoh’s was. Whoever “the god of this world” is or was, God worked through it and is therefore greater than it. Henry Kelly comments: “Given this track record, can we see the God of this Aeon as *our* God, as Yahweh? He is, after all, in charge of everything”. It is God and not any independent Satan figure who sends

people an *energeia* of error to believe falsehood (2 Thess. 2:12) – the ultimate 'energy' in the process is from God.

For something to be called "the god of this world" does not necessarily mean that it is in reality "the god of this world"; it could mean 'the thing or power that this world counts to be God'. Thus Acts 19:27 speaks of the goddess Diana, a lifeless idol, "whom all the world worships". This doesn't mean that the piece of wood or stone called Diana was in reality the goddess of this world. I mentioned in section 1-1-2 that Paul is quoting "the god of this world" from contemporary Jewish writings rather than actually believing such a 'god' existed. It's also possible that "the god of this world" who blinds people is an allusion to material in the documents comprising what are now known as the Gnostic Gospels. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* claims to record God's rebuke of Satan: ""You are mistaken, Samael", which means, "god of the blind"". Paul in this case would be alluding to popular belief about Satan, and reapplying this language to the Jewish opposition to the Gospel, and to the human "blindness" which stops them accepting Christ. In Eph. 4:18 Paul specifically defined what he meant by "darkness": "Having the understanding darkened... through the ignorance that is *within* them... The blindness of their heart". That opposition, rather than any mythical 'Samael', was the real adversary / Satan.

Even if it is insisted that Satan exists as a personal being, the question has to be faced: Who created Satan? Is his power under God's control, or not? Time and again the 'Satan' and 'demon' passages of the Bible indicate that however we are to understand these terms, God is more powerful, God is in control. The book of Job shows how the Satan there had all power given to him *by God*. The power of the Lord Jesus over 'demons' makes the same point. And in that context, note how Ex. 4:11 assures us that God is the one who makes people deaf, but Lk. 11:14 speaks of how such muteness is apparently caused by demons. Clearly, God is in control. This world, with all the evil and negative experience in it, has not been left under the control of some out–of–control evil being. With this in mind, it should be apparent that the 'god of this world' can't mean that the world is under the *ultimate* control of Satan rather than God. Rather, "the god of this world" [*aion*] "can also be read as merely a personification of all the forces of this *aion* that would thwart the success of the Christian message".

The way that the idea of 'Satan' is used to describe both individual sin and societies governed by the principle of sin is very much in line with the way that first century society was very much a communalistic rather than an individualistic society. The society was the person. Further, social scientists and psychologists have time and again confirmed the Biblical teaching that the fundamental motivation of human beings is the ego, self-interest – what the Bible calls 'Satan'. This is what drives people at the individual level, and thus drives societies. It's appropriate, therefore, for 'Satan', the personification of human sin and self-interest, to also be a term applied to human governments and societies as a whole. Truly in this sense (the Biblical) Satan could be understood as "the god of this world".

A Jewish Interpretation

If Scripture interprets Scripture, "the god of this world (*aion*)" in 2 Corinthians 4:4 must be similar to "the prince of this world (*kosmos*)" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Both the Jewish age [*aion*] and *kosmos* ended in A.D. 70. In the context, Paul has been talking in 2 Cor. 3 about how the glory shining from Moses' face blinded the Israelites so that they could not see the real spirit of the law which pointed forward to Christ. Similarly, he argues in chapter 4, the Jews in the first century could not see "the light of the glorious (cp. the glory on Moses' face) gospel of Christ" because they

were still blinded by “the god of this world” – the ruler of the Jewish age. The “prince” or “God” of the “world” (age) was the Jewish system, manifested this time in Moses and his law. Notice how the Jews are described as having made their boast of the law…made their boast of God (Rom. 2:17,23). To them, the Law of Moses had become the god of their world. Although the link is not made explicit, there seems no reason to doubt that “the prince of this world” and “Satan” are connected. It is evident from Acts (9:23–25,29–30; 13:50,51; 14:5,19; 17:5,13; 18:12; 20:3) that the Jews were the major ‘Satan’ or adversary to the early Christians, especially to Paul. Of course it has to be remembered that there is a difference between Moses’ personal character and the Law he administered; this contrast is constantly made in Hebrews. Similarly, the Law was “Holy, just and good”, but resulted in sin due to man’s weakness – it was “weak through the flesh”, explaining why the idea of Satan/sin is connected with the Law. Because of this it was in practice a “ministry of condemnation”, and therefore a significant ‘adversary’ (Satan) to man; for in reality, “the motions of sins...were by the Law” (Rom. 7:5).

That the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn- "Dawn" is better "shine out". The glory of Christ and therefore of God cannot shine through the veil of legalism. That Christ "is the image of God" is mentioned to make the point that being blinded to Him means being blinded to God. It is not possible to have a relationship with the Father without the Son. The Gospel is the glory of Christ. The blessings now mediated by the exalted Lord mean that *whatever* the barriers, those who appreciate those blessings and the *height*, the pure, wondrous *height* of His exaltation and what this thereby enables for us, will *naturally* preach it. The Gospel is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4 RSV). The glory of the “similitude of the Lord” that Moses saw and reflected (Num. 12:4) is likened to “the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). Like Moses, Jewish people have the vision of that glory, but they have it veiled; they potentially have it, but it is hidden, because their minds are veiled. This could possibly suggest that Paul saw more potential in the Jewish mind for Christ than other races; thus he speaks in Rom. 11 of how the natural branch which has been cut off [Israel] will be more effectively grafted back into the olive tree than the wild Gentile branches. This of course has similarities with the Lord’s teaching about Himself as the vine, whose unfruitful branches had been cut off (Jn. 15:2). Israel “much more” than the Gentiles can be grafted back in, whereas Gentile converts do this “against nature” (Rom. 11:24). In the context of Israel’s final repentance, God speaks of how every one of the Jewish people has been potentially created for His glory, because they carry His Name (Is. 43:7). Although Israel have been “quenched as a wick” for their sins (Is. 43:17 RVmg.), we are to realize that the wick is still smouldering, and are to follow the Lord’s example of never totally quenching it but instead seek to fan the wick of Israel back into life (Is. 42:3).

4:5 *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake*- The Gospel preached was of the glory of the Lord Jesus. His Lordship is predicated upon His glory. If we grasp that this is to be the content of our message, then we shall be consumed with preaching Him and not in any form self-advertising, nor using God's truth as a channel towards self-glorification. Paul answers the accusation that he was 'lording it' over the Corinthians by saying that he preached Christ Jesus as Lord- and therefore he was a servant of Jesus, if Jesus really is Lord. But the service of Jesus was manifested through serving His people, the Corinthians.

4:6- see on Jn. 13:32.

Seeing it is God that said- It is emphasized that God created through His word of command; He said, and it was done (Ps. 33:6,9; 148:5; Is. 40:26; Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5). God is outside the constraints of time, and outside the possibility of His word not being fulfilled. Therefore if He says something, it is as it is done, even if in human time His command is not immediately fulfilled. Thus He calls things which are not as though they are (Rom. 4:17). It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus and those in Him are spoken of as if we existed at the beginning; although we didn't physically. And so God spoke the words He did on six literal, consecutive days, and the orders ('fiats' is the word Alan Hayward used) were therefore, in this sense as good as done. But the actual time taken to carry them out by the Angels may have been very long. The Genesis record can then be understood as stating these commands, and then recording their fulfilment- although the fulfilment wasn't necessarily on that same day. It would seem from later Scripture that the orders and intentions outlined by God on the six literal days are still being fulfilled. Take the command for there to be light (Gen. 1:3.4). This is interpreted in 2 Cor. 4:6 as meaning that God shines in men's hearts in order to give them the knowledge of the light of Christ. The command was initially fulfilled by the Angels enabling the sun to shine through the thick darkness that shrouded the earth; but the deeper intention was to shine the spiritual light into the heart of earth-dwellers. And this is still being fulfilled. Likewise the resting of God on the seventh day was in fact a prophecy concerning how He and all His people will enter into the "rest" of the Kingdom. The Lord realized this when He said that even on Sabbath, God was still working (Jn. 5:17). The creation work had not really been completed in practice, although in prospect it had been. In this very context the apostle comments that although we must still enter into that rest, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3). See on Col. 1:15.

Light shall shine out of darkness- The new creation is effected with the same power, Spirit and word as the natural creation.

He shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge- The initiative in granting this 'light of knowledge' is with the Lord. It is not that the Bible is a riddle to be solved, which some manage to crack, and thereby through the light of knowledge come to know the Father and Son. By contrast, we are being told here that the Lord took the initiative by direct action within human hearts. But as happened at Corinth, some choose to restrict God's intended pathway, they grieve the Holy Spirit, and "limit the Holy One of Israel" as did Israel of old.

Paul's description of how the light of the glory of God in Christ shines in the heart of the new convert was not without reference back to his own Damascus road conversion (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26;13). Because the light was shone to us, we reflect it to others. “In the beginning", perhaps a huge period of time ago, God created the heavens and earth. But the present creation can be seen as being constituted some time later, after the previous creations. When during the six days of creation He said "Let there be light" this may not have necessitated the actual manufacture of the sun; this was presumably done "in the beginning". But the sun was commanded to shine out of the darkness (2 Cor. 4:6), and therefore from the viewpoint of someone standing on the earth, it was as if the sun had been created.

Of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ- We read in Is. 52:14 that the Lord's face was more marred, more brutally transmogrified, than that of any man. And yet reflecting upon 2 Cor. 4:4,6, we find that His face was the face of God; His glory was

and is the Father's glory: "The glory of Christ, who is the image of God… the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Who is the one who redeems His people? Isaiah calls him "the arm of the Lord": "To whom has *the arm of the Lord* been revealed?" (Is. 53:1; compare Is. 52:10). Then he continues: "*He* grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground" (v. 2). So, the *arm of the LORD* is a person- a divine person! He is God's "right arm," His "right-hand Man"! He is also human: He grows up out of the earth like a root out of dry ground.

4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthly vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves*- The reference is clearly to Gideon and his men breaking their earthly vessels, and God giving them a great victory (Jud. 7:19). Paul and Timothy were vessels used by God (Acts 9:15; 2 Tim. 2:21); but so are we all (2 Cor. 4:7). All true human achievement for God must be in allowing His Spirit to work, and not by human power "from ourselves". This is the spirit of Gideon (Jud. 7:2). However the idea may be that "earthly vessels" are the clay vessels before they have been fired in the kiln. The fire of judgment day will as it were solidify us as we have developed in this life. Now we are soft and responsive to the potter's hand; change is possible.

Several commentators insist that 'treasure in earth vessels' alludes to the Roman triumph, and this would continue the allusion to it made explicit in 2 Cor. 2. And in this chapter, :10-12 seem to allude to it as well. It was the conquered captives who had to carry their treasures, now the loot of the conquerors. And so the great paradox kicks in, as will be developed in the rest of the chapter. The image of defeat merges with that of victory, for we the losers are in fact thereby the conquerors. It is indeed 'the magnificent defeat'. The allusions to the Roman triumph are very similar to Josephus' description of the triumph in Rome to celebrate the victory over the Jews in AD70. Perhaps Paul is being inspired to allude to it, so that the events of AD70 would not be seen as such a terrible, permanent blow to the faithful. They were to perceive in the defeat a great victory.

4:8 *We are afflicted in every way, yet not crushed; perplexed, yet not in despair*- Another allusion to the situation at Gideon's time (see on :7). "Afflicted" is from a Greek word meaning to make narrow; "crushed" is from a different Greek word which has a similar meaning. We are made narrow, hemmed in- but in another sense we are not. We are gloriously free. Likewise in a sense Paul was in despair (s.w. 2 Cor. 1:8); but not in another. He uses the same word for "perplexed" in writing of his despair at the Galatians' loss of faith and moral declension (Gal. 4:20). We see here the two poles in his attitude to the Corinthians- despairing at them, and yet from a spiritual perspective, very positive about them.

All the language of :8,9 is taken from the Isthman games, which were held near Corinth and were second only to the Olympic games. "Afflicted in every way" is AV "troubled on every side" and alludes to being 'pressed down' by an opposing wrestler. Even beaten and pinned to the ground- we are the victors and will not be crushed, which was the logical next move for the wrestler who had pressed down his opponent and had him pressed in from every side. This is the same paradox as introduced in 2 Cor. 2, that we are both captives led in the Lord's triumph towards death, and yet the image of defeat merges into that of victory, for in another sense we are also more than conquerors in that victory triumph.

Likewise "perplexed" is also a word used in classical Greek of the wrestler who is perplexed or confused by his opponent and is hemmed in to apparently certain defeat.

However, the allusions are also to military terms appropriate to defeat, and this they continue the allusion to the Roman triumph and the captives being led in it. Afflicted, perplexed, pursued in battle and overtaken, struck down but not destroyed so as to be taken as prisoners of war and displayed in the triumph.

4:9 *Pursued, yet not forsaken*- The allusion may be to the runner whose opponent suddenly comes up behind him and overtakes him.

Struck down, yet not destroyed- As at the time of writing 1 Corinthians, Paul looked beyond his immediate traumas to the welfare of the weak Corinthians, and his concern for the impoverished Jewish believers in Jerusalem. The feature of all suffering is that we become self centred. Yet the Lord carrying His cross and looking outwards to the future suffering of the onlooking women is our great example. Paul was indeed forsaken by men (2 Tim. 4:10,16). But he was not forsaken by the Lord's presence through His Spirit.

Struck or 'thrown' down alludes to gladiatorship. When a gladiator was thrown down to the floor by another, then he was to be slain. But we are thrown down, we lose, and yet we are not finally killed. This continues the big theme of 2 Corinthians, beginning with the allusion to the Roman triumph in 2 Cor. 2, that images of death and defeat becomes images of life and victory. As the captives led in the triumph of the Lord Jesus are also presented as the victorious "more than conquerors".

"Destroyed" translates the Greek term Paul repeatedly uses in Corinthians for the destruction of the condemned at the last day; he has just used it in this connection in :3 (1 Cor. 1:18,19; 8:11; 10:9,10; 15:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3). It surely has to be that the 'destruction' in view is final condemnation. No matter how he was thrown or "struck" down by men, his comfort was that he was not and would not be condemned by the Lord. *His* acceptance means everything, and makes any human persecution or rejection of no account. And yet the rejection of men is a major issue with men; being 'cast down' from status or a position of acceptance becomes an unbearable experience for many. Paul went through all this, but the fact he was in relationship with the Lord and would not be condemned *by Him* was the ultimate comfort. And it should be for us too. Paul states this clearly in 1 Cor. 4:4- that the Lord's judgment and not human judgment [including that of our brethren] is all important.

4:10 *Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body*- All Paul's sufferings listed in :8 and :9 he understood as a fellowshipping of the Lord's. Whilst we cannot attach meaning to event at the time, all our sufferings are part of His. This explains the breadth and depth of His sufferings; through them, He in essence can connect with all our sufferings. And those sufferings are given to us, as some form of manifestation of His sufferings. And just as surely, the resurrection life of Jesus will be manifested in our body, both in this life (:11) and in the resurrection body at the last day.

Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others: “So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (2 Cor 4:12). The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

Paul speaks here as if he full well understood the ongoing nature of the Lord’s crucifixion, and saw it as the pattern of his daily living.

The almost terrifying thing is that *we,* for the sake of our identity with Christ, are also "delivered up to death" (2 Cor. 4:11). We are asked to share, in principle, the height of devotion that He reached in that moment. Analysing 2 Cor. 4:10,11 in more detail, we find a number of parallels:

v. 10	v. 11
Always	For we which live are alway
bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus	delivered unto death for Jesus' sake
that the life also of Jesus	that the life also of Jesus
might be manifest in our body	might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

The second parallel is significant. To be delivered unto death for Jesus' sake is to bear about in an ongoing sense His crucifixion. This means that His being "delivered over" was seen by Paul as a cameo of His whole sufferings on the cross. See on Mt. 27:26.

4:11 *For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh*- See on :10. If the life of Jesus is living in us ["we who live"], then we will constantly be experiencing both the crucifixion suffering and resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. The experience of new life within us now is the basis upon which our entire bodies will likewise be transformed (Rom. 8:11). This continues the allusions to the Roman triumph discussed on :7. "Always" here and in :10 are to be connected with the same theme in 2 Cor. 2:14 "always leads us in triumph in Christ". The passion and intensity of the triumph is to be constantly felt by us.

4:12 *So then death works in us*- The tragedy of death and suffering for the unbeliever is that it achieves nothing on a personal level, it is the end. Whereas for the believer, the Lord's sufferings and death are manifested in us, but they "work", they achieve or literally 'energize', life. Not only for us personally but for others. This is the ultimate death- a death which brings life for others as well as for ourselves. And only by connection with the Lord Jesus can such a meaning be attached to human death. This to my mind is one of the most powerful blessings of Christianity, of connection to Christ in baptism and a life lived in the power and Spirit of His death and resurrection. Death works... but our "light affliction" *works* for us the more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (:17). Death itself, the ultimate 'game over' and defeat for every man, becomes but a light affliction which works for us. For to attain life we must pass through death. But we pass through that process now- we die and live with the Lord in countless moments of temporal loss in this life. And in Paul's case, that 'death' in "us", him and Timothy, was to produce "life in *you".* His sufferings led to life for them, exactly after the pattern of the Lord's sufferings.

But life in you- We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7). Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others. The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

4:13 *But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe and on this basis we also speak*- The GNB gets the point: "The scripture says, "I spoke because I believed." In the same spirit of faith we also speak because we believe". Paul is saying that because he takes these things seriously, he really believes this is all gloriously true, he therefore speaks it out. "I believed, and *therefore* have I spoken" (Ps. 116:10) is quoted in 2 Cor. 4:13 concerning the attitude of the preacher; *because* we have believed, *therefore* we preach, after Paul's pattern. We carry in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, and live His resurrection life even now in our mortal flesh- and "We having the same

spirit of faith [as He had], according to that which is written, I believed and therefore did I speak. We *also* believe, and therefore *also* we speak" (2 Cor. 4:11-13). Here Paul quotes the Messianic Ps. 116:10 about *our* witness, which is a living out of the spirit which Jesus had in His death and present life and being in Heaven. And we should adopt a similar positive approach.

We are all terminally ill, if only we would know it. Paul quotes from the experience of Hezekiah at this time and says that this should be the keynote of our witness (Ps. 116:10). He was "delivered from death" and therefore promised to walk before the Lord "in the lands of the living", believing in salvation and therefore speaking to those lands of it (RV). We all face the day when we shall be as water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up; when the delicate, beautiful chandelier of human life will come crashing to the ground, when the rope holding the bucket snaps, and it falls into the well. In all these Biblical images of death, we face the tragic irreversibility of it all. Our bodies are already riddled with the cancer of inevitable decay. *Today*, while it is still today, we must focus ourselves upon the vital and essential realities of our faith, and away from all the peripheral issues upon which our flesh would far rather dwell.

4:14 *Knowing that He that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you*- This is in the context of having observed that the process of sharing the Lord's death "works ['energizes'] life in you" (:12). Again Paul sees the final salvation of the Corinthians as partly related to his own continued connection with them. This is the exact opposite of those who cut themselves loose from any believers who fall beneath their own self-chosen standards of doctrine or practice. It was to be God, the One who raised Jesus, who would "present us with you". He will make us acceptable to Himself and His Son at the last day. Note how in 2 Cor. 11:2 Paul writes of how he himself was seeking to "present" (s.w.) the Corinthians "as a chaste virgin to Christ". But here he writes that this process of preparation and 'presenting' is God's. Clearly enough, he is teaching that God will work powerfully through our efforts to present others acceptable at the last day. If we set our hearts and lives upon such work, God shall work in and through us, somehow enabling our work.

4:15 *For all things are for your sakes, that the grace may be multiplied through many*- God's saving grace meant that "many" preachers like Paul were sharing this grace to others; and the result would be thanksgiving which glorified God. The terms used in this verse are going to be later used by Paul about the gift or grace of giving to his Jerusalem Poor Fund. He believed that this giving would result in much thanks, to God's glory (2 Cor. 8:7; 9:8,12). The grace given each of us in salvation ought to be reflected in practical giving to the poor, so that our praise for God's giving to us translates into the praise of the recipients towards God. As Paul felt he could orchestrate even the salvation of the Corinthians (see on :12), so he felt he could arrange the glory of God through his elaborate Jerusalem Poor Fund project. But there is no evidence he gathered very much support for it, nor that it was accepted by the Jerusalem poor, nor that it ever elicited much thanks to God. Likewise it cannot be that Paul alone could be the saviour of those who "had not the knowledge of God" and who had turned away from God's glory in Christ.

Causing thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God- AV "to redound", Gk. 'to surge back'. God's grace shown to us surges back like the tide in good works to others; see on 4:1. The same word is used about the grace / giving to the Jerusalem

poor abounding to God's glory through all the thanksgiving which Paul imagined the project would elicit (2 Cor. 9:12 s.w.).

4:16 *Therefore we do not give up*- As noted on :1 where the same word is used, the power to keep on keeping on comes from the Spirit, and from the firm knowledge that by His grace we shall surely live eternally. The presence of the Spirit in our hearts and lives now is the guarantee that we shall live eternally, and our mortal flesh shall in due course be transformed to Spirit nature. This is why we do not give up, it is why the true Christian faith is no mere passing religion, passion or enthusiasm which comes and goes as we go onwards in life.

But though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day- The same word for "inward man" is found in Eph. 3:16: "Be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man". We are renewed by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5), renewed in the spirit of our mind (Rom. 12:2), we "have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col. 3:10). Rom. 6:4 teaches that after baptism, we live in an ongoing "newness of life". This is because of the gift of the Spirit, which strengthens and renews the inner man constantly. Just as we are "always" experiencing the Lord's sufferings (:11), so "day by day" we are renewed. A related word is used when Paul teaches that the new creation which begins at baptism makes all things new (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a process on renewal and strengthening ongoing in the hearts or "inward man" of the believer- if we will believe it and permit it. Paul has spoken of this at the end of chapter 3; we are being progressively changed "from glory to glory", closer and ever more exactly into the mental image of the Lord Jesus. The ongoing nature of the transformation is important to Paul, because it contrasts with the fading glory of the Mosaic system.

4:17 *For our slight momentary affliction accomplishes for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison*- The traumas of :8 and :9 are "slight"; the word is only elsewhere used in Mt. 11:30 "My burden is light". This affliction accomplishes or works for us the eternal weight of glory; but death works in us (:12). Even death itself is an affliction for a moment, viewed in the perspective of eternity. But the whole argument only makes sense if we are confident that eternity is indeed ahead of us. The word for "affliction" is used of the affliction / tribulation which was to hit the Jewish world in the lead up to AD70 (Mk. 13:19,24 etc.). This too was to be seen as a light, momentary affliction. But the immediate weight of the affliction is not shrugged off by Paul. He writes of "much affliction" (1 Thess. 1:6), through which we enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22), "all your tribulations [s.w.] you endure" (2 Thess. 1:4), "out of much tribulation we wrote..." (2 Cor. 2:4), "all our tribulation... insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:4,8), "great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14), "I know your tribulation" (Rev. 2:9). So the lightness is not in absolute terms, for we are asked to carry the cross of Christ; but in relative terms it is- compared to the eternal weight of glory ahead. The *weight* of that glory is contrasted with the *lightness* of the present affliction. However painful, it is for a 'moment' *relative to* the "eternal" glory. The context presents the eternal glory as that of the Lord Jesus. But we are being changed into His glory, from glory to glory, as the Spirit works within our minds now to effect that change. The RV reflects the Greek in offering: "More and more exceedingly an eternal weight". The ongoing nature is brought out well. The 'accomplishment' therefore refers not only to the change to glory at the resurrection of the body; but to a process of glorification now ongoing, and which will continue eternally. The transformation and renewal is something we shall eternally experience; eternity in that sense will never be boring. Our afflictions are right now accomplishing the eternal

weight of glory. Paul will soon use the same word in writing of how God, through the guarantee of the Spirit's work in us, is 'accomplishing' our salvation in us (2 Cor. 5:5). Our current afflictions are nothing to be compared with the accomplishment of glory even now within us- let alone to the eternal glory of bodily immortality at the last day.

Every moment of our lives is being intensely used by God to prepare us for the eternity ahead. It is incredible that our probations here are so short- just forty years or so after our baptisms. It would seem more appropriate if we suffered for say one million years in order to prepare us for the infinite time we will one day enjoy, in which one million years will be as a moment. The point is, a tremendous amount of spiritual development and preparation is packed in to a very small space of time. And from this a crucial conclusion follows: we must allow God to use every moment of our present lives as intensively as possible, to the end we might be prepared for His eternal Kingdom.

4:18 *Whilst meantime we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*- 'Things not seen' is a phrase elsewhere used for Jewish inability or blindness to the things of the Lord Jesus (Lk. 8:10; Jn. 9:39; Rom. 11:8,10). The idea of looking at things which are not visible is surely contradictory; until we read this in context of the preceding imagery of Israel not 'seeing' the glory of Christ because of the veil placed upon them. We look at those things, with unveiled face- things which are not seen *by many*, especially Jewish people.

Our Father sees in secret (Mt. 6:18), and here we are bidden look on things as He does. The world see but do not perceive / see (Mk. 4:12). We are to see a world they do not see. And we have that ability exactly because we are confident of our personal eternity ahead. Without that certainty, we have no longer term perspective, we will be unable to perceive that all current things are temporal. The same word is used in observing that the pleasure of sin are "for a season", temporal (Heb. 11:25). It is the perspective of eternity which strengthens us against seeking momentary pleasure.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens*- The context continues from the end of chapter 4, where we have been urged to focus on the things which are eternal rather than those which are immediately visible. Paul likens our body to a tent- and as a tentmaker it is understandable that he should use such a metaphor. If that tent or tabernacle is taken down, in death, we know that we have a solid, permanent building prepared for us by God, reserved in Heaven. It is this which we will be clothed with at the Lord's return. "Not made with hands" suggests that our future being has been prepared by God; "not made with hands" recalls the stone of Daniel 2 cut out without human hands, i.e. prepared by God. Verse 5 will explain that we have a future reward which is being worked out for us by the Spirit's action in our lives right now. Our focus should be upon who we will eternally be, not on who we are now. Who we shall eternally be is being prepared right now through the Spirit's action in our lives now.

5:2 *For indeed in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven*- The groaning is that of Rom. 8:23: "We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of

the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as children and the redemption of our bodies". The groaning is therefore for "the redemption of our bodies" at the Lord's return; the building being prepared in Heaven (:1) refers to the same thing. It is shoddy Bible study to use this passage as proof that we shall receive our reward in Heaven at the point of death. The reference in Rom. 8:23 to "the firstfruits of the Spirit" is matched here in :5 where we are encouraged that we have received "the Spirit as a guarantee". The Roman 8 passage goes further in explaining that our groans for the final salvation merge with the groans of the Lord Jesus in His intercession for us right now. Being clothed with, or "upon" (AV), suggests that human personality will not be totally destroyed- but clothed upon with immortality. The Bible offers personal salvation- that you and I as persons shall be eternally saved, rather than fading into some nirvana of nothingness. And in this is the eternal significance of our character development now- for who we essentially are is who we shall eternally be.

5:3 *Inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked*- Nakedness is associated with rejection at the Lord's return (Rev. 16:15). Again the focus is upon His return as the time when this change shall be effected, and not at the point of our death.

5:4 *For indeed we that are in this tent do groan, being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life*- "Burdened" is the same Greek word Paul has used in 1:8 to describe the burden / suffering he experienced for the sake of the Gospel. It made him "groan" the more for mortality to be swallowed by life- the resurrection and change of our mortal body to an immortal one at the second coming. The language is that which Paul has earlier used in 1 Cor. 15. "Not that we would be unclothed" connects with the reference to nakedness in :3. The sense is therefore 'Not that we want to be made naked before the judgment seat of Christ and left in that shameful state of condemnation, but to be made naked and then clothed upon with immortal bodies'. I don't think that being "unclothed" means that Paul didn't want to die- for in Phil. 1:23 Paul says he had a strong desire to die and only wanted to remain alive for the sake of what he could do in service to others. So his desire here in 2 Cor. 5:4 *not* to be "unclothed" I suggest refers to the nakedness of condemnation, the metaphor introduced in the preceding verse :3.

The struggle of prayer (see on Col. 2:1) is reflected in a word associated with it- ‘groaning’. The Lord Himself prayed with strong groanings and tears, and He even now makes intercession for our prayers with groanings which are inexpressible within the limitations of words. 2 Cor. 5:4 says that we groan, being burdened, for the day when “mortality might be swallowed up of life”. This is the language of a burdened Israel in Egypt, groaning for deliverance. Our ‘groaning’ in this mortal flesh (2 Cor. 5:2) is therefore not to be read as a justification for groaning and complaining about our humanity; but rather intense prayer for the second coming.

5:5 *Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*- God is now preparing or 'working' out our future eternal nature of being, which we shall receive in the form of an immortalized existence when the Lord returns. But we have the Spirit now in our hearts as a guarantee and foretaste of that great salvation. Paul has just used the same word for 'prepared us' in 4:17- our light affliction is working out for us an eternal weight of glory. But that 'working out' is God's working, by the Spirit. The only other usages of the word "guarantee" are also in the context of the Spirit being a guarantee *in our hearts* (1:22

"the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts"), granted after we believe and are baptized (Eph. 1:13,14).

That God is working in our lives through His Spirit, and that He has granted us the gifts of forgiveness and prospective salvation by its working, should not engender any spirit of relaxation. If we truly believe this, it will motivate us to greater personal effort: "God... hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident... wherefore we labour that... we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat... knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:5-11 AV)- i.e. 'Despite having had God's gift of salvation in prospect, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it. Think of the day of judgment, the fear that you will have then because of God's holiness and your sinfulness. Although this is not our only motivation, indeed it is somewhat human ("we persuade men"), it is still powerfully true'.

But the 'preparation' or 'working' of God can also be understood in this context as the fact He has first made us mortal, and allowed us to groan for immortality. For we who understand not only Bible teaching about death, but also the insistent Biblical emphasis upon it, we don't live life in an eternal now. We live now for tomorrow, joyful in our awareness of the eternal consequence of our actions and personalities beyond the grave, knowing that all our beliefs, actions, faith, character developments- all come to their ultimate term before the judgment seat of Christ. In speaking of our mortality and our longing for immortality, Paul comments that "He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God" (2 Cor. 5:5 AV). The reference to how God "wrought us" [NEV "prepared us"] would appear to comment upon the mortality of our bodies; human mortality [when correctly understood] makes us long for the coming of the Lord to clothe us with our new nature which is to be brought to us from Heaven (2 Cor. 5:2). God "wrought us" as He did in order to enable us to have this longing. According to the Bible, the spirit of man is God's. He gave us that life force (Is. 42:5), and at death "the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). If we seriously believe this, then we will see death as an opportunity to give back to God what He gave us, namely our very life force. If in our lives we followed this principle, realizing nothing we 'have' is really ours but His, and therefore we were open handed with our possessions and knowledge of Him, freely giving it out as it were to Him, then giving back our life force to Him will be but a natural progression from this way of living. And thus we will see immortality not as something we personally crave for our own benefit, but rather a further opportunity to reflect back to Him, to His glory. Thus understanding Bible truth about death affects how we face death and eternity, and therefore radically influences our lives now.

5:6 *Being therefore always of good courage*- The "therefore" refers to the fact we have been given the Spirit in our hearts (1:22) as a guarantee that we shall indeed be finally saved. Those like the Corinthians who deny the Spirit are left without this "good courage". It is that experience of the Spirit which convicts us that we are not "at home" in secular life, and long to be united with the Lord Jesus more fully (:8). The Greek word for "good courage" is used by Paul only here in 2 Corinthians (5:8; 7:16; 10:1,2). This personal confidence that we shall be saved inspires a generally hopeful and confident approach in dealing with others, not least politically fraught and tense situations as Paul faced with the Corinthians.

And knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord- "At home" translates the word which is found later in :8 and :9. The AV makes a mess here by not consistently translating the word. We are "at home in the body" but we would rather be "at home" with the Lord (:8). "At home" means just that- in

your family. "Absent" carries the idea of having emigrated abroad, of having quit something. This definition is crucial to understand this passage from :7-9. I suggest that Paul is not merely describing the general situation of believers in mortality- as if to say that if we are still in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus is a major New Testament theme; we are not "absent" from Him. But we should not be in a position where we have emigrated from Him, gone out from Him, quit Him- and these are the ideas present in *ek-demeo*. Without question, the *ek* prefix means 'out of', and it carries that meaning around 900 times in the New Testament. I suggest rather that Paul is teaching that if we are at home in the body, if secular life is our natural and preferred habitat, where we feel most at home; then we have emigrated, gone away, from the Lord Jesus.

5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight*- This connects back to 4:18: "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen". Our focus is not to be upon who we are now, what we see before our eyes; but upon who we shall eternally be, which we see by the eye of faith. In the language of :6 and :8, we are not to feel homely, "at home", in the present body nor the secular life with which it is associated. We are to have the Lord Jesus "at home" with us, and to be absent from the things of fleshly life.

5:8- see on Lk. 12:37.

Yes, we are of good courage; and we would rather be absent from the body and at home with the Lord- The reference of the "rather" is to being "at home in the body" (:6; verse 7 is an aside). Paul is confident of leaving the body and being at home with the Lord. As explained on :6, he has in view how we should right now in this life not feel at home in earthly life, and should not go away ["be absent"] from the Lord but rather be at home with Him in His family now. But this shall come to ultimate term when He returns, when like Lot we leave Sodom, we leave the things of this bodily life. He is confident, by grace, of that happening at the Lord's return. This interpretation is confirmed as we read on in :9,10 of our acceptance with Him then, and of the judgment seat of Christ at His return. This interpretation makes sense of the connection between confidence, and becoming fully "at home" with the Lord at His return and the judgment seat.

5:9 *Therefore we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him*- Our aim or focus (see on :7) is to be pleasing to Him at the day of His coming- I prefer AV "we may be accepted of Him", because the next verse goes on to speak of the judgment seat of Christ. "Whether at home or absent" could mean 'Whether we are alive or dead at His return'. This would then connect with one possible view of :4 "Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed"- which could mean 'We don't want to die before His return, our preference is that this mortal body be swallowed up into immortality at His return during our lifetimes'. This would mean that here in :9, being "at home" refers to being at home with the Lord now, and "absent" refers to being absent from the Lord in death. But in my note on :4 I have suggested an alternative interpretation. And we are never absent or away from the Lord, in death nor life, for all live unto Him. As explained on :6, we are now to be "at home" with the Lord and "absent" or to have quit the bodily, fleshly life. So Paul may well mean that he labours for the Corinthians, that whether they are currently at home in the bodily fleshly life or absent from it, spiritually weak or strong, they will still be accepted at the last day. And that fits to my mind more comfortably with Paul's whole attitude to the weak Corinthians and his labour for their final acceptance.

"In this (body) we *groan*... we that are in this tabernacle do *groan*, being burdened... we are always *confident*... we are *confident*, I say... Wherefore we *labour* (are ambitious), that... we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:1-10 AV). Notice the designed repetition of the words "groan" and "confident". The humdrum groaning of this life is related to our ambitious confidence that we really will be accepted at the day of judgment. The very thought of acceptance on that day requires real ambition, an ambition that will lift us right up out of the 'groaning' of this life.

5:10 *For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ*- We shall then be revealed as to whether we are "at home" with the bodily, fleshly life- or with the Lord and His family. We shall be revealed as to whether we are "absent" or have gone out from the Lord, or whether we have instead quit the bodily, worldly life. The revelation of each believer at the judgment seat will be public- the same word is used by the Lord in teaching that no secret thing shall not be revealed "abroad", before all (Mk. 4:22). Paul had earlier used this word in teaching the Corinthians that the secret intentions of the heart shall be "revealed" at the Lord's coming (1 Cor. 4:5); every man's work shall be revealed ["made manifest"] (1 Cor. 3:13). Here in 2 Cor. 5:10, he says that the deeds of the body shall be revealed- but in the Lord's book, the thought and the actions are the same. There will be a mutuality at the day of judgment- the Lord Jesus shall be revealed to us, and we to Him. His life shall then be manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:10,11). The essence of judgment day is ongoing now- for our deeds are manifest now before God, in the light of the cross (Jn. 3:21 and context; see notes there). And so Paul now goes straight on to say that "we are made manifest [s.w. "revealed"] unto God" right now (:11). This is why Paul claims utter transparency before the Corinthians; he has now hidden agendas, because he is completely "made manifest [s.w. "revealed"] among you in all things" (2 Cor. 11:6). We shall be revealed before the Lord and all our brethren in that day, so we may as well be in this life. "We must all *appear* before the judgment seat" (2 Cor. 5:10 AV) doesn't therefore just mean we'll put in an appearance. The Greek means to be exposed utterly. We shall have "our lives laid open" (NEB). Then, the unshareable self will be revealed; that essence of personality which is unknown even to us.

That each one may receive the result of the things done in a bodily form, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad- We note again the reference to the body. Paul has been urging us to not be "at home" in the body but to instead be "at home" with the Lord and His family (see on :6). The things done "in the body" (AV) will be judged with eternal consequence. All "the things done" will then be judged. Somehow, the judgment event will take account of every single action, every good or bad. This is what gives significance to human life, thought and action, every moment. All shall have eternal moment and consequence at the last day. We shall then "receive" for the good (Eph. 6:8) and bad which we have done (Col. 3:25).

5:11- see on 1 Jn. 3:19.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men- "Persuade" is the same word used of how Paul had initially visited Corinth and "persuaded" the Corinthians of the Gospel (Acts 18:4). His preaching was now passive presentation of theological truths. Given the eternal moment of the issues arising from believing or rejecting the Gospel, he unashamedly, proactively sought to persuade men of the positive response they should make. And he did so knowing "the fear" or

"terror"(AV) of the Lord's rejection at the day of judgment.

But we are revealed to God, and I hope that we are revealed also in your consciences- As noted on :10, we shall be revealed to God at the last day; and yet the essence of judgment is right now. Paul hopes that in their hearts, the Corinthians knew that the Paul they saw and heard was the real Paul; he was speaking and acting as if before the judgment throne of the Lord, right now. He did not in fact have any other persona or agendas, as they falsely accused him of. See on :10 and :12.

Fearing God's judgment and righteousness is not in itself a bad motivation. It may not be the highest motivation, but in practice, because we so often understand no other language, the real fear of God is a necessary motivation. Knowing the “terror of the Lord" (a phrase used in the OT with reference to coming judgment), Paul persuaded men to accept His grace (2 Cor. 5:11). Noah went into the ark (cp. baptism) from fear of the coming flood (Gen. 7:7), as Israel crossed the Red Sea (again, baptism) from fear of the approaching Egyptians, as men fled to the city of refuge (again, Christ, Heb. 6:18) from fear of the avenger of blood, and as circumcision (cp. baptism) was performed with the threat of exclusion from the community (possibly by death) hanging over the child. Biblically, *phobos* is the motivation for a pure life (1 Pet. 3:2; 2 Cor. 7:11), for humility in our dealings with each other (Eph. 5:21), for accepting the Gospel in the first place (2 Cor. 5:11). It must be remembered that the Gospel is not only good news, but also the warning of judgment to come on those who reject it (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38-40). The good news is *so* good that a man can't hear it and decide not to respond- without facing judgment for his rejection of God's love and Christ's death. There are many who know the Gospel (e.g. by being 'brought up in the Faith') but who calmly walk away from the call of the cross. I would suggest that they need more reminding than it seems they are given of the fear of God, the tragic inevitability of judgment to come, the sense of desperate self-hate and bitter regret that will engulf men then, the sense of no place to run... . Paul used "the terror of the Lord" , the concept of fearing God, to persuade men who had rejected his beseeching (2 Cor. 5:11).

The idea of conditional salvation, and that not for everybody but a tiny minority, I find both hard to accept and yet the very thing that clinches the actual reality of 'the truth' we hold. Josiah's zealous reforms started with reading "the book of the covenant" (2 Kings 23:2), probably the list of curses which were to come for disobedience (2 Kings 22:19 = Lev. 26:31,32). And this book was in some way a joy and rejoicing to Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16). In this sense Paul used the terror of possible condemnation to persuade men (2 Cor. 5:11). And when those that had already believed (Acts 19:18 Gk.) saw how the condemned sons of Sceva fled away from the spirit of Jesus naked and wounded, in anticipation of the final judgment, they ceased being secret believers and came out openly with their confessions of unworthiness and need for salvation. In the light of that foretaste of judgment to come, they realized that nothing else mattered. The image of them fleeing naked definitely alludes to Am. 2:16: "The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day, Says the Lord" (NKJV).

5:12 *We are not commending ourselves to you again*- Perhaps Paul was quoting back to them what he knew some said about him: 'Here he goes again, commending himself'. The immediate reference would be to Paul's claim that he is transparent, because he stands now as before the judgment seat of Christ, revealed to them as he would be then (see previous commentary on this chapter). He has just said that they know this to be true in their consciences (:11). And he has used the same argument in

3:1 and 4:2; his commendation is in fact within their consciences ("commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God", 4:2).

But giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart- Paul is setting the scene for his forthcoming self-commendation in human terms which he will make in chapter 6- "In all things approving [s.w. "commending"] ourselves as the ministers of God" in all his sufferings (2 Cor. 6:4). He is speaking in human terms- for he is clear that it is not he who commends himself who is approved, but whom the Lord commends (2 Cor. 10:18). This commendation of the Lord was in their consciences (:11)- by the work of the Spirit in their hearts, if they were indeed open to it. He notes that it is the false teachers, who humanly speaking were his competitors, who commended themselves (2 Cor. 10:12). But he will go on to make a self-commendation so that they can still engage with those false teachers ["who boast about outward appearance"] on their own terms. The boat should not be about outward things, but about "what is in the heart". And what was that? He has just said that they ought to have the Spirit in their hearts (:5), and it was that Spirit which ought to have worked within them so that the commendation of Paul was within their hearts, in their consciences (see on :11). Paul could of course have refused to engage with these people on their own terms. But he does, in the same way as some believers find it appropriate to engage with the arguments of scientific atheists in the terms of science. Even though the higher arguments for God's existence are beyond the scientific paradigm. "I speak in human terms" is a phrase Paul several times uses. He sought by all means to persuade men.

Like the Lord, Paul's transparency was what connected him with people. He says that he needs no letter of recommendation to them, because he is written on their hearts; "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God… we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 3:3; 4:2; 5:11 AV). There were those in Corinth who thought in terms of appearances rather than the heart; those who demanded letters of recommendation before accepting Paul (2 Cor. 5:12); but Paul's response is that because he is transparent to God, it is inevitable that he is transparent before them his brethren. They knew in their hearts / consciences, no matter how they sought to deny it, that he was sincere. And this was why Paul could be so open with the critical Corinthians about his personal life. "Be ye also enlarged" invites us to be like him in this. To be asked to have the openness of Paul is a challenge indeed. Even in our Christian experience, those brethren and sisters who have the most influence on others are those who artlessly radiate their own spirit, whose struggle with sin, devotion and example is unconcealable and uncontrived.

5:13 *If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you*- Paul is presumably quoting from accusations made about his mental stability. Festus made the same accusation (Acts 26:24). We note that Paul doesn't accuse the slanderers of slander; he reasons from the assumption, for a moment, that what they said was true. The Lord did likewise in His teaching. But the idea of appearing mad or in fact being 'right minded' are clearly in the spirit of Paul's opening position to the Corinthians which we find in 1 Cor. 1. It is the mind devoid of the Spirit which would consider a spiritual person to be "foolish". By considering Paul to be 'a fool', the Corinthians indicated how they were simply "not Spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1)

despite having been given the Spirit. "If we are out of our mind" would be more strictly translated "when we were out of our mind", with reference to a specific past incident; compared to "we are in our right mind" which is a more continuous tense. The being 'out of our mind' and perceived as mad could refer to a single incident of ecstatic in-Spirit behaviour which the Corinthians had observed in Paul whilst he was amongst them. Plato (*Phaedrus* 244) describes the supposedly spirit-filled priestesses at Delphi [near to Corinth] as "mad" when they were [supposedly] filled by a spirit, and "in their right mind" [s.w. as here in 2 Cor. 5:13] when they were not possessed by a spirit. This apparent madness was 'to God'; but Paul related to the Corinthians in his right mind (Gk. 'soberly'). They had as it were eavesdropped on Paul's personal relationship with God in some Spirit ecstasy, and were mocking him for it. But his interactions with the Corinthians had, Paul says, been of an utterly sober nature.

5:14- see on 2 Cor. 8:9.

For the love of Christ controls us- The love of Christ (and this phrase is almost always used in the NT of the cross) must *constrain us* (2 Cor. 5:14); we must reflect upon it until with Paul we pray with bowed knees to know the length, and the breadth and the height, of that love of Christ (on Calvary) that passes our unaided human knowledge (Eph. 3:19). For this alone is what will drive our passivity from us; here at last is something to respond to with all our heart and soul. The image of soldiers in their time of dying has often been used afterwards as a motivation for a nation: “Earn this" is the message their faces give. And it is no more true than in the death of the Lord. “The love of Christ", an idea elsewhere used of His death (Jn. 13:1; 2 Cor. 5:14,15; Rom. 8:32,34,35; Eph. 5:2,25; Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5 cp. 1 Jn. 4:10), *constrains us*; it doesn’t force us, but rather shuts us up unto one way, as in a narrow, walled path. We cannot sit passively before the cross of the Lord. That “love of Christ" there passes our human knowledge, and yet our hearts can be opened, as Paul prayed, that we might know the length, breadth and height of it. The crucified Son of God was the full representation of God.

The Lord died as He did so that the love of God, the real meaning of love, might be displayed in a cameo, in an intense, visual, physical form which could be remembered and meditated upon. Observing the memorial meeting is the very least we can do to this end; and this itself is only a beginning. “The love of Christ *constraineth us*" (AV) not to live for ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and to show this by our concern for our brethren, in the context. Marvin Vincent has a telling comment on the Greek word translated "controls”: "The idea is not urging or driving, but *shutting up* to one line or purpose, as in a narrow, walled road" (*Word Studies Of The N.T.*). We shouldn't be driven men and women; we are not urged or driven by the cross, but shut up by it to one purpose. There are only two ways before us, to death or life; and we are shut up by the cross in that road to life. In this lies the sustaining and transforming power of the cross, if only we would meditate upon it. It is an epitome of every facet of the love of God and of Christ. There the Name of God was declared, that the love that was in the Father and Son may be in us (Jn. 17:26). The same word is used about the Lord in Lk. 22:63, where we read He was "bound", constrained, limited in movement- as He was constrained for us in His final sufferings, we should likewise be for Him.

Because we have judged that in that one has died for all, therefore all have died- If the classic idea of substitution were correct, then surely this should read "One has died for all, therefore all have *lived*". But the death of Christ *for* us rather shows us how to *die* in a death like His, that we through identity with His death might share in

His life. If we really think of the Lord's passion seriously, our thoughts will be punctuated with the realization: "I would not have done that. I would simply not have held on". But in that He died for us all in Him, it is reckoned that we all died with Him the death of the cross. We are graciously counted as having died with Him in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), and now we try to live this out in practice. And in appreciating this, inevitably our patience with our brethren will be the more thorough-going.

5:15 *And he died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and rose again*- The representative nature of the Lord's death means that we are pledged to live out His self-crucifixion as far as we can; to re-live the crucifixion process in our imagination, to come to that point where we *know* we wouldn't have gone through with it, and to grasp with real wonder and gratitude the salvation of the cross. Paul is surely alluding to the idea of baptism, whereby we identify with His death and resurrection; the language here is similar to that concerning baptism in Rom. 6:8. "As one has died for all, then all have died, and that He died for all in order to have the living live no longer for themselves but for Him who died and rose for them" (2 Cor. 5:14,15 Moffatt). It has been powerfully commented: "To know oneself to have been involved in the sacrificial death of Christ, on account of its representational character, is to see oneself committed to a sacrificial life, to a re-enactment in oneself of the cross" (W.F. Barling, *The Letters To Corinth*).

All that is true of the Lord Jesus becomes in some sense, at some time, true of each of us who are in Him. It's true that nowhere in the Bible is the Lord Jesus actually called our "representative", but the idea is clearly there. I suggest it's especially clear in all the Bible passages which speak of Him acting *huper* us- what Dorothee Sölle called "the preposition of representation". Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon define *huper* in the genitive as meaning "'for', 'in behalf of', 'for the sake of' someone. When used in the sense of representation, *huper* is associated with verbs like 'request, pray, care, work, feel, suffer, die, support'". So in the same way as the Lord representatively prays, died, cares, suffers, works "for" us, we are to do likewise, if He indeed is our representative and we His. Our prayers for another, our caring for them, is no longer a rushed salving of our conscience through some good deed. Instead 2 Cor. 5:15 becomes our motivation: "He died for (*huper*) all [of us], that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for (*huper*) them". We are, in our turn, to go forth and be "ambassadors for (*huper*) Christ... we pray you in Christ's stead (*huper* Christ), be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Grasping Him as our representative means that we will be His representatives in this world, and not leave that to others or think that our relationship in Him is so internal we needn't breathe nor show a word of it to others. As He suffered "the just for (*huper*) the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), our living, caring, praying for others is no longer done "for" those whom we consider good enough, worthy enough, sharing our religious convictions and theology. For whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died *huper* us (Rom. 5:6). And this representative death is to find an issue in our praying *huper* others (Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11), just as He makes intercession *huper* us (Rom. 8:26,34). We are to spend and be spent *huper* others, after the pattern of the Lord in His final nakedness of death on the cross (2 Cor. 12:15). These must all be far more than fine ideas for us. These are the principles which we are to live by in hour by hour life. And they demand a huge amount, even the cross itself. For unto us is given "in the behalf of Christ [*huper* Christ], not only to [quietly, painlessly, theoretically] believe on Him, but also to suffer for (*huper*) his sake" (Phil. 1:29). In all this, then, we see that the Lord's being our representative was

not only at the time of His death; the fact He continues to be our representative makes Him our ongoing challenge.

5:16 *Therefore we, from this time forward, know no one after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more*- In the context, Paul has written of how baptism into Christ makes us totally identified with Him. His death and resurrection, and His ongoing life, are all to become ours. Paul is determined to perceive his fellow believers as in Christ; which would explain why he can criticize and perceive so clearly their serious failures, and yet write and feel so positively about them. He would not know them after the flesh, but [by implication] after the Spirit. And although Paul had met Christ in the flesh, perhaps during the Lord's ministry [at which time Paul was living in Jerusalem] or certainly on the Damascus road- that literal meeting with the Lord was now irrelevant to Paul. For knowing the Lord Jesus after the Spirit was and is the true way to achieve and perceive His presence near and real. The promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was to make the presence of the Lord Jesus as real as when He was literally on earth- and in a more profound and personal sense. Paul had previously gloried in his having physically met the Lord Jesus- but he says that now he knows Him like that no more. All is of the Spirit, and having the Lord's presence in the heart through the Comforter.

5:17 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*- The context is full of Paul's allusions to his Damascus road conversion, when he did indeed know Christ after the flesh (:16). Paul is surely saying that he was in a sense everyman there; what happened to him can happen to "any man". The emphasis is therefore to be placed on the word "any". Paul really is our pattern.

F.F. Bruce has observed: "Something of Paul's native impetuousness is apparent in his epistolary style... time and again Paul starts a sentence that never reaches a grammatical end, for before he is well launched on it a new thought strikes him and he turns aside to deal with that" (*Paul: Apostle Of The Free Spirit*, Exeter: 1980, p. 456). This style is exemplified here in 2 Cor. 5:17. The Greek text here is a sentence in which there are no verbs: “If anyone in Christ- new creation”. It is as if the thrill of it leads him to just blurt it out. And observe that this was to be found in a man of extraordinary culture and intellectual ability. By perceiving this tension, the passion behind his style is thereby accentuated the more. Likewise consider how in Galatians Paul uses so many negatives, as if his passion and almost rage at the false teachers is coming out. See on Gal. 1:1.

The idea of a "new creation" is using a technical term known in Judaism for the conversion of a person from idolatry to Judaism and monotheism. Rabbi Eliezer apparently wrote that "He who converts a man to the true religion is the same as if he had created him". So seeing that Paul was the converter of the Corinthians, his description of them as a new creation may be a reminder of their debt to him.

God is seeking to work a new creation in the experience of men and women. He has done this for us in Christ, and yet the reality of it is still dependent upon whether we will allow ourselves to put on the new man after the image of God, whether we will become born again after His image and likeness (Eph. 4:23,24). "A new creation" is very much the language of Rev. 21:5 concerning the creation of new things on the ruins of the old, at Christ's return. Yet this dramatic change must occur within the believer as a result of being in Christ in this life, before he can share in the wonders of that future age.

The Greek of 2 Cor. 5:17 is tellingly ambiguous; the sense can be: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature", or, "If any man be in Christ, let him be a new

creature". The fact of becoming in Christ through baptism means that we are new creations potentially, and therefore must work towards being new creations. We must go on further than just being baptized into Christ.

The old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new- As a new born baby sees a chair, a table, a brother or sister, for the very first time, so do we after baptism. It is so hard for us to appreciate the newness of everything to a baby or small child. "All things are become new" in our attitude of mind after baptism. Yet we live in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), as if this process of birth is ongoing throughout our spiritual lives. After baptism, therefore, we set out on a life in which we should be gazing, in wide eyed wonder, at new spiritual concepts and realities. How patient we should be with others who are in this position. "Old things are passed away" at baptism, just as the old world order will "pass away" at the Lord's return (Rev. 21:5). The dramatic change that will come upon this planet in the Kingdom should therefore be paralleled in our new spiritual vistas after baptism, and throughout the process of being re-born and becoming a new creation. The contemporary Jewish writings and the Apocrypha use the term "new creation" to describe the situation which would be brought about at the last day (1 Enoch 72:1; 2 Apoc. Baruch 32:6). Further exemplification is presented in Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997) p. 297. Yet Paul applies what could be called 'future Kingdom language' to our status in Christ right now.

5:18 *But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation*- The Greek for "reconciled" implies to mutually change both sides. Both God and man were in some sense changed by the work of Christ. God reconciled us by the cross, and *therefore* to us was given the work of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18,20)- a sharing with others of our own experience. This was clearly what fired the first century ecclesia. On the basis of our experience of reconciliation with God, we have been given “the ministry of reconciliation”, in that God “has put in us [Gk. settled deep within us] the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18,19). That which is deeply internal issues in an outward witness. For this reason all discussion of how that outward witness should be made is somewhat irrelevant- the witness naturally springs from deep within. If it doesn’t, we have to ask whether we have anything much deep within.

"Ministry" is a word repeatedly used by Paul in 2 Corinthians for his ministry or service to the brotherhood (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8). Because we have been reconciled to God by forgiveness, through the ministry of the suffering servant, we are to respond by ministering to others practically. Thus "the ministry of reconciliation" isn't simply 'preaching the Gospel' or reconciling others to God. It refers also to the practical ministry / service which is "of" or inspired by reconciliation. Classical Greek only uses the word translated "reconcile" regarding personal relationships of humans; and never about God or in a theological sense. The idea of having a personal reconciliation with God personally was a huge paradigm breaker in the first century world- and properly understood, it is today too. Thus "the ministry of reconciliation" is parallel with the ministry of the Spirit and of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6,8). The reconciliation achieved is by the Spirit, deep in the heart of the believer- for that is where personal relationships exist.

God reconciled the world; but the word of reconciliation is committed unto us. All men were reconciled to God on the cross, even while they were sinners (Rom. 5:10); but it depends upon us to take that Gospel of reconciliation to them. So far as

we fail in this, so far we leave His death for them in vain, only a potential achievement. We were given reconciliation personally (Rom. 5:11 RV); and we are also given “the ministry of reconciliation”, the command to preach that reconciliation and share it with others . To be reconciled to God is to be given a charge to reconcile others.

Our preaching should flow naturally out of our own personal experience of God's grace. The fact that we were reconciled is tied up with the fact that we have been given, as part of this “being reconciled”, the ministry of preaching reconciliation. It is the greatness of God's grace which will form the content of our preaching, not our own practical experience of it. Our experience will only motivate us personally, not anyone else. We preach not ourselves, but Christ as Lord and Saviour. Let's really get down to serious self examination, to more finely appreciating the holiness of God and the horror of sin. If we can do this- and only if- our preaching, our speaking, our reasoning, even our very body language, will be stamped with the vital hallmark: humility.

Note that the style of 5:18-21 suggests it may have been a hymn well known to Paul's early Christian readership, or even a baptismal confessional statement.

5:19- see on Ps. 32:2.

That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses to them- Christ "reconciled the world" in that He obtained forgiveness for *us* (2 Cor. 5:19)- *we* are "the world" which was reconciled, we are the "all things" purged by His blood (Heb. 9:22). God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" seems to be a comment on the death, rather than the nature, of the Lord Jesus. It is in the context of the statement that Christ died for all men (2 Cor. 5:14). In that death, God was especially in Christ. Perhaps it was partly with reference to the cross that the Lord said: “I shall shew you plainly of the Father" (Jn. 16:25). See on Jn. 19:19.

And has committed to us the word of reconciliation- We are the means by which God is appealing to mankind; and we must do this while there is the opportunity for salvation. As Moses delivered God’s people “with the hand of the angel”, we likewise are working in co-operation with huge Angelic forces (Acts 7:35 RV). In prospect, God reconciled the whole world to Himself on the cross, the devil was destroyed, *all* sin was overcome then, in prospect. In this sense Christ is the propitiation for our sins as much as He is for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). On the cross, He bore away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). So now we must spread this good news to the whole world, for *all* men’s' sins were conquered on the cross.

5:20 *Therefore, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating the world by us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*- We are the face of Christ to this world, and to our brethren; He has no arms or legs or face on this earth apart from us, His body. God “makes His appeal by us” (2 Cor. 5:20 RSV). Paul's logic here parallels the Corinthians with "the world". He begs them to be reconciled to God (knowing that some of them weren't in relationship with God and "had not the knowledge of God", 1 Cor. 15:34). And yet Paul elsewhere writes so positively about them. Their status in Christ meant that he on one hand felt towards them as to the Lord Jesus, confident of their salvation. But Paul is a realist, his love didn't make him blind. And sensing the real possibility of their condemnation, of the eternity they might miss, he *begs* them. The Lord's passion for the world's

reconciliation led Him to the cross; and it is that same passion which He seeks to articulate through us. The other references to Paul's 'begging' or 'beseeching' the Corinthians relate to practical matters- the same word is used of begging them to accept back the disciplined brother (2 Cor. 2:8) and to contribute to the Jerusalem Poor Fund (2 Cor. 9:5). It was through these things that they were in practice reconciled with God. For our relationship with Him depends upon our relationship with our brethren. Paul will conclude 2 Corinthians by begging the Corinthians to "be comforted" (13:11), using the same word as here translated "beg". Paul knows that the Corinthians must make the choice to accept the appeal he was making, but he appeals to them by all means.

God desires to “reason together" with men (Is. 1:18). This is extraordinary indeed. God is seeking to persuade men to accept the forgiveness available in the blood of His Son. And He asks us to do this work for Him, to reflect this aspect of His character to the world, with that same spirit of earnest humility: "As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God". No wonder in the context Paul says that we should *therefore* watch our behaviour and attitudes. The fact men turn away from God's *beseeching*, His *praying* that they will accept His grace, is surely the greatest tragedy in the whole cosmos, in the whole of existence.

Because of the cross, the atonement which God wrought in Christ’s offering, we beseech men to be reconciled to God. Appreciating the cross and the nature of the atonement should be the basis of our appeal to men. And indeed, such an appeal is *God* appealing to men and women, in that there on the cross “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". The blood and spittle covered body of the Lord lifted up was and is the appeal, the *beseeching* of God Himself to men. And this is the message that we are honoured to preach on His behalf; we preach the appeal of God through the cross. See on Jn. 19:19. "All men" can have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And this motivates us to preach to "all men".

5:21 *He who knew no sin, he became a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him*- 2 Cor. 5:14-21 urges us to preach the salvation in Christ to all men, because He died for us, as our representative. He died *for* [the sake of] all (5:14,15), He was made sin *for* our sake (5:21); and therefore we are ambassadors *for* [s.w.] His sake (5:20). Because He was our representative, so we must be His representatives in witnessing Him to the world. This is why the preaching of Acts was consistently motivated by the Lord’s death and resurrection for the preachers. See on Heb. 2:9.

There was a child-likeness about the Lord. Not in that He was naive- He was the least naive of all men. But rather did He have an innocence about sin, as if He were a sweet child caught up within the web of sinful men around Him. Indeed the point has been made that when Paul spoke of the Lord as being one “who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), he was using the very phrase used in rabbinic and other contemporary writings to describe children, who were too young to ‘know sin’. This child-likeness was beautifully related to His utter naturalness, which was so much a part of His moral perfection.

Paul's teaching here about imputed righteousness was fundamental to how he himself viewed the Corinthians. This was how God viewed them; and it was how Paul viewed them. This explains his positive language about them, despite being aware of their deep weaknesses of practice and understanding.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *And working together with him we entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain*- God's desire for the salvation of the Corinthians involved Him working through Paul. And in that sense God and Paul became fellow workers (see on 1 Sam. 14:45). Paul seems to have the great commission in mind, when he wrote in 5:19-21 that to all of us has been committed the ministry of reconciliation, and in discharging it we are 'workers together' with God- the very same word used in Mk. 16:20 concerning how the Lord Jesus 'worked with' His men as they fulfilled the commission. To be co-workers with none less than God... is a wonderful idea. He comes down to our level. We are called to be workers, not spectators at a show. And He works with us, with camraderie which comes when men work together.

The "grace" in view is surely the *charis* of the Spirit. The Corinthians had been given the Spirit at baptism, but had not made use of it. They had received it in vain. The same word for "received" is used in 1 Cor. 2:14 to lament how the natural man does not receive the Spirit. And yet 1 Cor. 1 is clear that the Corinthians had received the Spirit. But they were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). The Spirit had been received, but in vain. In contrast, Paul can say that he has not received God's grace in vain (1 Cor. 15:10); he is bidding them follow his example of transformation.

6:2- see on Ps. 69:13.

For He said: In a time of acceptance I hearkened to you, and in a day of salvation did I succour you. Behold, now is the time of acceptance; behold, now is the day of salvation- This quotation is in support of the statement that we have received God's grace, *charis*, gift of the Spirit; but we are not to receive it in vain, but rather make use of it. The 'succouring' in view refers to just that. The same word is used in Heb. 2:18 of how the Lord Jesus gives us such help in time of temptation. Seeing that temptation is internal to the human mind, this help is surely psychological, within the heart- which is exactly what the gift of the Spirit is all about. Forgiveness is indeed in view, but beyond that- strength against falling into sin.

There's an allusion here to Ps. 32:6. For every sinner, for whom David is our example, *now* is the time when God may be "found" in the sense of experiencing His forgiveness. God *is* love towards men, He *is* forgiveness. To experience this and respond back to it is therefore to find the knowledge of God. This "time when You (i.e. God's forgiveness, which *is* God) may be found" which David speaks of is that of 2 Cor. 6:2: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation", literally the 'today' of salvation. We get the sense of urgency, of using every moment to repent and find salvation. That must be refleted in our urgency of appeal to men, and also in our attitude to our own repentance. Paul was speaking of how all sinners, baptized or not, need to realize this; we are all in David's position. Some complain that they did not experience a very great upsurge in finding and knowing God at the point of baptism. This may be due to an insufficient emphasis on the need for repentance and appreciating the seriousness of sin before baptism; and not being willing to make use of the Spirit gift which we are then given. We must not think that we know God because we believe a Statement of Faith and have been baptized. "Now is the accepted time", Paul wrote to the baptized Corinthians, to truly take on board the marvel of God's forgiveness, to know it and respond to it for ourselves, and thereby to come to a dynamic, two-way relationship with God.

But the allusion is also to Is. 49:8 “In an acceptable time have I heard you”. This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ. Is. 49:8,9: “In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you” is quoted about us in 2 Cor. 6:2 in the context of us being preachers, labouring with God. Isaiah continues: “And I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves” (RV). This is the language of the Lord’s preaching, which freed men from the prison house (Is. 61:1,2). Yet because we are in Him, we too have His ministry; our words too can *make men inherit* the Kingdom, and free men from their bondage. “We are witnesses [through being] in him” (Acts 5:32 RVmg.). As the Lord in Isaiah’s servant songs was the suffering, saving, atoning servant, lifted up to give salvation world-wide- so are we. This is why a Messianic passage like Is. 49:8 is quoted by Paul in 2 Cor. 6 about *us,* sinners that we are. The next verse, Is. 49:9, must therefore also be about us: "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves... they shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water” (AV). In the same way as *we* have experienced the "acceptable time" in this life, so we will be able to encourage others to make use of the "accepted time" of God's grace.

6:3 *We aim to give no reason for stumbling in anything, that our ministry is not blamed*- The "ministry" received is to speak and act on God's behalf; for "our ministry" is *His* ministry of reconciliation which has been given to us (5:19). It is therefore critical that our service or ministry saves others, or works towards that; and therefore we will be careful not to cause any to stumble from the path towards that great salvation. As an "ambassador" (5:20), we must be careful not to discredit the Lord whom we represent and whose messengers and representatives we are.

6:4 *But in everything, commending ourselves as servants of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses*- An "ambassador" (5:20) was a servant. The authentication of him as an ambassador was in all the troubles he had experienced for the sake of that work, and his patient response to them. "Patience" or endurance was [and still is] the foremost qualification and characteristic. All the afflictions, necessities etc. were endured and did not stop Paul from continuing- for the idea of "patience", *hupomone*, is of "endurance". This is what authenticates a servant of God- keeping on keeping on, rather than a brief impressive mission trip or moment of sacrifice. We are not only Jesus to this world but also effectively we are the witness to God Himself. We minister His care to others; to the extent that Paul could write both that he was a minister of God, and also a minister of the church (2 Cor. 6:4; Col. 1:24,25). It is primarily *people* who communicate, not words or ideas. Personal authenticity is undoubtedly the strongest credential in our work of communicating the message. Thus Paul could speak of his afflictions as being his credentials (2 Cor. 11:21-33; 1 Thess. 2:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:10-12). And God’s true servant commends himself by the endurance of opposition (2 Cor. 6:4,5).

6:5 *In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings*- These kinds of afflictions, especially the riots ["tumults"], had come upon Paul in Corinth and surrounding areas (Acts 18:13). His readership knew he was telling the truth. "Watchings" is literally 'sleepless nights' (NIV); the reference could be to how

his hard labour as a tentmaker had to be done through the night at times, so that he could do ministry work during the day (1 Thess. 2:9 gives an example).

6:6 *In pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness*- This group of sufferings refer to Paul's internal efforts and sacrifices in order for the ministry to go ahead. Paul's loving patience and care for the Corinthians exemplified all these characteristics.

In the Holy Spirit- The fruit of the gift of the Spirit included love and all that flows from it. Paul could sense that this fruit had been brought forth in him. Hence he goes on to list real love. This is why he so often links the Holy Spirit with love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 2:1,2).

In sincere love- There is repeated N.T. warning against the ease of slipping into a mindset which thinks itself to be 'loving' when actually it isn't. "Let love be without dissimulation" (s.w. "unfeigned"; Rom. 12:9). The fact he knew himself to have "love unfeigned" (2 Cor. 6:6) was one of Paul's credentials as a genuine apostle. James 3:17 speaks of the true spirituality, including gentleness, patience, kindness etc., as being "without hypocrisy" (s.w. "unfeigned"). A true response to the doctrines of the basic Gospel will result in "love unfeigned" (1 Pet. 1:22). Israel of old failed in this: "With their mouth they shew much love; but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ez. 33:31). This is all some emphasis. It helps explain why both in ourselves and in others it is possible to behold a great emphasis on love whilst at the same time harbouring a very unloving attitude. I think all of us with any ecclesial experience will be able to recall conversations where 'love' has been advocated, or 'unloving behaviour' criticized, in language which simply *breathes* bitterness and contempt!

6:7 *In the word of truth, in the power of God*- The word of truth is the Gospel (Col. 1:5), and Paul's truthful preaching of it was confirmed by the power of God allowing miracles to be done to confirm his preaching.

By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left- The idea is of a warrior holding weapons in both hands, defensive in one, offensive weapons in the other.

6:8 *By glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report. As deceivers and yet true*- Paul lists these things as an evidence that he is well authenticated as a preacher or minister of the Gospel. But the personal integrity of every true preacher is always going to be questioned. Paul was not beyond criticism or false accusation. That can never be a required feature of those who minister the Gospel; for according to Paul here, the very fact the preacher becomes the object of slander and even exaggerated "good report" is all what confirms the credentials of a true minister of Christ. We could conclude that being unfairly gossiped about is a characteristic of the true servant of God. So here when Paul lists the things which confirm his apostleship, he not only lists his imprisonments and shipwrecks; he says that the fact he has been slandered is another proof that he is a servant of Christ. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

6:9 *As unknown and yet well known*- The accusation was that Paul was a nobody, unknown. When as they knew, he was well known. This may explain the otherwise strange comment of the Jews in Rome that they had never heard of Paul. They surely had, but they treated him as "unknown".

As dying and behold we live- It is common for public figures to be gossiped about as having an illness, being terminally ill, and having only limited time left. It seems Paul had experienced that.

As chastened and not killed- Chastening may refer to public whipping, as it does in Lk. 23:16,22. Paul had five times been whipped or 'chastened' by the Jewish

synagogue courts with 39 lashes (2 Cor. 11:24). Forty lashes were considered enough to kill- Paul was taken right up to the point of death. But he didn't die. Perhaps he has in mind the resurrection which occurred on one occasion after he was whipped to death in Acts 14:19,20.

6:10- see on Mt. 26:39.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing- In :9, Paul has cited the false accusations against him and answered them. Now he appears to comment upon some of his characteristics which his critics disliked, and justifies them, or at least presents them in another light. He so often writes of his tears and worry for his brethren; he was sorrowful, and yet it is part of the Christian life to also at the same time have joy. He has in view the Lord Jesus, who was the man of sorrows on the cross, and yet could speak of "My joy" at the same time. But surely he also alludes to how he has used the same words in telling the Corinthians that he had sorrow from them when he ought to have rejoicing from them (2 Cor. 2:3). He sorrowed over them, and yet he also rejoiced over them for who they were by status in Christ (2 Cor. 7:7,9,13,16; 13:9).

As poor, yet making many rich- Critics leave the accused guilty whatever the truth is. Paul was accused of seeking wealth from his ministry, and yet apparently mocked for being poor- for wealth was seen, as today, as proof that a minister was of God. Paul clearly intends a linkage with his teaching in 8:9 that it was through the poverty of the Lord Jesus that we are made rich. And Paul saw that working out in his own life. He speaks of how we received the riches of God's grace (Eph. 1:18; 2:7; 3:8,16); and yet in writing to the Corinthians he uses only to them a specific Greek word meaning 'to enrich'. He reminds them of how we are *enriched by Him* in the knowledge of forgiveness which we have (1 Cor. 1:5; 2 Cor. 9:11), and *therefore* we are to 'enrich' others in our preaching to them of the same grace (2 Cor. 6:10).

As having nothing- In our *attitudes* we must be as if we possessed nothing, as if we have in our heart of hearts resigned everything, even the very concept of personal 'possession'. Paul could say that he was *as if* he possessed nothing, although he evidently had at least some money to his name (Acts 24:26), and could offer to reimburse Philemon for any damages. There is a great freedom in this, if only we would know it.

And yet possessing all things- It is the Lord Jesus who possesses all things. The three characteristics mentioned in this verse each apply to the Lord Jesus in His time of dying. Clearly Paul felt identity with Him.

6:11- see on 2 Cor. 8:24.

Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged- The openness of Paul, his self-revelation of his innermost spirit, especially to his detractors at Corinth, is incredible. In such situations one tends to be cagey and reserved rather than open-hearted. But much of what we learn about Paul's innermost struggles comes from his letters to the Corinthians, who seemed ready to abuse his every word. And he asks them, as his very own children, to respond to his transparency by being open with him: "In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also" (2 Cor. 6:13). Many find that human leaders or elders come between them and a personal following of Jesus. Yet we need to remember that Jesus never delegated his personal authority over His people to anyone. This is where the Catholic idea of the Pope as the personal representative of Jesus is so wrong. Much as we should respect our elders, this respect shouldn't come between us and the Lord Jesus. Note how Paul never demanded power over his converts. He made himself vulnerable to them, in the hope that they

would respond to him in an open relationship. Note the parallel between mouth and heart. This is very common in the Bible (at least 25 examples)- for our words issue from the heart.

6:12 *You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections*- The GNB seems to well summarize this awkward phrasing: "It is not we who have closed our hearts to you; it is you who have closed your hearts to us". This sounds as if one of the criticisms of Paul was that he had closed his heart to the Corinthians, he was all theory and no heart, a distant man hidden behind his own theology. And Paul's openhearted sharing of his life and feelings is therefore to be understood as a response to that slander.

Their sense of 'limitation' or being 'cramped' [Gk.] was not due to what he'd said, but more because of their own consciences as believers: "You are not cramped in us, but you are cramped by your own hearts... be you also enlarged! Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" (2 Cor. 6:12-14). He's saying that the apparent 'cramping' or 'limitation' of being separate from the ways of the world is actually not a cramping at all- it's an enlargement of the heart's horizons. And this fits in admirably with the Hebrew idea of 'holiness'- a separation *from* sin /the world *unto* so much more.

6:13 *In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also*- The "return" was in that Paul wanted them to respond to his open hearted position before them. He wanted his attitude of transparency to elicit the same from them. Despite their revolt against him, he considers them his spiritual children (although he had baptized few of them); and so he wanted them to mimic his attitude in this.

6:14 *Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers*- Paul now attempts to put his finger on why they were not acting to him as towards a parent, mimicking his openness (:13). It is because of associations with others. Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. Thus Paul warns Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), or else he would come to them and not spare. He is quoting the LXX of Num. 25:3 concerning how Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, resulting in Moses commanding the murder of all those guilty- just as Paul later did to Corinth. Israel were not to sow "mingled seed" in their fields, or make clothes of "mingled" materials (s.w. LXX Lev. 19:19). The materials would, as the Lord Himself mentioned, tear apart. The garment wouldn't last. And sowing different seeds together likewise would bring no fruit to perfection. But the LXX in these passages is quoted in one place only in the NT: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). If we are, *the relationship can't work*. So don't think that if we yoke with unbelievers, as Corinth were with the Judaizers, or if we marry out of the Faith, it will all work out OK somehow. Unless there is serious repentance (and even then, not always), *it won't work*. It will be a garment patched up with two different materials.

In 1 Cor. 5 Paul seems to imply that the Corinthians were using temple prostitutes within the church services, specifically at the breaking of bread meeting. This was also found elsewhere in the early churches (1 Tim. 2, Rev. 2:20). Paul here is surely alluding to that issue, and showing that the boundaries between believers and unbelievers are hard and not porous.

For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion has light with darkness?- "Fellowship" and "communion", *kioinonia*, here carries the sense of 'What do they have in common?'. The Corinthians thought that they could be Christians, yoked to the Lord, whilst involved in idol worship and Judaism. But if Christ is the light- then all else is darkness. Paul has earlier used the metaphor of how

in the new creation, light shines forth out of the darkness. Although Paul was very tolerant of the Corinthians, he knew that ultimately there can be no compromise. It's not that they 'ought not to fellowship' with darkness; his point is that light and darkness are mutually exclusive categories, there is nothing in common between them. This is all being said in support of the appeal earlier in this verse not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Equal yoking is in order to get a job done- ploughing for the Lord, doing His work. And we shall not be able to participate in His work if we are unequally yoked. Not because we are not 'allowed' to, but because in practice we will be pulling different ways.

6:15 *And what agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever?*- "Belial" was a specifically Jewish term for 'satan'. The fact Paul uses it here demonstrates the degree of Judaist influence upon the Corinthians. The Bible doesn't teach the existence of a cosmic Satan figure as believed in by first century Judaism; the word "Belial" never occurs again in the Bible. But (as he often does) Paul reasons with them from their perspective. It was unthinkable in Judaism to suggest that there was middle ground between Belial and God; but this in practice was how they were living. But when "Belial" occurs in the Old Testament, the Septuagint translates it as transgressor, impious, foolish or pest. It does not occur in the Septuagint as a proper name- i.e. 'Satan' as a personal cosmic being. *Belial* in Hebrew means 'worthless', and it seems that it became personified in Jewish thought, eventually being twisted by them into a term for the cosmic 'Satan' figure which they came to wrongly believe in. So it could be that Paul is putting 'Belial' for what the Old Testament would call "sons of Belial", i.e. wicked men. They are then made parallel with "unbelievers", just as "Christ" is matched by "believers".

6:16 *And what agreement has a temple of God with idols?*- Paul here appeals to the Jewish obsession with the sanctity of the temple. To have idols within it was the greatest sacrilege. And yet the Corinthians were worshipping idols within the church, which is God's temple.

For we are a temple of the living God, even as God said- God 'lived' in the temple in that His glory and Spirit were present there; and He has placed His Spirit within each person who has believed and been baptized into His Son. But the Corinthians refused to be aware of this; hence in their personal and collective lives they were unaware of His presence and activity, and the need to keep themselves from defiling that holy space with idolatry. The quotation is not from any one place, but as was commonly done by Rabbis, is a mixture of language from Ex. 29:45; Lev. 26:11,12; Ez. 37:26,27; 43:7 and Zech. 2:10,11.

I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people- God now dwells in His people through the Spirit ("In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God by the Spirit", Eph. 2:22). John's Gospel records the many times where the Lord Jesus speaks of abiding or dwelling within His people, especially through the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit. Paul has questioned whether the Corinthians appreciate that the Spirit is indeed within them, thereby making them the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16,17). The presence of the Spirit makes our hearts and lives exclusively God's. But because Corinth failed to permit the Spirit to function and were wilfully ignorant of it, they therefore failed to perceive the exclusivity of God's claim upon them, and were involved with idol worship. Paul is writing to a church which included Gentiles who had fallen under the influence of Judaism. He is saying that the Old Testament people of God are now the baptized Christian community, indwelt by the Spirit, for whom holy place and space is now the heart of the believer and the collective church of God. If God is walking

amongst us and within us- then to be yoked together with an unbeliever is going to be impossible (:14).

The experience of God as "their God" was only if they came out from the world (:17). Paul has earlier stated that some of them have no relationship with God; "some have not the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. 15:34). God was not "their God"; for in practice, they refused to be indwelt by His Spirit, which was His stamp of exclusive ownership of them. Paul spoke of how those who join themselves with unbelievers (and marriage must surely have been in his mind) had to retract or repent of that relationship, and *then* God would receive them and *be their God* (2 Cor. 6:14-17). He was referring back to the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 17:7, that God would be the God of Abraham's seed. Although baptism makes us the seed of Abraham, we can step out of that covenant; and it seems this is what the Corinthians had done.

6:17 *Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will welcome you*- This is a quotation of Is. 52:11,12, initially concerning the need for the Jews to quit Babylon. Clearly Paul felt that the Corinthians were still within "Babylon" and needed to leave it, lest they be consumed in its judgments. This would be one of many examples of where Paul clearly saw the apostasy of the Corinthians; and yet he respects their status "in Christ" and assumes their final salvation, for he cannot personally consign them as individuals to condemnation at the last day. For we are not to judge in that sense.

God will confirm us in coming out from the world. He told His people to flee from Babylon, to come out of her and return to His land and Kingdom (Is. 48:20; 52:7; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:7). Babylon offered them a secure life, wealth, a society which accepted them (Esther 8:17; 10:3), houses which they had built for themselves (Jer. 29:5). And they were asked to leave all this, and travel the uncertain wilderness road to the ruins of Israel. They are cited in the NT as types of us in our exit from this world (2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4). Those who decided to obey God's command and leave Babylon were confirmed in this by God: He raised up their spirit to want to return and re-build Jerusalem, and He touched the heart of Cyrus to make decrees which greatly helped them to do this (Ezra 1:2-5). And so the same Lord God of Israel is waiting to confirm us in our every act of separation from the kingdoms of this world, great or small; and He waits not only to receive us, but to be a Father unto us, and to make us His sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:18).

We are to "be separate" in this life, as an act of choice in the myriad of daily decisions we face (2 Cor. 6:17)- and yet at the judgment, the Lord will "sever" (s.w.) the wicked from the just (Mt. 13:49), or "separate" the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:32). But we are to live out the judgment now in our separation from wickedness. And if we do this, wicked men shall "separate" from us- the judgment is worked out ahead of time (Lk. 6:22).

"I will welcome / receive you" quotes from Ez. 20:34, which is a plea for Judah to repent and enter the new covenant. They will be 'received' on forgiveness of their sins. As laboured in 2 Cor. 3, the Corinthians stood related to the new covenant, as we do. But we can be received if we come out from the Gentile world and make the journey to Zion, confessing our sins.

6:18 *And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty*- Some in Corinth did not have "the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. 15:34), i.e. living relationship with Him. If they came out from the world, then God would accept them as His children. And yet Paul writes and feels towards Corinth as if they are indeed God's children; even though in another sense he appeals for them to enter exclusive covenant with Him and become His children. This is a

powerful paradigm for us to follow, in our struggles as to how we should relate to children of God who by behaviour and beliefs are apparently not His children. We are to accept them *as* His children, ever honouring and respecting their commitment to Christ in baptism- but appeal for them to act appropriately and repent of their inappropriate positions.

Paul is alluding here to the LXX of 2 Sam. 7:14, where God promises David that He will be a father to David's Son, the Lord Jesus. As noted earlier, Paul applies language specifically relevant to the Lord Jesus to us; for this is what it means to be "in Christ". And so he changes the quotation, as he often does. "I will be *his* Father, and *he* shall be My *son"* becomes "I will be a father *to you* and *you* shall be My *sons and daughters*". All that is true of the Lord personally becomes true of us. This sets the scene for 2 Cor. 7:1 "Seeing then that *we* have these promises...". Indeed all the promises are primarily about the Lord Jesus, but through Him they are made to all of us who are in Him. I think that is what 2 Cor. 1:20 is really saying: "For no matter how many and whatever be the promises of God, in him is the ultimate Yes! Therefore also through him is the Amen, to the glory of God through us". And we must ever remember the context of Paul's argument- it is that seeing these things are true, we who are "in Christ" are not to be "in" the things of this world nor inappropriately joined to them. The promise of the virgin birth through the Spirit is hereby made to us. As Gal. 4 reasons, through the Spirit we progress from being not only adopted sons but to being God's actual sons, crying Abba [daddy], Father.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

7:1 *Therefore beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*- The promises which concluded chapter 6 related to God's people being His temple, where He would live through the Spirit. Paul is arguing that they have already been fulfilled in the Spirit-filled believer, and he is urging the Corinthians to behave appropriately to that status. So we could understand "Having these promises" as meaning 'Having had such promises fulfilled in us'. Yet for many in Corinth, it seems that they were still promises which they had not yet attained to, because of their resistance of the Spirit and the spiritual life.

The call to leave Babylon in Is. 52:11 has been quoted about the Corinthians in chapter 6. They were to live appropriate to the calling received. The usage of Is. 52:11 suggests that the people referred to were actually *in* spiritual Babylon; they had unequally yoked themselves together with unbelievers; they needed to separate (s.w. to divide, sever) themselves, and come out from among them. The idea of unequal yoking could be a marriage allusion. We must wash ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit even after baptism (2 Cor. 7:1); by doing so, we as it were go through the death-and-resurrection process of baptism again; we live it all once again. See on Gal. 3:27.

2 Cor. 7:1 exhorts us to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh, not being like those sinners who “defile the flesh” (Jude 8). These passages would imply that the flesh is defiled not by who we are naturally, but by human behaviour and mindsets from which we can separate ourselves. Whilst we consider ourselves so awful that we consider our flesh to be defiled *naturally*, we will never value the human person, and will give way too easily to sin as if it’s just our natural fate. See on Rom. 8:3. The

cleansing had already been done to them at their baptisms, when they were given the cleansing or sanctifying of the Spirit, as noted in 1 Cor. 1 and 2 Cor. 1. God thereby purified or cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). But they had not made use of this, and needed to believe and experience it again. "Flesh and spirit" is a term Paul has used in appealing for sexual purity at Corinth (1 Cor. 7:34). This verse is really an appeal to quit the idol worshipping and sexual misbehaviour which characterized the church.

7:2 *Open your hearts to us*- The appeal to open their hearts (see on 6:11 and 6:13) was in order for them to get in touch with their own consciences, and realize that indeed, Paul had not wronged anyone. As noted on 5:11, Paul appealed for them to look at their consciences, to look within their hearts- for their, potentially, the Spirit of God was dwelling and active, if they would allow it to be. The allegations that Paul had wronged or abused others were untrue, and Paul baldly states as much.

We wronged no one- The same word used by the Lord of Himself in the parable of Mt. 20:13: "I did you no wrong". Consciously or unconsciously, Paul's thinking was saturated with the Gospels. Paul twice uses the term in Act 25:10,11 in insisting that he had done no wrong to the Jews; so again we sense that it was Judaists who were behind this false accusation.

We corrupted no one- The word Paul uses about the Jewish false teachers corrupting the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:3). Perhaps the emphasis is therefore upon the word "we". Paul had not corrupted them- others had.

We took advantage of no one- This sounds like the usual accusations against Christian leaders of seeking sexual or financial advantage. Paul uses it in a financial sense in 2 Cor. 12:17,18 and in a sexual sense in 1 Thess. 4:6. The 'Satan', the adversary, the Jewish opposition, did indeed get an advantage over the Corinthians (s.w. 2 Cor. 2:11). Paul is stressing that *he* had not done this; but others had.

7:3 *I say it not to condemn you*- Paul can tell some at Corinth that they have no knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34), that they need to re-enter covenant with Him and come out from Babylon (as he has just said at the end of chapter 6). But he still refuses to condemn them- and therefore as he cannot pre-judge the outcome of the judgment seat of Christ, he accepts them as his brethren, uncondemned by him. Even if he begs them to act in a way which is appropriate for those who are the Lord's.

For as I have said before, you are in our hearts, to die together and live together- Dying and living together is the language of baptism. Just as we died and live together with Him and His body (Rom. 6:3-5), so we do with all the others who are in His body. Time and again, Paul feels that his salvation, his resurrection and glorification at the last day, is absolutely tied up with that of the Corinthians.

7:4 *Great is my confidence in you*- The following verses, climaxing at the end of the chapter with his claim to have "perfect confidence in you all", are all hard to square with what we know about the Paul-Corinth relationship. They were sceptical and critical of him, and throughout the Corinthian correspondence he is directly and indirectly answering their slander of him. But now he appears to launch into a section of ecstatic joy and praise of them, claiming things for them which clearly were not true. And he concludes the letter by threatening judgment upon them, deeply saddened by their rejection of him. The logic of his argument in this section appears faulty, as if they are words uttered on the cusp of emotional experience, not connected with reality, and as if he were just madly 'in love' with them, willing to see them as something which they simply were not in reality. And which reality he continually states and laments, both immediately before and after this section.

There are various possible explanations. The positive language about them may be pure sarcasm, of the kind he uses in 11:4; but it would be so extensive and never signalled as such to make this unlikely. He may have so counted them as "in Christ", imputing them as righteous when they were not, that he allows himself to express his emotions about them in writing in this way. Or he may have been 'buttering them up' because he moves straight on to ask them to come up with some money for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. Or perhaps he was so obsessed with his projects of saving them and of the Jerusalem Poor Fund, that the slightest positive news about them was amplified by him into ridiculously positive positions and claims on their behalf. Inspiration in this case would have allowed the letter to be written as is, full of Paul's irrational emotions at this point, just as the bitter rantings of David against his enemies are likewise recorded under inspiration in the Psalms.

It would be rather like the boy who madly loves a girl who isn't that interested in him. He invites her for countless dates, and she refuses. But then she calls him and asks if she can just drop by his place to pick up her favourite umbrella, which she left there a month ago. The boy of course agrees with glee, and as he waits for her to come, he gets onto social media and tells his friends that the girl has agreed to marry him and is on her initiative coming to visit him. And then afterwards she calls him and says her brother will just drop by and pick up the umbrella, as he is working in that area today, and she's too busy... This kind of irrational 'in love' behaviour can be seen in Hosea, where Hosea's wildly oscillating love and anger with Gomer reflect God's feelings for His faithless Israel.

Great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort, in all our affliction I am overflowing with joy!- This outbreak of basting, comfort and joy was because of some positive report from Titus, who had just come to Paul after a visit to Corinth. This letter is therefore being written in real time; Titus as it were comes through the door with the news, whilst Paul is up to chapter 7:3 of his letter. And instead of going back and editing what he has written earlier in the light of the coming of Titus, he just leaves it as is and utters this burst of enthusiasm for the Corinthians- to return to reality in chapter 8.

It should be noted that an alternative is to view 7:4 as picking up from 2:14, with the intervening material as some huge digression. But 2:15 flows right on in context from 2:14. Such a break is unnatural; and all the same, the position Paul held about the Corinthians in chapter 2 remains contradictory with the outburst of confidence he has in them in chapter 7, and that outburst also contradicts the position and lack of confidence he has in them throughout the rest of the letter. So this ingenious idea doesn't really help things.

7:5 *For even when we went into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side. Without were conflicts, within were fears*- "Our flesh" might mean that Paul's bodily health reflected his internal worries about the Corinthians and his ministry. "Even when..." would be a reference to the fact that the Lord had specifically called Paul to go and preach in Macedonia in a vision (Acts 16:9,10). And yet despite that specific invitation, the way was not easy and Paul was wracked with pressures and difficulties. Paul paints a hard picture of his time in Macedonia, as the backdrop against which the good news from Titus was received by him.

7:6 *Nevertheless God that comforts the lowly comforted us by the coming of Titus*- This is an allusion to the LXX of Is. 49:13. It would seem that Paul was so saturated with the Scriptures that he alludes to phrases at times without any significant relevance to his purpose or context; he is just using language and phrases which are in his mind at the time, just as we all do. God's comfort came to Paul through a human

mechanism- Titus. It's as if Paul is seeking to provide an exemplification of the principles he stated at the beginning of this letter- that our experiences are in order to "comfort" others. Seeing that the Corinthians remained an awful concern for Paul, as witnessed by the rest of the letter, we can suspect that Paul is wilfully seeking to paint things in these terms.

7:7 *And not by his coming only, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you*- The Corinthians are commended for comforting Titus who in turn passed on that comfort to Paul. This again is an attempt to make the situation a fulfilment of the principles of 1:3-6, where Paul states that God's comfort to believers is mediated through the comfort of others. On :6 I noted that there seems an element of forcing the situation with Titus to fit those requirements, when in reality there was not so much comfort at all from the Corinthians. For Paul has to go on to badger them to come up with the cash they have promised for his Jerusalem Poor Fund. It seems from 12:16-18 that the Corinthians accused Paul of using Titus to 'craftily... take advantage' of them. Yet here Paul wishes to give the impression that the Corinthians comforted Titus, who relayed that comfort to Paul, and thus Paul was deeply grateful to the Corinthians for comforting him. It seems Paul here in chapter 7 is exaggerating things in his own mind; see on :4 for an explanation of why.

While he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me. So that I rejoiced yet more- Both before and after this section in chapter 7, Paul is dealing extensively with the cynicism and criticisms of the Corinthians against him. If indeed their love for Paul was so deep and credible, why does he have to state in 8:8: "I am probing the sincerity of your love"? If their love for him was so passionate, why in chapter 11 does he have to defend himself against their cynicism towards him, to the point that he even gets sarcastic with them: "For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept- it seems you think you do well to go along with him" (11:4). "Forgive me this wrong" (12:13) is another example of a sarcasm which would be inappropriate in a mutually loving and respectful relationship. Clearly they were forsaking Paul in order to follow his enemies. This was hardly "your longing... your zeal for me". Zeal for him was what Paul subconsciously hoped for... and the news that they had been partially obedient to Paul on some point was perhaps wildly over-interpreted to mean they were zealous for him. The deep love for Paul which he likes to imagine as Titus gives him some news from Corinth is hardly for real, if he has to write to them: "I have become foolish. You compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you" (12:11). He desperately gave them reason to respect him- when such reasons ought to have been forthcoming from them. But they were not. 12:15 certainly sounds like they were falling out of love with Paul, rather than the more in love with him: "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less by you?". They directly accused him of dishonesty: "You say I was crafty, and got the better of you by deceit" (12:16), and "you seek proof that Christ speaks in me" (13:3). Is this really reconcilable with Paul's claim to have heard of "your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me"? Especially powerful is 12:19: "You think all this time that we are excusing ourselves to you". "All this time" means that throughout their relationship over the course of the correspondence, the Corinthians didn't trust Paul and thought he was making excuses for having abused them through the visit of Titus and in other ways. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this exalting language of chapter 7 is either bitter sarcasm, or Paul being overly positive about them.

We hardly get the impression that they were longing for him, zealous for him and mourning their disobedience to him. If that were indeed the case, surely Paul would have put a red line through what he had previously written in 2 Corinthians, and then not written as he did in the rest of the letter. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul *interpreted* the report of Titus in terms of his deepest psychological hopes for the Corinthians. "Mourning" is an intense term, only used of the women weeping for their baby children who had been murdered (Mt. 2:18). Such deep lamentation is hard to square with the rest of the letter. "So that I rejoiced *yet* more" suggests Paul was already rejoicing over the Corinthians, and now he did so the more after the report from Titus. But he has earlier explained that he cancelled an intended visit to them because he knew they would give him sorrow rather than the rejoicing he hoped to have for them (2:3). He hoped to rejoice in them- and that psychological expectation was so deep in his subconscious that when Titus mentioned some potentially positive things about them, he found himself rejoicing, and imagining that even before that, he had been rejoicing. See my explanation and analogy offered on :4.

The words Paul uses for longing, mourning and zeal are found in essence in his description of their response to his command to separate from the immoral man (:11,12). Yet the terms can mean 'indignation' and can equally refer to their self-justification in explaining why they had not initially removed the immoral person. Paul likes to turn that around to mean they were zealous "for me". But the rest of the letter shows that to be wishful thinking. These terms are also used by Paul in describing his longing, mourning and zeal for his brethren. It's as if he is subconsciously hoping that his feelings towards the Corinthians are theirs for him. He has explicitly stated that he hopes that his attitude of mind toward them will be theirs toward him (see on 6:11,13).

7:8 *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though only for a time*- We meet here the intriguing situation whereby Paul wrote an inspired letter with a command concerning the immoral man- and then regretted writing it. It seems that for a time Paul took false guilt over the matter. But he emerged from that, refusing to feel guilty for it. And there are other Biblical examples of refusing to take guilt when others feel that it should be taken. Recall how the Lord's own parents blamed Him for 'making them anxious' by 'irresponsibly' remaining behind in the temple. The Lord refused to take any guilt, didn't apologize, and even gently rebuked them (Lk. 2:42-51). In similar vein, Paul would not take guilt for their being upset with him. Likewise Absalom comforted his raped sister not to 'take it to heart', not to feel guilty about it, as it seems she was feeling that way, taking false guilt upon her for her rape (2 Sam. 13:20).

On a more human level, it seems that the Corinthians had replied that they were 'most upset' by Paul's letter commanding them to remove the immoral man, and criticizing them for not having done so. Yet Paul turns that pouting, self-justifying 'We are most upset by how you wrote to us, you know' into a claim that they had sorrowed unto repentance. He is making a word play with "sorrow". But the rest of 2 Corinthians shows that they still needed to experience Godly sorrow leading to real repentance (12:20,21).

7:9- see on Lk. 9:23-25.

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry to repentance. For you were made sorry in a Godly way- Paul writes here as if they were made sorrowful unto repentance by his letter, asking them to remove the immoral man from amongst them. And he therefore rejoices at their heart felt obedience to him. We would therefore assume that he could now go to Corinth with joy- for I noted on chapter 2 that Paul had delayed going to Corinth because he didn't want to have sorrow from them on his coming, but rather joy. But even by the end of this letter, Paul states clearly and repeatedly his unallayed fear that if he does visit them, "I shall not find you such as I would" (2 Cor. 12:20,21). He urges them to repent in response to his letter, because otherwise if he visited them, the Lord might use him to seriously punish them (2 Cor. 13:10). So his claim to be totally confident of their repentance and obedience seems somewhat hollow- for if they indeed had done all he had asked, then he could come to them with joy and not sorrow. But that clearly was not the case. If indeed the Corinthians had sorrowed to repentance, then why passages like: "See my suggestions for his exaggerated 'rejoicing' over them on :4.

That you might suffer harm from us in nothing- He appears to be quoting back to them their complaint that he had harmed them. He appears to be desperately trying to argue that all is good now, because their sorrow and hurt has led to their repentance and reconciliation with Paul. Although the rest of the letter shows this was not the case.

7:10 *For Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, it brings no regret; but the sorrow of the world works death*- Paul is trying to turn around their 'We were really upset you know by your letter, really sad you should write to us like that' as meaning they had sorrowed with Godly sorrow. But this was a desperate attempt to make things seem right.

The language here in 7:7-11 is allusive to David's penitence, because Paul wished to interpret the news from Titus as meaning that the Corinthians had repented of their deep immorality: "Ye were made sorry... ye sorrowed to repentance...ye were made sorry after a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly...*", Ps. 32:6)... for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation... ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam. 12:5)... what zeal... your mourning, your fervent mind" (AV). Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3)... my sorrow is continually before me... I will be sorry for my sin... many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps. 38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim. 6:10; Ex. 4:31; Is. 35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse. It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor. 12:21). As David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor. 6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is

motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" by God (2 Cor. 7:10 AV) could mean that if we repent / change our minds, then God will not repent of His plan for saving us. But more likely is Paul's fear that they will regret their repentance, repenting of a repentance, as it were. Rewriting and renegotiating the narrative of our sins so that we no longer know Jesus as "the sinner's friend" because we are no longer on our knees before Him. We must always be singing in our hearts "*He comes, He comes, the sinner's Friend*! *The fall'n to raise, the meek to bless*". And he says that this cannot be the case as Godly sorrow and repentance leads to salvation, and going back on it would mean death. Clearly Paul fears the Corinthians are unstable. We see that "repentance" is a position which God works towards achieving in us. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all *should come to* repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). There is a path there; repentance is granted, it is a gift from God. And yet man must repent. But that desire is confirmed by God. The Lord described His ministry as calling sinners to repent. Paul likewise summed up his ministry as preaching "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21; 26:20). If repentance refers to works, or penance, then we would expect to read about this in the New Testament. But there are no such lists of what works are required for repentance of specific sins. And *meta-noieo* without doubt means a meta-understanding, a meta-perception. *Noieo* is translated to think, to perceive, to understand, to consider etc.

We see that "sorrow" is related to repentance. It's possible that this results in a kind of depression which is not altogether wrong. For we are in one sense to live our lives in the spirit of repentance, since we are in an ongoing sense convicted of our sins. We note that the fruits of repentance in :11 are all attitudes, rather than actions. I would come down on the side of attitude rather than action when it comes to defining repentance. The idea of 'repentance' is used in the Old Testament in terms of attitude or feeling- e.g. God repented / was grieved that He had made man (Gen. 6:6), Isaac was comforted upon the death of his mother, he 'repented' in that he felt differently about her after he met his wife. Our natural tendency to justification by works means that we would rather do works, than have this sorrow for sin. And so the orthodox churches confused penance with repentance- works had to be done as penance if certain sins were committed. The focus was all on the external. The Catholic Douay-Rheims version of the Bible even replaces "repent" with "do penance". The Biblical emphasis upon sorrow of heart for sin has thereby been perverted. To claim that repentance means actions and cessation from sin is rather mythical really, because in reality we all continue to sin in more or less the same ways. As Paul laments in Romans 7, which is perhaps the most psychologically detailed window onto repentance which we have in the Bible. The idea that repentance means good works and never sinning again would appear the stuff of Sunday School Christianity; not properly thought through, and a kind of justification by works; rather than salvation by grace through faith. The call to "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38) was obeyed immediately. So there was no time for works of repentance to be done; repentance clearly enough was a contrition of mind rather than works. This is not to say that action, life lived in practice, is unimportant. Rather is it to place the onus where the Bible places it- which is on the heart, upon the internal rather than the external. The Lord bids us to turn and become like children (Mt. 18:3)- again, an attitude. The repentance of the prodigal is likewise presented in terms of internal attitudes rather

than works of putting things right. Of course, the mental attitude of repentance is intended to have practical results, but those works are separate from the repentance itself. Paul's message was that "[Men] should repent and turn to God performing deeds appropriate to the repentance" (Acts 26:20). And repentance is not perfectionism nor future living without failure. Although deep repentance is going to have an actual, concrete impact upon life lived. We need to bear this in mind in considering the repentance of others. Some who have sinned against us may actually repent in their hearts. But their pride [which we too share] somehow precludes them from saying so to us.

7:11 *For observe this very thing: you sorrowed in a Godly manner, and what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be pure in the matter*- See on 7:7. This diligence and zeal after repentance must be squared with 12:20,21: "I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not as I would wish, and should myself be found by you such as you would not wish. Lest by any means there should be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality and sensuality that they have practiced". It could be argued that Paul is thrilled at their obedience over "the matter", some specific point of obedience. But the overall tenor of chapter 7 is that he is thrilled with them and has complete confidence in them "in everything" (:16). The comparison with 12:20,21 [and similar passages] leaves me concluding that Paul here is carried away with a loving positivity about the Corinthians. In 13:5 he seems to doubt whether they are really "in the faith"; yet here he speaks so positively of their Godly zeal. Their "indignation" and 'vehemence' may well have been indignation that Paul had asked them to separate from the immoral brother. But Paul now likes to interpret that as part of their Godly zeal. "You proved yourselves to be pure" sounds like they may have given some reason excusing them for not having previously separated from the immoral brother (1 Cor. 5); and Paul accepts that explanation as he understands it from Titus. Their 'clearing of themselves', *apologia*, self defence, sounds like self justification- doubtless giving excuses as to why they had not initially removed the immoral brother, and had now done so, in apparent obedience to Paul's demand they do so. Paul wishes to understand their indignant self-justification as Godly sorrow.

The Greek word *zelos* means both zeal in a good sense (2 Cor. 7:11,12; 9:2; 11:2)- and also it's translated jealousy, strife, envying (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20). Likewise, *thumos* is used both about righteous anger, and also fits of anger which are sinful. It's clear enough from these linguistic facts, quite apart from our practical experience, that zeal turns into strife far too often and far too easily. The problem is, we so easily defend the strife, the jealousy, the anger… as righteous zeal, Godly anger. The line seems to us very fine, although it isn't in God's eyes. I observe too often brethren who appear so full of anger, but never reveal it openly… until it comes to some matter connected with their religious life. And then, wow, they let it all rip on some poor person, feeling they are justified.

7:12 *So although I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong; but that your earnest care for us might be*

revealed to you in the sight of God- This argument seems desperate. The reasons given for demanding the removal of the immoral man were given in 1 Cor. 5 as being because a little yeast affects the whole lump of dough. But now, Paul says that the whole thing was just a test to make them realize before God, in their consciences, how much they cared for / respected Paul. Paul has earlier appealed to their consciences as being proof of his sincerity, and now he says that the whole command to discipline the immoral brother was in order for them to have revealed to themselves how much they cared for Paul. If the whole request to remove the brother were really just an experiment to prove this, then it reveals a marked lack of care for the person involved; for Paul urges them to receive the brother back lest he be psychologically shattered by the exclusion experienced (2:7). All the contradictions within the argument can only really be explained by reading Paul here as utterly desperate to be reconciled with the Corinthians, taking blame on himself as much as he could, and trying to slip past the problem by saying it had all only been an experiment. Their "care" is the same word as in the preceding :11, translated "diligence" (AV "carefulness"). Paul is saying that the fact they did eventually remove the immoral man shows their diligence *towards him*. But that was just how he wished to see it. For the rest of the letter shows their deep disrespect of Paul.

7:13 *Therefore we have been comforted, and in our comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all*- Was this really what had happened, with Titus feeling joyful and refreshed by them? 8:23 and 12:18 imply that they accused Titus of being Paul's puppet and part of a crafty scheme to get money out of them. According to the [uninspired] footnote at the end of the letter, 2 Corinthians was written by Paul and Titus. The "us" references in the letter would therefore refer to Paul and Titus; and it is clear that Corinth were cynical and critical towards the "us", which would include Titus.

Yet all the same, Paul's joy for the joy of Titus is instructive. Paul sincerely felt the joy of others as being his personal joy (Rom. 12:15 cp. 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 2:3). Because we are in one body, we rejoice with those who rejoice. “We are partakers of *your* joy”, Paul could write. The comfort which Titus felt was that which Paul felt (2 Cor. 7:6,7,13); Corinth’s joy was Paul’s (2 Cor. 7:13). This should ensure a true richness of experience for the believer in Christ, sharing in the joys and sorrows, the tragedies and triumphs, of the one body on the Lord. “He that separateth himself seeketh his own desire” (Prov. 18:1 RV). This says it all. Any separation from our brethren, whether it be from personal dislike of them or for fear of losing friends amongst others who order us to separate from them… is all ultimately selfish.

7:14 *For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true*- If Paul wrote so toughly to the Corinthians in both the recorded epistles, it is unlikely he kept Titus in the dark about their problems. So it seems Paul is surely putting the most positive possible interpretation on his guidance to Titus before Titus went to visit Corinth. Yet he insists that he 'boasted' to Titus of their obedience, and he feels he had been justified. We will go on to read that he had boasted of the Corinthians' intention to support the Jerusalem Poor Fund- even though it seems they never came through on their promises. So Paul boasted of them because he so loved them that he dearly wished them to be spiritual and obedient. He counted them as far more than they really were.

7:15 *And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him*- Again, as noted on :13, we have to recall that 8:23 and 12:18 imply that they accused Titus of being Paul's puppet

and part of a crafty scheme to get money out of them. If indeed they received Titus with "fear and trembling" then this was of little lasting consequence. And their "obedience" was hardly very significant, because in 10:6 Paul speaks of their "obedience" (s.w.) as not having been yet achieved. Again we are left with the impression that Paul is interpreting their behaviour in the most positive possible way, to the point of being unrealistic.

7:16 *I rejoice that in everything I can have perfect confidence in you*- Paul had every reason not to have confidence in them. The confidence he exudes here may be a radical example of imputing righteousness to those in Christ. Or it may also be an example of him being caught up on the cusp of obsessive-compulsive emotion, wildly over-positive about them. The word for "confidence" is used almost exclusively in 2 Corinthians (5:6,8; 10:1,2). Paul's confidence in the Lord spilled over into his confidence about his brethren. Whatever, we have here a great example of love and positive attitude toward those who are hopelessly weak. Even though at the end of this letter, he bluntly threatens them with Divine judgment for their impenitence. It's as if he is praising a difficult child for one good thing which they did do [more or less] right. And elsewhere, we see Paul's positive confidence in brethren whom he also wrote to as if he was not very hopeful in their conformity to the things he was asking of them: "I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is" (Gal. 5:10). Or "we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do, and will do, the things which we command" (2 Thess. 3:4). Or to Philemon: "Confident of your obedience, I write to you" (Philemon 21). Paul's positivity about others, however we interpret it, is indeed an inspiration. He reflected the love that hopes all things. And yet there is also the sense that he was just determined that his relationship with Corinth would work out, and that they would make the collection for the Jerusalem believers. He says that he determinedly decided that his next visit to them would not cause him any sorrow (2 Cor. 2:1) because they were going to be responsive to him. And there is a degree to which he was just set on trying to make things work, when sadly they would not. His ecstatic response at the report of Titus leads him at this point of writing to claim he now has confidence in them "in everything". But the rest of the letter shows that this was unrealistic.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

8:1 *Moreover brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia*- Paul now turns his attention to his pet project- the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The Corinthians had agreed to contribute, but apart from a handful of pro-Paul loyalists listed in 1 Cor. 16, donations had not been forthcoming. Paul is now trying to persuade them to donate as they had promised. There seems no evidence that his project every really worked out- he has to ask for prayers that whatever he gathered would even be accepted by the Jerusalem elders (Rom. 15:31)- which makes us wonder how severe the plight really was in Jerusalem, for hungry people will accept food from whoever. When he finally arrived in Jerusalem, it appears [see my commentary on Acts] that he was arrested at the investigation of the Jerusalem Christians. The entourage which accompanied the cash and goods taken to Jerusalem doesn't include anyone from Corinth (Acts 20:4); and there is no record that the Corinthians ever heeded Paul's appeals here and actually donated. Further, there is no historical evidence for a long drawn out famine in Jerusalem lasting several years.

Paul later in this chapter says that his Fund had begun over a year previously, and by the time the goods or cash were collected and taken to Jerusalem, we must allow at least another year. We wonder whether there was indeed the urgent need in Jerusalem which Paul imagines there was. He wished to assist "the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26)- not Palestine generally, nor all the believers at Jerusalem, but an impoverished group amongst the Jerusalem church. It would seem to me that Paul is fixated with Jerusalem (as I noted several times in commentary on Acts and Paul's determination to make a witness there), and wishes to force some fulfilment of the Kingdom prophecies which envisage Gentile wealth being brought up to the Jerusalem temple. It is noteworthy that Paul gives four reasons for the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and only one of them is the actual relief of poverty; the others are of a more abstract and spiritual nature (9:13).

Paul begins his delicate exercise by pointing out the generosity of the Macedonian churches, where he was located at the time of writing 2 Corinthians. The Corinthians 'knew' God's grace given to the Macedonians, and how they had responded in grace / giving. Grace leads to grace in practice. That is the idea. He speaks likewise in :9, that we also 'know' the grace of the Lord Jesus. His becoming poor for us is to elicit our giving, as He gave out. I will suggest that the point of His 'becoming poor' is specifically His death on the cross. That is to motivate "love", which is practically manifest through giving. True Christian giving is therefore motivated by something beyond the mere secular sense of guilt about having more than some others. Our giving is motivated by the giving / grace which we have been given. 1 Corinthians 1 is clear that the Corinthians were generally not wealthy, but they had been "enriched in all things" in spiritual terms. It is those spiritual gifts, of the Spirit, which should motivate our giving. Rom. 15:25-27 makes the same point in the same context: "For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share their material blessings".

Paul often uses *charis*, "gift" or "grace", with reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit in the heart which all believers receive at baptism. The Corinthians had been given the same gift, but hadn't actualized it, and were therefore still not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). By "the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia", Paul effectively means 'I want to tell you how much they have given'. But he speaks instead of the grace / gift given to them. The intentional confusion is to make the point that the gift / grace give to the Macedonians had elicited in them a grace / giving to the Lord's cause. Paul's repeated subtext throughout the Corinthian correspondence is that the key to their greater spiritual response is their awareness of the Spirit within them. The same words for 'grace given' are used of how the Spirit is given to all believers (Jn. 1:17; Eph. 4:7 "unto every one of us is given grace", and often); and specifically of how grace had likewise been given to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:4).

8:2 *For in a severe test of affliction*- The severe famine in Palestine was matched by a severe test of some sort in Macedonia; perhaps there was a famine there too.

Their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part- They were indeed cheerful givers, for their joy was the motivation for their giving. Their joy for what the Lord had done for them, for the "abundance" [s.w.] of His grace and giving to them (Rom. 5:17), led to their giving to the poor. The request for the Corinthians to be cheerful givers was therefore directly based on the Macedonian example (9:7). Likewise the "generosity" of the Macedonians was to be emulated by the Corinthians (9:11,13).

"Their abundant joy" references the theme of joy found throughout Philippians, with around 17 Greek words related to "joy" being used, and continuing the theme of Paul and Silas rejoicing when in prison there, singing hymns at midnight. But their poverty is called "extreme". We know from Phil. 4:15-18 that the Philippians were very generous to Paul's mission: "You yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need... I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you". If these gifts were from the plural "churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:2), but Paul says the Philippians alone donated, we can conclude that as in Corinth, the "church" at Philippi was comprised of various house churches. Surely the homes of Lidia and the prisonkeeper were amongst them. Their recorded generosity means that they heeded Paul's call to them, as generally poor and persecuted people, to be "not looking to your own interests but actually to those of others" (Phil. 2:3,4). For poverty inevitably leads to the tendency to think only of our own interests.

8:3 *For according to their power, I testify, yes and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord*- The idea of *kata* their *dunamis* occurs in the parable of the talents, which are given to believers on conversion (Mt. 25:11 AV "according to his several ability"). That this refers to the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers after baptism is confirmed by *kata dunamis* being used in exactly this context in Ephesians. The Spirit is given according to God's power (Eph. 1:17,19). We are strengthened according to God's power in the Spirit within the "inner man" (a point made three times, each time using *kata dunamis*- Eph. 3:7,16,20, repeated in Col. 1:11,29). The Macedonians had been given the *charis*, the gift of the Spirit; and according to that gift, they in turn were giving. The Spirit therefore influenced them and confirmed them in their generosity; it worked within the "inner man". For that is where decisions relating to generosity are taken. But *beyond* the psychological power inspired by the Spirit, the Macedonians donated even more. And that is quite something. This makes the best sense of what is otherwise an awkward verse: "For *kata* their power [*dunamis*], I bear record, and *huper* their power [*dunamis*], they were willing of themselves" (AV). This last phrase [which is the literal translation of the Greek] finally makes sense- once we realize that they gave according to the power and will of the Spirit within them, but they of themselves, beyond the influence of the Spirit, donated even more. Paul's persistent concern is that the Corinthians had been given the Spirit, but were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). He seems to blame their lack of donations as related to the same essential problem.

We can give on some kind of proportionate level to what we have. Or we can give *more than we can afford*; the kind of giving the Philippians are commended for (and no, Paul didn't scold them for being irresponsible): "In their deep poverty... to their power... yea, and *beyond their power*" (2 Cor. 8:2). The basic message of so many of the parables is that our generosity to the Lord's cause should be offered without a calculated weighing up process first of all, and with a recognition that such giving may be contrary to all human wisdom. Thus the rich man sells *all he has* and buys a pearl- he's left with nothing, just this useless ornament. He doesn't sell what he has spare, his over-and-above... *all he had* went on that pearl, for the sheer joy and surpassing, all-demanding excellence thereof. His wife, colleagues, employees- would have counted him crazy. He acted against all the conventions of human wisdom. Likewise the shepherd leaves 99% of his flock unguarded and goes chasing madly after the one weak, straying one. This was crazy, humanly; one per cent loss wasn't

unreasonable. But he risked all, for love of the one. And in this He set us a pattern for forsaking all we have.

8:4 *Begging us earnestly to accept this grace as a token of their fellowship in this service to the saints*- The begging was perhaps necessary because Paul realized they had given more than they could sensibly afford to give. It was "a token of their fellowship in this service" in the sense that Paul understood donating to the Fund as an evidence that they fellowshipped their poorer brethren in Jerusalem. The language of "fellowship" is used (as in 9:13) because Paul's intention was to bind together in fellowship the Jerusalem Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians in pagan Corinth. It was a grand idea and concept, but the Jerusalem Christians returned to the temple system of Judaism, not heeding the calls in Revelation to come out from that latter day Babylon [spiritually] lest they be consumed in her AD70 judgments.

8:5 *And their giving was beyond our hope; for through the will of God, first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us*- "First" can mean 'most importantly'. He saw their response to the Lord as their response to him- because he appreciated the degree to which he as their converter was a full manifestation of the Lord whom he preached. But all the same, on a human level, Paul's position on support for the Jerusalem Poor Fund seems far too personal. He sees support of it as support for him. He perceives it as a test of their personal loyalty to him. And here he says so explicitly. Their generosity was beyond even what the Spirit had enabled them to give (see on :3). But to Paul, even more importantly, the Macedonians had given themselves "to the Lord and to us". Paul sees himself as manifesting the Lord Jesus to them; and thereby their attitude to him was their attitude to the Lord. We too can easily seek personal loyalty from others, rather than the overall service of the Lord Jesus by them.

The Macedonians gave "themselves". That is significant. For in :9, the argument will be that we are to allow ourselves to be motivated by the example of the Lord in His death. And He too gave Himself, He "poured out His soul unto death", He offered up "Himself", gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20), His soul was made an offering for sin. The argument throughout will be that giving is a matter of the mind; the amount of cash, as it were, is irrelevant. The Macedonians firstly gave themselves to the Lord Jesus, in response to His giving to them. But Jesus is His body. Giving ourselves over to Him means giving ourselves to the body of Christ. And this giving is not to be a mere matter of words, as it had been for Corinth, a shrugging assent that generosity to the poor is no bad thing.

Paul parallels *giving* to the poor believers with *giving* our own selves to the Lord. Every act of generosity to the Lord's people is a giving to Him personally. Paul had obviously grasped the huge implications of the Lord's teaching that whenever His people are cold, thirsty, in need... then He is in such need, and every ministration to them is a ministration to Him. 2 Cor. 8:9 teaches that our response to the Lord's sacrifice should be giving to others *until we are poor*, reflecting the Lord's making of Himself 'poor' to the extent of being left naked and dead, hanging upon a stake of wood. We must review all our generosity in this light. Is it a giving of our abundance, or is it a giving until we make ourselves poor...? The practical implications of this are *huge*.

8:6 *So much so that we urged Titus*- Paul asked Titus to visit the Corinthians. He himself "of his own accord" decided to visit them. But God put the idea in the heart of Titus (2 Cor. 8:6,16,17). The freewill desire of Titus was confirmed by the hand of God operating on the heart of Titus. It could be argued that it was God who put the

idea there in the first place, foreknowing that of Titus's "own accord" he would wish to do this work.

That as he had started, so he should complete among you also this act of grace- "This act of grace" is literally as AV "the same grace". Paul wants the Corinthians to respond to the Spirit gift / grace given to them just as the Macedonians had. So the mission of Titus was to make the Corinthians respond to grace in the same way as the Macedonians had- by donating to his pet project, the Jerusalem Poor Fund. But response to God's grace is not uniform... Titus had "started" the work by arranging their contributions, and now he was asked to complete it by getting the promised cash and donations out of them. Again, "grace" is put for their response to God's grace- in giving / being gracious. And this is true for all time, not just in the particular situation here in view. God's grace cannot be passively received. We are to respond to it by likewise giving and being gracious.

8:7 *So as you abound in everything, in faith and speech and knowledge and in all earnestness and in your love to us, see that you excel in this grace also-* These are references to the Spirit gifts which the Corinthians had potentially received, and which they claimed to practice (1 Cor. 1:5; 12:8-10). Yet Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 has revealed that in reality they were only pretending to have the Spirit gifts of speech and knowledge. They were acting as the pagans acted at the Delfi oracle, speaking in unintelligible utterances and calling this the Spirit gift of the Spirit. They didn't really practice the actual gifts of the Spirit, for they were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). They *claimed to* "abound" in the Spirit gifts, but as noted throughout 1 Cor. 12, they did not in reality. Likewise their abounding "love to us" was imputed by Paul- for the rest of 2 Corinthians shows that they were far from being in love with him. But Paul takes a positive view of them, and reasons that if indeed they feel filled with the Spirit and with love, then they will also perform this *charis*, this grace or Spirit gift- by actually giving in material terms. Again, Paul is arguing that their actual giving will be a function of the gift or grace of the Spirit being allowed to operate within them.

We cannot know God's grace without likewise 'abounding' with it ourselves. This can be in acts of generosity; the early believers were to 'abound' in generosity to the needy (2 Cor. 8:7- the same word used about the abounding of God's grace). But the spirit of 'abounding' is far more than material generosity. We are to 'abound' in the work of edifying the church (1 Cor. 14:12; 15:58); abounding in prayer for each other (1 Thess. 3:10), rather than just praying once about someone else's problem as a conscience-salving formality. Ask yourself- whether your prayer for others is of the 'abounding' quality that the Lord's intercession was and is *for* you? We are to 'abound' in praise- for God's abounding grace abounds through us to His glory if we praise Him for that grace (2 Cor. 4:15). And so... how is your praise? A mouthing off of familiar words and lyrics, that you've hummed and hymned for years? Or the internal praise that has some real fire and flame to it? As God makes His grace *abound* to us, *we* are to *abound* to every good work (2 Cor. 9:8). We are to 'abound' in love to each other, as God abounds to us (1 Thess. 3:12). This is why there will never be a grudging spirit in those who serve properly motivated by God's abundance to us. This super-abounding quality in our kindness, generosity, forgiveness etc. is a feature lacking in the unbelievers around us. If we salute our brethren only, then we do not super-abound (Mt. 5:47); if we love as the world loves its own, then we have missed the special quality of love which the Father and Son speak of and exemplify. This radical generosity of spirit to others is something which will mark us apart from this world.

8:8 *I speak not as direct commandment*- The Jerusalem Poor Fund project was not a direct commandment from the Lord Jesus nor directly inspired by some Holy Spirit edict. It was Paul's own initiative. Yet more specifically, Paul is writing of his request that they actually give the promised contributions to Titus at this time.

But rather through showing you the earnestness of others I am probing the sincerity of your love- AV "But by occasion of the forwardness of others". Those "others" are the Macedonians. Paul excuses his urging of Corinth to come up with the cash because the speed [Gk.] or diligence of the Macedonians requires the Corinthians to now respond. The whole argument sounds somewhat contrived. The "probing" or testing is an image from metallurgy, and has been used about the final crucible of judgment day in 1 Cor. 3:13. Is it too much to think that Paul thought that their final judgment was related to whether they gave toward their poor brethren in this way? In which case he appears to be far too obsessive about garnering support for his project. If indeed Corinth had such passionate love and "fervent mind" toward Paul as he claims in 7:7, and if truly "I have perfect confidence in you all" (7:16), then why this need to probe the sincerity of that love? Clearly his argument is contradictory- because his outpouring of enthusiasm in chapter 7 was on the cusp of emotion, although the recording of it is Divinely inspired.

But whatever, love must of course be sincere. Unless our ‘love’ reflects a genuine care and respect for the other person, it isn’t love. William Barclay suggests that the Greek word *porneia*, prostitution, is rooted in the verb *pernumi*- to sell. If our love is the love which is bought and sold, which goes to the highest bidder, which treats its object as a thing which can be discarded, or ‘loved’ without truly intimate union… then it’s actually a form of prostitution. Each time we ditch a friend because the going got tough, withheld love because we weren’t getting from it what we intended… we’re essentially showing a spirit of prostitution rather than love. This is why love in the end must always find practical expression in a self-sacrificial way. The Corinthians were to show the sincerity of their love [implying there can be a fake ‘love’] by their generosity to the poor believers in Judea (2 Cor. 8:7,8,24).

8:9- see on Mt. 13:46.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor as a pauper, that you through his poverty might become rich- I have argued throughout this section that Paul is going too far in trying to patch things up with the Corinthians and is urging them to donate to the Jerusalem Poor Fund using whatever reasoning he can lay hold of. He now urges giving on the basis that the Lord Jesus was rich but became poor for us so that we who were poor might be made rich, and therefore they ought to give of their material wealth to the poorer brethren in Jerusalem. But 1 Corinthians 1 has stated that there were not many wealthy individuals in the Corinthian church. And thinking through the argument used here, the logic is far from tight. For the Lord Jesus was not materially rich. Our enrichment by Him is surely spiritually. But He did not lose his spiritual riches, becoming spiritually poor, in order that we who are spiritually poor should be enriched spiritually. Neither did He lose any material riches in order to spiritually enrich us. Not only is the logic of the argument not tight, but the meaning of riches and poverty is confused. The Lord's self giving on the cross should indeed motivate us to material generosity to the poor. But the metaphors used here are too mixed to make a very compelling argument once it is more closely analysed. He seems to make a similar mistake in :15 (see note there). This seems typical of the desperate tactics Paul is using to cajole the Corinthians into giving to the fund. There is no evidence they

ever did, nor that what support was gathered from other churches was ever actually accepted when it arrived in Jerusalem.

The reasoning here needs to be read and re-read. I don't think the idea has to be that the Lord was rich and then became poor so that we who were poor might become rich. The idea doesn't have to be of transferrence of assets, as it were. He once had something which He then didn't have, because He gave it to us. Rather I suggest He gave to us because He was rich. And that giving was through becoming poor, which I take to be a reference to His mentally taking upon Himself the status of a slave in His death. This was so that we who are poor might become spiritually rich, like He is. This reading depends upon us no longer seeing 'giving' as transferrence of assets. And the essential idea of 'giving' here is to give ourselves mentally. You can be a mentally 'giving' person without at all losing any of your assets. You give, spiritually / mentally give, because you are a spiritually rich person. We think of 'giving' forgiveness. Such giving doesn't leave us depleted. In this context, we can be poor but make others rich (2 Cor. 6:10). In terms of Phil. 2:5-7, the Lord took upon Himself the form of a slave, so that we might become rich like Him- in spiritual terms. And that 'making rich' is defined for us in 1 Cor. 1 as being "enriched by Him in all things".

We have each been touched by God's grace, and His influence upon us leads us to reach out to influence others by lives of grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus cannot be received passively. The Corinthians' response must be to make themselves poor, so that their poor Jewish brethren might be made richer. *Every* person who has been enriched in the Lord Jesus will in turn respond in a life and even a body language that somehow transforms others. Prov. 13:8 speaks of how our attitude to wealth is a crucial factor in our eternal destiny: "The ransom of a man's life are his riches". Just prior to that we read in Prov. 13:7: "There is that makes himself poor, yet has great riches". This verse is actually part quoted in 2 Cor. 8:9 and Phil. 2:7, about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus made himself poor, of no reputation, and now has been so highly exalted. Our living out of the Lord's cross is shown in our making of ourselves poor. That is surely the unmistakable teaching of this allusion. The connection with Phil. 2 is significant; for it was on the cross, and not at any so-called incarnation, that the Lord took upon Himself the mind of the lowest, poorest slave. And the cross was and is to be the ultimate psychological motivation to give ourselves to the Lord who gave Himself for us, and it is this which will overflow into material giving to His body. But once the motivation is established as being from our response to the cross, giving is no longer merely the realm of the wealthy. It is not mere philanthropy. It is to be the mindset in which all live who have known the giving of their Lord to them. And their giving will then be a manifestation of the Lord's giving to them. And so grace as it were circulates.

Do we struggle to be truly generous to the Lord's cause, and to turn our words an vague feelings of commitment into action? Corinth too were talkers, boasting of their plans to give material support to the poor brethren in Jerusalem, but doing nothing concrete. Paul sought to shake them into action by reminding them of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" on the cross (2 Cor. 8:9). Corinth had few wealthy members, but Paul knew that the cross of Christ would inspire in them a generous spirit to those even poorer than they. The richer should be made poor by what the Lord did, Paul is saying- not harmlessly giving of their pocket money. For He gave in ways that hurt Him, ways that were real, meaningful and thereby effective and powerful.

To put it mildly, our experience of His death for us should lead us to be generous spirited in all ways. In appealing for financial generosity to poorer brethren, Paul sought to inspire the Corinthians with the picture of Christ crucified: “For ye know the grace [gift / giving] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor [Gk. a pauper], that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In the light of this, we should not just be generous from the abundance of what we have; we should become as paupers in our giving. The Lord’s giving wasn’t financial; it was emotional and spiritual. And so, Paul says, both materially and in these ways, we should likewise respond to our brethren, poorer materially or spiritually than we are. “The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:14 Philips; it “urges us on", NRSV).

Because in the Kingdom we will be given all the wealth that is Christ's, therefore we should sell what we now have and give to the poor (Lk. 12:33 cp. 44 NIV). But more than this, in a sense God *has now* given us the Kingdom (Lk. 12:32 NIV), and therefore we should in natural response to this give of our blessings (in whatever form) to make the poor rich, just as Christ did to us (2 Cor. 8:9 alludes here). Basically, according to this, generosity (both of spirit and material giving) is proportionate to our faith that we both have now and will receive the matchless riches of God's grace in Christ. "Grace" is used by Paul in 2 Cor. to refer to both the grace God has given us and the grace of giving which the Corinthians ought to respond to it with; as God had reached into their lives, so they should reach into the lives of their poverty stricken brethren.

In appealing for the Corinthians to be generous, Paul points out that the Lord Jesus became a pauper for our sakes, and therefore, because of the riches of salvation He has given to us, the *least* we can do is to reach out into the lives of others with what riches we may have (2 Cor. 8:9 Gk.). This is why in 2 Cor. 8:1,19; 9:14, Paul uses the word "grace" to mean both the grace of God and also our grace (gifts) in works of response. Thus he talks of bringing the "grace" of the money collected for the poor saints; he is talking about the gift they had made; but in the same context he speaks of God's grace in Christ. If we have received the grace of God's forgiveness and salvation (and so much more) in Christ, we must show that grace, that gift, by giving. Our heart tells us to give, our heart is in our giving, it's a natural outcome of a believing mind (2 Cor. 9:5-8, J.B. Phillips). Our giving is a quite natural outcome of our faith in and experience of the cross.

The suggestion has been made that because Jesus increased in favour with men, He may have gotten on quite well in His secular life. Paul speaks about how although Jesus was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor [a pauper, Gk.] that we through His poverty might be rich. Clearly the reference is to the 'poverty' of the cross, that we might be spiritually rich- for He doesn't enable us to get materially rich through following Him. And yet the context of Paul's words is about the need to give up our material riches for Christ's people, and he cites the example of Jesus to inspire us in this.

8:10 *And herein I give my judgment*- The idea is 'my advice'. Paul has stated that in these matters he is not speaking by direct Divine commandment (:8); this is all his personal initiative.

For this is expedient for you- There is no clear reason given for the expediency which would arise from their giving to the Fund. The word means 'profitable' and is used in 1 Cor. 12:7 of how the Corinthians had been given the Spirit for their 'profit'. Perhaps Paul means that if the Spirit is really within them, then they will make the donation and 'profit' thereby.

Who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to desire to give but to actually give- The beginning was apparently in undertakings given to Titus that they would donate to the collection. Hence :6 speaks of Titus having begun this work in them, and now coming to them to finish it. This would place the previous visit of Titus about a year previously. Paul says that they had begun to do it a year ago- but then in :11 he asks them to "perform the doing of it" (AV). Again, Paul appears to be exaggerating. Had they actually begun 'doing', actually giving, i.e. putting money aside in collections, a year ago? Apparently not, for he asks them now to 'do' so (:11). But he likes to imagine that they began collecting a year previously as they had apparently undertaken to Titus.

8:11 *But now complete the doing also*- See on :10.

That as there was the willingness to want to give, so there may be the completion of the desire also, according to your ability- Again there seems a contradiction; Paul has said that they began actually giving a year ago (:10), but now a verse later he downgrades that to saying that they had only expressed a willingness to give, and he urges them to now complete or (AV) 'perform' what they had intimated. We get the consistent impression of weak argumentation, because Paul is seeking by any means possible to get them to actually donate. "according to your ability" is an attempt to render a difficult and ambiguous Greek phrase; the GNB may be better with "do it with what you now have", as if to say 'As you haven't been actually collecting funds, well OK, just give what you right now have in your pocket'. This would mean that his claim that they had begun 'actually giving' a year ago (:10) was at best exaggerated. The loose logic in argumentation arises it seems from a desire by all means to get something out of them, in order to make the grand concept come true- of Gentile Corinthian Christians giving funds towards the welfare of conservative orthodox Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul's focus upon the positive is really tremendous, especially coming from a man so far spiritually ahead of the weak Corinthians. He commends their "readiness" to donate, whilst pointing out they are more talk than action; and later speaks to others of "*our* readiness", identifying himself with the Corinthian brethren whose lack of actual action had got him into so many problems in fulfilling what he had confidently promised on their behalf (2 Cor. 8:11,12,19). He even gloried to others of their "readiness" (2 Cor. 9:2), whilst clearly not turning a blind eye to their failure to actually produce anything concrete.

The allusion here may be to Mk. 12:43. Paul saw those generous ecclesias as the widow with one mite, and also as rich Mary giving what she had (Mk. 14:8 = 2 Cor. 8:11). This reveals his sensitivity; he knew some of them were poor, some rich. Yet he saw they were all making a real effort. And he understood this in terms of characters in the Gospels.

8:12 *For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has*- See on :11. The "readiness" would refer to their agreement a year ago to support the Fund. They are to give from what they have in hand right away, and not to worry if the

actual sum was small. The language of 'acceptability' is appropriate to sacrifices on the altar being accepted by God (1 Pet. 2:5). Yet Rom. 15:31 uses the same word in casting doubt upon whether the collection would be 'accepted' by the Jerusalem Jews. Even if men don't accept our sacrifices, then God does.

Not according to what he does not have- He is saying that lack of great resources need not stop their actual giving, because the desire to give ("the readiness") is critical And that principle is true for all time. A mean spirit is often excused by the knowledge that one doesn't have much to give. But the desire to be generous is critical, and means that the amount given is not of itself important. Paul had boasted for the past year that the Corinthians were "ready" (9:2); but that meant nothing if the cash had not been actually donated. The Greek of 8:19 could mean that if they actually gave, then they would glorify their own readiness of mind, which Paul sees as so critical in any giving.

The Lord taught men to give alms of such things as they had (Lk. 11:41); as we have opportunity / ability, we must be generous to all men (Gal. 6:10). These passages are teaching a *spirit* of generosity; and even a believer with literally *no* money can have a generous spirit. "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) *a willing mind*, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not". *Every man* was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) *with a willing heart* (Ex. 25:2- Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so'. And yet the majority of us have at least *something* materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give. "*Every man* according as he *purposeth in his heart* (generosity is a mental attitude), so let him give; *not grudgingly*, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". See on Acts 11:29.

Our intentions to do good can be counted as if they were performed. Thus if we have a generous spirit, and would love to be generous to the needy, but just can't do it – it's counted as if we've done it.

8:13 *For I do not say this so that others may be eased and you distressed*- Paul is not asking them to give to their serious detriment or "distress". He is looking for a symbolic donation- but there is no record that they made even that. "Distressed" is a term commonly used by Paul for the distress or affliction which almost inevitably accompanies the Christian life; but Paul doesn't wish to bring even that upon them.

8:14 *But that as a matter of fairness*- The idea is of equality, that the surplus of Corinth may meet the deficit in Jerusalem.

Your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be an equality- Paul is asking them to give only of what they had in 'abundance', superfluous to basic needs. Considering that there were not many wealthy in Corinth (1 Cor. 1) and that most people lived a hand to mouth existence, we can conclude that by asking for this, Paul is seeking just a symbolic gift. The abundance of Jerusalem which supplied Gentile need is surely a reference to spiritual things. The language of 'supplying need' is used in a spiritual sense by Paul in Phil. 4:19. The idea of Jewish spiritual things being recompensed with Gentile material things is found in Rom. 15:26,27: "For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in material things". Achaia here refers to Corinth. 1

Corinthians 1 is clear that the Corinthians were generally not wealthy, but they had been "enriched in all things" in spiritual terms. This was their "abundance", and the Greek means 'super abundance'. It is those spiritual gifts, of the Spirit, which should motivate our giving. It is the grace of God which "abounds" to us (Rom. 5:15 s.w.). 2 Cor. 9:8 will make the connection clear: "God makes all grace abound toward you, that you... may abound to every good work". This doesn't mean God will make you wealthy so you can be generous. Rather is the idea that His abounding grace to us, perceived by us, will be enough to motivate us to giving. It is natural to want to give in gratitude for what we perceive done to us. We think of Naaman, and of the parent grateful to the stranger who saves their child from getting run over by a passing car. Rom. 15:25-27 makes the same point in the same context: "For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share their material blessings".

All the efforts of Paul to make them actually pay up gives the lie to his claim that "they were pleased to do it". There would have been no need for the high pressure of 2 Cor. 8 if that were true. Again it seems Paul is obsessed with the idea of the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and loves to boast of the support he liked to imagine it had received. The Romans 15 passage goes on to speak of Paul's intended visit to Spain- and that too, so far as we know, never happened.

8:15 *As it is written: He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little had no lack*- The preceding verse has argued that Jewish Christian spiritual abundance should elicit material support from Gentile Christians. But that was not true to reality- for the Jerusalem Jewish Christians soon returned to Judaism, and were against Gentile Christians, being largely responsible for Paul's arrest when he arrived in Jerusalem with what had been collected, and probably behind much of the Judaist trouble making in the Christian churches he founded. And now he uses an argument which is not completely apposite to the case he is trying to make. In the wilderness, some families could collect more manna than others due to weak health or lack of opportunity. But they shared the manna collected in a collective way, according to Jewish tradition, so that nobody had too much or too less. Those who could collect more gave their abundance to those who could not gather enough. This posits a material giving of our superfluous material wealth to those in the community who have a deficit in material wealth, and in this way "an equality" is achieved. But :14 has argued differently- that Jerusalem's *spiritual* wealth should be matched by Gentile *material* giving. The argument from the Jewish manna tradition about the stronger sharing with the weaker (which is not Biblically attested) is therefore not completely relevant. The Biblical account is that each family should gather their own manna for their family; so that Jewish tradition may not even have been correct or historically actual in any case. I noted on :9 that Paul makes a similar poor argument and confusion of category concerning the wealth of the Lord Jesus. He confuses material and spiritual, in a way out of character for Paul the intellectual rabbi, whose arguments are usually logically tight, compelling and watertight. All this arose, I suggest, from a desperate desire to make things work out regarding the Poor Fund and his vision of Jewish-Gentile unity within the wider church. Many well intentioned Christian leaders have made similar mistakes when seeking to enforce a unity in practice upon believers who are simply not mature enough nor ready for it.

Paul pleads with Corinth to see the similarities between them and the ecclesia in the wilderness; he wants them to personalize it all. He sees their gathering and redistribution of wealth as exactly analogous to Israel’s gathering of manna (2 Cor.

8:15)- and he so wishes his Corinthians to think themselves into Israel's shoes. For then they would realize that as Israel had to have a willing heart to give back to God the wealth of Egypt which He had given them, so they were to have a willing heart in being generous to their poorer brethren (Ex. 35:5 = 2 Cor. 8:12). And they would have realized that as "last year" they had made this offer (2 Cor. 8:10 Gk.), so the year before, Israel had received Egypt's wealth with a similar undertaking to use it for the Lord's cause. As Moses had to remind them a second time of their obligations in Ex. 35, so Paul had to bring it again before Corinth. And if they had seen these similarities, they would have got the sense of Paul's lament that there was not one wise hearted man amongst them- for the "wise hearted" were to convert Israel's gold and silver into tools for Yahweh's service (Ex. 35:10 = 1 Cor. 6:5; 2 Cor. 10:12).

They were fed with manna one day at a time- this is so stressed (Ex. 16:4,19,20). There was to be no hoarding of manna- anything extra was to be shared with others (Ex. 16:8; 2 Cor. 8:15). But we live in a world where the financial challenges of retirement, housing, small family size [if any family at all]... mean that there appears no other option but to 'hoard manna' for the future. To some extent this may be a reflection of the way that life in these very last days is indeed quite different to anything previously known in history; but all the same, we face a very real challenge. Are we going to hoard manna, for our retirement, for our unknown futures? Or will we rise up to the challenge to trust in God's day by day provision, and share what's left over? "Give us this day our bread-for-today" really needs to be prayed by us daily. Let's give full weight to the Lord's command to pray for only "our daily bread", the daily rations granted to a soldier on active duty. It's almost impossible to translate this term adequately in English. In the former USSR and Communist East Germany (DDR), there was the idea that nobody in a Socialist state should go hungry. And so if you were hungry in a restaurant after eating, you had the right to ask for some food, beyond what you paid for. In the former East Germany, the term *Sättigungsbeilage* was used for this in restaurants- the portion of necessity. It's this food we should ask God for- the food to keep us alive, the food which a Socialist restaurant would give you for free. We shouldn't be thinking in terms of anything more than this. It's an eloquent essay in what our attitude to wealth, materialism and long term self-provision ought to be.

8:16 *But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus*- We note that God can act directly upon the human heart. Although it may be that again Paul is exaggerating- for he had surely briefed Titus of his own expectations and intended outcomes, and I have argued on chapter 7 that Paul chose to over interpret the report of Titus when he returned to Paul from Corinth. "The same earnest care" refers to how the Macedonians had an "earnestness" (:8 s.w.) for the project. Titus and the Macedonians had the same urgency for the project, and Paul wants Corinth to likewise respond "urgently"- for the Greek for "earnest care" carries the basic idea of haste. The urgency was because Corinth had not in fact been collecting for the Fund as they had intimated they were doing, and something at least had to be contributed from them for Paul's boasting about them to be validated, and for the project to work out.

There is an urgency in the mediation of mercy towards others. When Paul thanks God that Titus has a heart of "earnest care" for the Corinthians, he uses a Greek word [*spoude*] which literally means "speed", and is elsewhere translated "haste" – as well as "haste" and "business" (2 Cor. 8:16). The heart that really cares will be characterized by a speedy and quick response, not a careful weighing up of a

situation, nor a resignation of responsibilities to ponderous committees. See on Lk. 14:5.

8:17 *For he indeed accepted our appeal; but being very earnest, he went to you of his own accord*- As noted on :16, it was Paul who appealed to Titus to go to Corinth and get them to donate to the Fund. But he says that Titus also went of his own will, in response to God confirming his 'earnestness' with more 'earnest care' placed in his heart (:16). We see here a cameo of how Christian action works out in practice. There are various stimuli- a request from another brother, a passion placed in our heart, and our own freewill passion of our own accord. God will not force anyone to work for Him against their will; but He will place callings in their heart, and confirm their response to it.

8:18 *And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches*- The obvious questions are as to who this brother was, and why the anonymity? Another brother is apparently mentioned anonymously in :22- although that may be another description of the same brother. If the anonymity was to preserve from persecution, why would a specific brother be targeted for persecution for being involved in a welfare project? If persecution is indeed a reason, then one suspects it was Paul's Jewish enemies who were trying to stymy the project. Which is why when Paul arrives at Jerusalem with what had been collected, the Jews get him arrested. And with the Judaist influence at Corinth being such a problem for Paul, we can imagine it was that same Jewish influence which was seeking to hamper Paul's pet project. The brother with a good reputation amongst the churches was Timothy (Acts 16:2,3). 2 Cor. 1:1 states that this letter was written by Paul and Timothy; it could be that although the letter was written by both of them, Paul is writing here, and referring to his co-author in this indirect way because that was appropriate literary protocol at the time. Paul wants to remind the audience of Timothy's strong qualifications, but he is aware that this a letter ostensibly co-authored by himself and Timothy. So he has to refer to Timothy in this indirect manner.

8:19 *And not only this but he is the one who was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this act of grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord and to show our own willingness to help*- Paul carefully doesn't define which churches had appointed this brother [Timothy?] to carry the collection. We can assume they were churches founded by Paul and loyal to him. What would have added to the credibility and success of the project was if those "churches" included the Jerusalem church and other Jewish churches in Palestine. The group of brethren who took the gathering to Jerusalem in Acts 20:3 were certainly pro-Paul loyalists and include no "circumcision" Christians. So whilst Paul was right to seek to glorify the Lord and to administer the project with integrity, placing himself beyond reproach as to financial mismanagement, the whole approach was forcing something on to others which they were clearly not supportive or nor willing to support. This is the problem with obsessive enforcement of projects upon others. Paul was clearly the administrator of the project, as he says himself here. And he simply lacked credibility with the hard core circumcision party who dominated the Jerusalem church; this was not his fault, indeed there was likely nobody who had the confidence of all the various factions to be able to pull off a project of this scope and scale. "To show our own willingness to help" is an attempt to translate two Greek words which literally mean "your ready mind" (as AV). The text could be stating that the "act of grace", the giving to the Fund in response to God's grace, would glorify both the Lord Jesus and also their

willingness to assist in His work. But offering glorification of self as a reason to donate is really getting desperate.

8:20 *This was to avoid being blamed by anyone in this matter of charity which is ministered by us*- The "matter of charity", AV "this abundance", uses a term which concerns a large sum: "lavish gift" (NAB), "large sum" (NJB), "large fund" (JB). But the Corinthians hadn't yet donated anything, and as noted above, time was passing, Paul didn't want them to be burdened, and he was looking for just a symbolic donation from them. But he uses this term because of the huge significance which he saw in their donations. It really seems Paul was exaggerating things in his mind. Paul wisely got others involved in transporting the funds so that his integrity could not be questioned.

8:21 *For we take care to do things honourably, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men*- This is a quotation from Prov. 3:4 LXX. It is not enough to reason that we are correct before God; if we have a sense of His glory and our responsibility as His witnesses in this world, then we must be careful to appear correct before men too. Not because we wish their approbation, but because we seek to glorify God in the eyes of this world.

8:22 *And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things; but now, much more earnest, by reason of the great confidence which he has in you*- This could be a parallel description of the brother in :18. Or it could be another anonymous brother. The word "earnest" is used elsewhere only of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:17), whose name means literally 'the bearer / carrier of profit', which would be relevant to bearing / carrying the Poor Fund to Jerusalem. I noted on 7:16 that Paul's "great confidence" in the Corinthians was because he wished to see them in a positive light, he over interpreted the report from Titus as meaning that they were indeed who he wished they were. And here too, this anonymous brother is described as having the same "great confidence" in the Corinthians. But as noted throughout chapter 7, I suggest that this is Paul projecting onto another brother his own [mistaken] feelings towards the Corinthians. He has decided that this anonymous brother will have the same view of them as he does. This is not to say that the record here is not inspired, nor that the Spirit was not with Paul. But as we read of David's bitter ranting against his enemies, his feelings on the cusp of emotion are recorded in God's words, so the record of Paul's feelings for the Corinthians are recorded- contradictory as they are, just as human emotion is often self-contradictory when love and personal investment are involved.

8:23 *Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker toward you; or our brothers, they are the messengers of the churches, they are the glory of Christ*- The Corinthians knew Titus, for he had already visited them. So this 'enquiry' would not be in the sense that they didn't know who he was. It was Titus who had visited them and 'begun' the project with them, and he had just returned to Paul from a visit to Corinth (7:13). And Paul was now sending him to them again in the hope they would give him the promised donations. So the 'enquiry' was rather of another kind, reflecting a hostility towards Titus and the brothers with him. This reveals that Paul's claim about the mutual love between Titus and the Corinthians was again an emotional exaggeration, and he had to as it were come down to earth and in reality defend Titus against the scepticism the Corinthians had about him.

8:24 *Therefore show them in the presence of the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf*- Paul dealt with a very difficult situation in Corinth by

being totally open hearted, when his natural sense must have been to be very cagey with them (2 Cor. 6:11). Indeed, some of his most revealing autobiographical passages are found in 2 Corinthians, as he opens his heart to them. And he encouraged them to likewise *openly show before the ecclesias* their love for others (2 Cor. 8:24 s.w.). He surely had in mind the Lord's teaching that our light should shine before others, because all things will ultimately be brought into the open (Lk. 8:16,17). This doesn't just refer to preaching; it refers to an open shining out of whatever spirituality we have, to everyone.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

9:1 *For concerning the service to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you*- I have noted throughout commentary on chapters 7 and 8 that Paul's arguments are very emotional and desperate in many ways. He is seeking some actual real donation from the Corinthians as they had earlier promised. And he is using every possible argument, including some desperate ones, to get them to agree to give Titus and his team some cash or material donations when they come. So within the two chapters of high pressure reasoning which we have in chapters 8 and 9, it is hardly true that half way through he here says that it was really unnecessary for him to be writing to them about their donations, because he is so sure they are going to donate. He says he has "no need" (GNB) to be writing this because he knows their willing hearts (:2). So... why then write two chapters of desperate urging if it was unnecessary? Again (see on 8:9,15), Paul's logic and persuasion is uncharacteristically weak and uncompelling.

9:2- see on Jn. 19:39; Rom. 11:14; 2 Cor. 8:11.

For I know your readiness, of which I boast on your behalf to those in Macedonia, that Achaia has been prepared for the past year- Paul could have taken the view that they were all talk, as people often are when it comes to money matters. Instead he boasts of their talk about wanting to support his project. In all human relationships, we can take a cup half full or cup half empty approach. Paul was so 'in love' with the weak Corinthians that he acted as if he really believed them, when clearly all the evidence was that he should have been wary of their promises. After all, these are the same Corinthians to whom he wrote 1 Corinthians. It was surely an exaggeration to say that Achaia [Corinth and the churches around it] had been "prepared" for a year. Prepared to give? Or does he imply they had collected each week as he advised in 1 Corinthians 16, and were now ready for the donations to be picked up by Titus and his team, in order to be taken to Jerusalem? According to the usage of "prepared" in :3, that seems more the idea. As suggested on chapter 7, this is the boasting of a man deeply in love with a woman who just isn't going to come through on his expectations and hopes for her. Hope had morphed into reality in Paul's mind.

And your zeal has stirred up very many of them- Paul could bid men follow him, that they might follow Christ. And the inspired word does bid us go down the road of comparing our behaviour with that of others. Paul boasted of the Corinthians' enthusiasm in planning to make donations in order to provoke the ecclesias in Macedonia to a like generosity. Their zeal "provoked very many" (AV). We should provoke one another to love and good works, by example (Heb. 10:24). This is why Christian fellowship is built into our spiritual journey- for we take strength from others as well as from the Lord directly. He mediates His encouragement through others.

9:3 *But I have sent the brothers, that our boasting on your behalf may not be made void in this respect. That, even as I said: You may be prepared*- Paul had already sent Titus and the two anonymous brothers mentioned in chapter 8, and it would seem they were carrying 2 Corinthians in their hands to give to the Corinthians. He asks them now to "be prepared", i.e. to hand over some actual donations; whereas he had boasted to others that Corinth was already "prepared" (:2). He wants them to live up to his exaggerated hopes and expectations of them. And this is exactly what causes so much friction in human relationships, especially in the spiritual sphere.

9:4 *Lest by any means, if there come with me*- This sounds as if Paul was actually going to accompany Titus, but according to how he has earlier written of his travel plans, we can assume that Paul intended himself to come to Corinth after Titus had

actually secured the donations from them. Hence in :5 he writes of Titus and his team going on ahead of him to Corinth. But in 13:2 Paul speaks as if his coming to Corinth was under question, and if he did visit them again, it would be in serious judgment upon them. We can conclude that this letter is a 'flow of consciousness' letter, Paul is writing down his thoughts and feelings as they come to him, in line with his policy of being completely open hearted to the Corinthians (see on 6:11). He writes here as if all is going to work out, Titus will prepare them for the donations and they will make them, and then Paul and some Macedonians will come and be present when the donations are collected and taken on towards Jerusalem. But in 13:2 he concludes the letter by writing that his visit is in question and it will be for judgment of the Corinthians. This kind of flow of consciousness writing is to be found often in the Psalms, Lamentations and at times in prophets like Jeremiah. It is all inspired, but gives us an insight into the internal thought processes of believers, with all their anger and irrationality and the contradictions of thought which we all experience as we cope with situations.

Some Macedonians and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you) would be embarrassed for my being so confident of your generosity- These Macedonians were presumably Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus, mentioned in Acts 20:4 as those travelling to Jerusalem with the collection. Paul mentions his own embarrassment first, and theirs only secondarily, in passing. He had too much personally invested in the project. Loss of face was far more significant in the first century world than we can imagine. To reason 'You had better donate or else I shall be embarrassed' is not a particularly strong argument, and reflects the urgent desperation Paul felt to by all means make this project work. But don't be too hard on Paul- he was sincerely motivated, but like many believers of his personality type, his pet project in the Lord's service had become obsessive for him.

9:5- see on 2 Cor. 8:9.

So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you- The 'urging' suggests Titus and his team were not altogether confident of the whole plan, and Paul had to urge them. This gives the lie to Paul's rejoicing in chapter 7 that Titus had been welcomed by the Corinthians and was relieved and confident in their giving. That, I suggested, was written on the cusp of the joy which comes from the love which believes all things, on the slenderest and most unrealistic of evidence.

And arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not, as it were, as an extortion- Again there appears a tension within Paul's argument. He says that the gift must be "willing" and not extorted or pressured out of them. But he has just asked them to make the gift lest they be ashamed (:4). We are left with the impression of high pressure tactics being palmed off as 'things which don't really need to be said but I'll just mention them' (:1). "Extortion" is the word for coveting. We can give money generously, apparently, but do so from a motive of *covetousness*- the very opposite of true generosity and acceptable sacrifice. We can covet respect, admiration from our brethren... and not give as a pure and private reflection of the endless grace we have received.

9:6 *But this I say: He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully*- Paul now gives a more spiritual reason for their generosity. Our generosity to others now will lead to a reaping at the time of harvest, which is at the Lord's return. And yet from 1 Cor. 15 we know that some of the Corinthians didn't believe in the Lord's resurrection and were sceptical of a claim of future harvest at the resurrection. So the whole appeal was at a level inappropriate

to the spiritual level of the Corinthians; and we can learn from that in our dealings with weaker believers. "Bountifully" is the same word used in :5 for "gift"; the AV in :5 brings out the connection by calling their "gift" a "bounty". They would receive again the "bounty" or gift they sowed- but at the harvest, which 1 Cor. 15 has explained is at the Lord's return and will be in the form of the nature of our resurrection body. Our generosity now has eternal consequence. And as 1 Cor. 15 points out, there is an out of proportion increase between the seed sown and the body that later arises. We don't just get what we sow, but so much more. In the end, this is a question of levels. It's not that the "sparing" shall not be saved; but rather that they shall not eternally reap the blessings of their generosity in this brief mortal life.

9:7 *Let each man do according to what he intends in his heart*- The Greek suggests that they were to do this in the future (AV "so let him give"). Which rather gives the lie to Paul's over enthusiastic claim that they had already started donating in actuality (8:10). He is asking them to now give something, even on a symbolic level. But for all the desperation of his position and pressuring of the Corinthians to donate, Paul does to his credit recognize that all giving must be from the heart. It was there in the heart that the Holy Spirit resided, at least potentially; and Paul is again hinting that their giving would be actualized by allowing the path of the Spirit in their thinking and actions. Giving according to the heart is an allusion to Israel donating towards the work of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:2; 35:21). The new tabernacle is the poorest of the Christian believers.

Not grudgingly, or of necessity- Yet some of the reasons Paul urges for their giving were indeed from a motive "of necessity", e.g. to save face (:4). As discussed previously, this is another example of apparent contradiction within Paul's reasoning, so desperate is he to see this project work, at least on some level.

For God loves a cheerful giver- The quotation is from Prov. 22:8 LXX "God blesses a cheerful and giving man". The blessing may be alluded to in :8-10 where the idea is that God blesses the generous with even more to give. Paul has written of how the abounding joy of the poor brethren in Macedonia abounded unto a generosity which was actually beyond their means (2 Cor. 8:2). And here when he goes on to speak of how God loves a "*cheerful* giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), he uses a word which James Strong defines as meaning 'hilarious', from the Greek *hilaros*. And yet our giving tends to so often be a matter of phlegmatic planning, to salve an otherwise uneasy conscience. But the picture Paul paints is of a man or woman *hilarious* in their giving to the poor. This isn't the giving which watches for the response, and is offended if it isn't what we expect. This is a picture of giving from the joy of giving, reflecting the Father's generosity to us. And this, Paul says, *God loves*. Quite simply. We touch the heart of Almighty God by such giving. And yet this hilarious giving isn't merely the emotion of a moment, the sort of thing played upon in many a Pentecostal gathering. It is to be a giving as a person 'purposes in their heart' (2 Cor. 9:7); and again, Strong challenges us with his definition of the Greek word translated 'purposes': "to *choose* for oneself *before* another thing (*prefer*), that is, (by implication) to *propose* (*intend*)". But having made this conscious decision, to put, say, Sister Svetlana's need before your preference for a new piece of furniture, we are to perform the actual giving with the hilarity of the cheerful giver. And as we know, Paul makes the point that such acts of generosity are acts of sowing, bringing forth fruits of righteousness; and the Lord will grant us yet more seed to sow in the same way. Forsaking all we have may not mean we are left with nothing.

9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that you, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work*- Paul often uses *charis*, "gift" or "grace", in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift, he feels, should elicit giving and grace within us, which is why in this section he puts "grace" for their giving to the Jerusalem Poor Fund. They had been asked to abound in this grace (see on 8:7), which in practice meant giving to the poor; and God was able in turn to make all grace abound to them. In this sense we receive grace for grace (Jn. 1:16). The gift of grace is not just a one off gift at baptism; in response to how we use it, so it will be given yet more to us. The simple principle is that God will empower us to do good works; we cannot blame a lack of good works on God not having empowered us.

9:9 *As it is written: He has scattered abroad, He has given to the poor. His righteousness abides for ever*- The generosity of God is to be a direct pattern for our own. And His giving is liberal and abundant, and is part of a righteousness which is eternal. Giving now has eternal consequence.

9:10 *And He that supplies seed to the sower and bread for food shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing*- Seed is multiplied in order to be sowed, and not to be hoarded. Paul is not simply saying that if wealth comes our way, it is in order to give it away. For he was writing (according to 1 Cor. 1) to those who were not "mighty" in this world or secular reckoning. He is writing to low wage earners, and encouraging *them* to be generous with what they had, and to believe that they will be given "seed" in order to sow it by being generous to others. If we want to be sowers, which is part of our Christian calling, then God will give us the seed to sow. God will empower us to meet the needs and fulfil the callings received. 2 Thess. 1:11 is explicit about this too: "To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfil every desire of goodness and work of faith, with power". The desire to do good shall be fulfilled by God's empowerment. This takes quite some faith to believe, and it seems the Corinthians also stumbled at it. But the principles here stand true as a challenge for all time.

Paul likens generosity to sowing seed. If we do this for our poor brethren, then God will multiply our seed for sowing (RV); He will give us yet more with which to be generous with. We are “enriched unto all liberality” (2 Cor. 9:11 RV)- this is *why* we receive anything, to be liberal with it. And thus he writes in conclusion of “the proving of you by this ministration” (2 Cor. 9:13 RV). This brief but vital teaching of Paul here is a proof of our spirituality. Our response to ministering to others is a proving of us. It’s as simple and as clear as that. And remember that Paul was writing these words to a *poor* ecclesia, amongst whom there were not many wealthy folk (1 Cor. 1:26-28). Paul speaks of joy as a motive for generosity.

And increase the fruits of your righteousness- The Old Testament allusions are to the LXX of Is. 55:10 and Hos. 10:12. These passages imply an eternal quality to the righteousness, just as God's righteousness abides for ever (:9). The fruit of our generosity in this temporal life is eternal.

9:11- see on 2 Cor. 6:10.

You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God- "Enriched... for" could be translated as AV "enriched... to". Either way, the idea is in harmony with the teaching of the preceding verses, that we are enriched so that we may be generous- in whatever terms that enrichment

comes. As stated earlier, we are given seed in order to sow it, rather than hoard it. Any enrichment for generosity is not as it were a reward for having been generous, but merely a provision to continue doing it. The fruit which sprung up from the seed sown, or the enrichment caused by generosity, is envisaged as being in spiritual terms. Thanksgiving to God would be produced as a result of their generosity. But again, the argument is true as it stands, but appears somewhat forced- please give your money as I direct you, so that I and my team can then give thanksgiving to God. I have noted through chapters 7-9 that Paul seems to use every argument possible to persuade the Corinthians to part with their cash, and at times his desperation is apparent. The idea of enrichment however is how Paul opened the Corinthian correspondence, reminding them that they had been "enriched in every way (1 Cor. 1:5) in having been given the Spirit in so many different ways- even though they were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1) because they had not let the Spirit function. The similarity of wording is significant. The giving or grace of the Corinthians was to be enabled and rooted in the Spirit *charis* or gift / enrichment they had been given. It was in this sense that Paul could say he had "made many rich" by his preaching ministry (2 Cor. 6:10).

9:12 *For the administration of this charity not only provides for the wants of the saints, but abounds also through many thanksgivings to God*- Paul was clearly the administrator of the charity project, although he sees himself as a 'deacon' or servant of it (NEV "administration"). And yet it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the project and its success had become obsessive to him. He sees it is a way in which poverty could be relieved, but much praise and glory elicited for God and His grace, if orthodox Jewish Christians in Jerusalem could fall to their knees in praise and thanks for their Gentile brethren's generosity to them in Corinth. Visions of Christian unity are likewise not unknown today to become obsessive, and those involved in them become too personally caught up in their success or failure. I pointed out on chapters 7 and 8 that there is no evidence that the famine continued in Palestine as severely nor as long as Paul's passion for the Poor Fund required; to the point that he had to ask others to pray that when he finally arrived in Jerusalem with the food and cash, it would be accepted by the brethren (Rom. 15:31).

Thanksgiving to God and His glorification can be elicited in multiple ways, and even if the Poor Fund project failed, glory to God could surely be achieved another way. But it seems too much had been personally invested in it. The fascinating story is recorded for our learning, and the lessons are powerful. The truth is that when Paul arrived in Jerusalem with the Poor Fund, the Jerusalem Jewish Christians provoked a riot, were certainly not happy to see him, forced him to demonstrate loyalty to the Jewish law, and I have argued in commentary on Acts- got him arrested and imprisoned. It is fantasy to imagine Paul arriving with those carrying the money and goods, and the saints in Jerusalem falling to their knees in praise to God for Paul's initiative and administration of the Corinthian's generosity. That's just not what happened. Paul's project was intended indeed to elicit many thanksgivings to God, but that was not the outcome. He writes here of what he hoped and dearly wanted to happen as if it had happened. There is in Hebrew [and he clearly thought in Hebrew whilst writing in Greek] a prophetic perfect tense, whereby God often expresses His hopes for the future in the past tense, as if they have happened. And Paul does the same here, writing of how his project has resulted [i.e. surely *will* result] in thanksgiving as a result of Corinthian generosity. The idea that this refers to some previous support of the Poor Fund doesn't really fit with the flow of the argument in this chapter. Paul had been asked by the Jerusalem elders to "remember the [Jewish Christian, perhaps specifically Jerusalem] poor" in return for not demanding the

circumcision of Gentile converts (Gal. 2:10). Paul dearly wished to be acceptable to the Jerusalem elders; for him culturally, Jerusalem was still the centre of the world. Perhaps his obsession with the Poor Fund arose partly from his desperation to be acceptable and pleasing to the Jerusalem elders. It would have been so very hard for Paul to experience a hostile reception by his Jerusalem brethren and perhaps a refusal of what support he had managed to gather for them. He was then forced by them to prove his orthodoxy, and it seems the Jerusalem Jewish Christians were the ones who orchestrated his arrest and imprisonment. The Lord surely worked to correct Paul's desire to please men.

9:13 *By their approval of this service*- "Their approval" is an attempt to grapple with what seems an awkward phrase, rendered correctly by AV "By the experiment of this" service. Paul rather likes the idea of things being an experiment; for he has written earlier using the same word about his command for them to separate from the immoral brother (2:9). This was a test or experiment of their loyalty, rather than being necessary for the sake of that brother or those whom he had wronged (7:12). There must be divisions within the church so that the tested / experimented with / approved might be made manifest (1 Cor. 11:19). In these kinds of issues- division in the church, a case of an immoral brother or a project to support poor believers of a different ethnicity- the crucial issue is how we respond to the test or "experiment" which the situations provide. The apparently central issues (e.g. the poor at Jerusalem or the immoral brother) are in this sense the furniture of the scene. It is how we respond to the tests or experiments which is so critical.

They glorify God for your loyalty which you confess to the gospel of Christ, and for the generosity of your contribution to them and to all- As noted above, Paul is speaking of his hopes as if they had actually happened. The Jerusalem Christians were not glorifying God for Corinthian generosity at that time; and there is no evidence they ever did, or that Corinth gave anything. The use of the word "loyalty" is unfortunate because the careful reader is already suspicious that Paul is too concerned with Corinthian loyalty to him and his pet project. It is also simply not the case that by not supporting a particular welfare initiative, we are being disloyal to the Gospel. Again the argument is high pressure and not completely sound. Here at the very end of the section about the Poor Fund, Paul perhaps betrays the way that what he hopes for in the Corinthians is what he wishes to see and states as having happened. He says that the Jerusalem poor are praising God for the way the Corinthians are generous to them "and to all". But this was surely the fantasy of love. There was no evidence the Corinthians were donating "to all", and all the other evidence in the letters reveals their serious immorality and spiritual weakness.

Initially, the Corinthians agreed to take up a collection for their poor Jewish brethren. Paul later encouraged them in this when their will to carry it out flagged, but the initial inspiration was from "the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 9:13 NIV). That Gospel doesn't state that to obey it, one must give money to the poor believers in Jerusalem. But Paul perceived that *effectively* it did; this was, in their context, part and parcel of confessing the Gospel. We learn from this that the Gospel has abiding power to transform lives after conversion as well as before.

9:14 *While they also, with prayers on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you*- I noted earlier that Paul had exaggerated about the Corinthians supposedly longing for Titus and himself. And he makes a similar exaggeration here. The Jerusalem Christians likely had little knowledge of the

Corinthians, and so the language of longing and praying is exaggeration. It was Paul who uses the word "long after you" several times about his longing after his brethren; and he imagines that the Corinthians have the same attitude to their brethren as he does. The grace (gift) "in you" is a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Corinthians, within them, which Paul has so often alluded to in his Corinthian correspondence. He urges the Corinthians to make use of that gift, to allow the path of the Spirit, which would elicit in them a giving of grace to others. But it is questionable whether in reality the Jerusalem Jewish Christians longed for the Corinthians upon that basis. But in theory, yes- the "fellowship of the Spirit" was and is a fellowship experienced on the basis of each believer having the Spirit at work in their hearts, and responding to it. This creates a fellowship with others who are allowing the same process.

9:15 *Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift*- As noted on :14, the gift in view is that of the Spirit, within the hearts of the believers. Paul thanks God for it, with the implication that the Corinthians should be more appreciative of and responsive to it.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

10:1 *Now I Paul*- The appeal to support the Jerusalem Poor Fund in chapters 7-9 is now finished, and Paul now returns to tackle the Corinthians over their serious spiritual inadequacies. For all the love, enthusiasm, imputation of righteousness, the loving them with a love which imagines good and exaggerated their spirituality- Paul was also realistically aware that they were heading the wrong way in their spiritual lives. "Now I..." suggests that the argument flows straight on from the preceding chapters. Chapters 7-9 appear to present the Corinthians in an unrealistically positive light, but now Paul turns to realities. The break in style is such that some have suggested that chapters 7-9 form a separate piece of correspondence. But "Now I..." indicates that Paul is fully aware of what he has just written, and is now returning to dealing with their suspicions of him and need for exhortation.

I myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ- "I myself" emphasizes his personal approach to them. And he himself was acting as Christ to them, with His gentleness. His sarcasm and anger later in this letter must be read therefore either as a departure from his aim as here stated, or we are to read it as all the same expressing the Lord's meekness and gentleness. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" is surely a reference to the Lord's description of Himself as being, there and then, "meek and lowly of heart" (Mt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1). Paul's point is that as the Lord was in His life, so He is now, in His heavenly glory.

I who in your presence am lowly among you- "Lowly" was likely a reference to how his critics described his literal presence, perhaps hinting at some physical deformity. But the ultimate "lowly" one was of course the Lord Jesus, and Paul has just stated that he seeks to relate to them as Him, with His meekness. For the same word is used by the Lord in saying that He was "lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29). And he has earlier stated that he feels "lowly" because of the bad state of affairs in Corinth (2 Cor. 7:6 s.w.). The Lord's lowliness of mind (s.w.) was at its zenith during His time of dying (Phil. 2:3), and Paul sets that humbling of mind as the pattern for every Christian.

But being absent am bold toward you- The contrast is between being present and yet

being now absent from them. He is keenly aware of his absence from them (10:11; 13:2,10). But he warns them that he will visit them and be in presence as he is when absent in his letters (:11). He earlier warned them that although he was absent yet through the Spirit he was present with them (1 Cor. 5:3; also Col. 2:5 "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit"). Therefore his presence or absence was not to be understood by them as significant. Any attempt to criticize the difference between his written style when absent and personal style when present was ill founded- because through the Spirit, he was present with them although absent. So they were not to think that what he was now going to write was just mere words, and his personal presence would be far less demanding.

10:2 *I beg you now, so that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh*- Paul has earlier expressed his fear that if he visits them, then he will boldly judge them. Indeed, he has given this as the reason why he delayed his planned visit to them. This attitude to his next visit stands in contrast to the claims in chapters 7-9 that they love him and he can't wait to see them and oversee the collection of their donations for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. He intended to boldly judge those who consider him as an unspiritual person, walking according to the flesh. The Spirit through Paul would judge them- and they would realize that he walked according to the Spirit and not the flesh. Paul was "confident" that he would judge some of them severely, and yet in 8:22 he has written of the confidence he has that they will respond to his appeals, and his "confidence in you in all things" (7:16). These were statements written on the cusp of loving enthusiasm for them, thinking the best of them. But he is also confident that not all is well with them, and that he shall have to judge some of them severely.

10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not fight in a fleshly way*- This is likely a quotation from the Corinthian detractors, who claimed that Paul conducted himself "in a fleshly way". Walking after the flesh rather than the Spirit is the way of condemnation (Rom. 8:1,4; Gal. 5:16; 2 Pet. 2:10). Paul is having to defend himself against those who consider that he is not at all Spiritual. Paul has used the same word for "fight" with reference to his ministry generally in 1 Cor. 9:7, and uses the same metaphor to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:4). 2 Cor. 10:3,4 is perhaps an allusion to the way that Jericho was taken with such a humanly weak battle plan. The point of the allusion is for us to see ourselves as those nervous Israelites desperately clinging on to their faith in God's victory rather than human strength. And we each have our Jerichos- habits, life-dominating patterns of thinking, that seem so impossible to shift.

10:4 *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds*- The allusion is to the LXX of Prov. 21:22: "A wise man attacks fortified cities and demolishes the fortress in which the ungodly trusted". Note that in 9:6 Paul has quoted from Prov. 22:8, so this part of Proverbs was in his mind in formulating his argument in this part of the letter. We see here how the inspiration process worked- the ideas of the Spirit are reworked by the Spirit within the mind or spirit of the inspired writer. Paul sees himself really at war, using wisdom (according to the Proverbs allusion) to bring down all kinds of apparently solid and impregnable structures. His sense here is exactly that of 1 Cor. 1, where he says that the Spirit overthrows the unspiritual wisdom of men which seems so strong. He perceives those strongholds as being in the minds of the Corinthians and the false teaching received.

10:5 *Casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*- The "imaginations" are the "strongholds" of :4. The "high thing" continues the metaphor of bringing down fortifications, the reference being to high towers of defence. The picture is of the strongholds being stormed, and the captives taken into another citadel- where they are obedient to Christ. The whole metaphor is descriptive of internal thought processes and reflects how Paul realized that the state of mind is what Christianity is all about. It is thoughts and prideful attitudes which have to be overcome before obedience to Christ can be achieved in the mind. Paul has just written of being obedient to the Gospel in obeying its implications- in giving to the poor (2 Cor. 9:13). It is pride and the strongholds of human strength which hinder that obedience. Paul parallels "the knowledge of God" and having our thoughts in "captivity to the obedience of Christ". This is what it means to know God; the correct theological conclusions about God are not therefore in view when Paul writes of "the knowledge of God"; he uses 'knowledge' in the sense of relationship. He has earlier lamented that some in Corinth "have not the knowledge of God". To know God is to live in mental obedience to His Son. It is a matter of the Spirit in the mind, of having the spirit or mind of Christ within us.

Isaiah is full of references to the proud being 'made low' by judgment- the same Hebrew word is common: Is. 10:33; 13:11; 25:11; 26:5. Perhaps Paul had this in mind when he said that our preaching is a bringing down of every high thing that is exalted against God (2 Cor. 10:5). Our message is basically that we must be humbled one way or the other- either by our repentance and acceptance of the Gospel today, or through the experience of condemnation at the day of judgment. We're calling people to humility. And we must ask whether the content and style of our preaching really does that.

Like John, Paul makes a seamless connection between defending true doctrine, and spiritually minded living in practice. Through destroying arguments and "every pretension that exalts itself against the knowledge of God", we can "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5 RV). This is because, as Neville Smart put it, "of the radical part played in the salvation of the individual by the ideas and beliefs he holds in his mind. They are in fact the roots from which his fixed attitudes and his daily actions spring, and from which they take their particular tone and colouring".

"Though we walk in the flesh (cp. Paul's recognition of his fleshly side in Rom. 7)... the weapons of our (mental) warfare are not carnal (of our fleshly man), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds". These strong holds which are pulled down are defined in v.5 as "imaginations... every thought" which have to be 'cast (cp. 'pulled') down'. Those strong holds exist in the recesses of our natural minds. Rom. 6:13 encourages us not to yield our minds as weapons of sin, but as weapons of God (Rom. 6:13 AVmg.). Our thinking is a weapon, which both sides in this conflict can use. The sinful man within us is "warring against the law of my (spiritual) mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23). Yet 2 Cor. 10:5 describes our spiritual man as overthrowing our carnal man, and bringing those thoughts into captivity to the Christ man. The impression is created of constant attrition, with victories for both sides. In Rom. 7 the impression is given that the carnal man is winning; whilst 2 Cor. 10:2-5 paints the picture of the Christ man

triumphant. To get this picture over, perhaps the Spirit used a spiritually depressed Paul in Rom. 7, and a triumphant Paul at the time of writing 2 Cor. 10?

10:6 *And being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full*- This could mean that when they were fully obedient to Christ (:5), and had shown this in practice by obeying his command they donate to the Jerusalem Poor Fund, then he would punish the disobedience of others within the Corinthian church. On this basis we would have to assume that when Paul writes to 'you' here, he is writing to a subgroup within the church who will be obedient to him. But he seems to use "you" in a more general and natural sense throughout the letter. We get no impression elsewhere that he is writing to an obedient subgroup within the church. So we must consider other possibilities for interpretation. One possibility is that the more God's word abides in us, the more we will know our sinfulness (1 Jn. 1:10). Thus Paul would be speaking here as if when Corinth are more obedient, he will reveal further to them the extent of their weakness (2 Cor. 10:6).

Or it could be that the obedience of Corinth to Christ refers to their general spiritual maturity; once that was complete, then Paul could go further and move on to judge the disobedience of others apart from Corinth. This would connect with how Paul goes straight on to speak of how he had received, as it were, a measuring line which enabled him to preach in certain areas, including Corinth. When the spiritual growth of the Corinthian converts was complete, then his measuring line would be extended, and the Lord would allow him "to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you" (this is how I would interpret 2 Cor. 10:6,13-16 RV). But a measuring line is Ezekiel's figure of Divine judgment; as if to say that once Corinth are obedient, then Paul can move on to other areas to revenge all disobedience / judge / measure them out.

10:7 *Look at the things that are before your face, staring at you. If anyone trusts in himself that he is Christ's*- Any serious study of a Bible passage requires us to look at it in different translations and make some effort to understand the real meaning of the original- for sometimes the sense of a passage can completely change, depending on translation (especially in Job). Thus in the AV of 2 Cor. 10:7, Paul is made to ask a question: "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?". In the RV, this becomes an affirmation: “Ye look at the things that are before your face". But in other versions, it becomes a blunt demand from Paul that the Corinthians should open their eyes to the true facts: "Look at things which stare you in the face!" (J.B. Phillips).

On balance, on the strength of the context, I would go for a translation to the effect that Paul is rebuking them for looking at things from the outward appearance. For the same word translated "before your face" has been used by him in exactly this sense when he rebukes them for following those who look at life after the outward appearance (5:12). Paul's presence or face / outward appearance has just been described as unattractive and lowly (10:1). Paul is now rebuking them for looking at things externally, whereas he has just explained in :4,5 that the essence of the Gospel is about internal transformation and spiritual things. By judging according to external appearances, they were concluding that Paul was not even "Christ's".

Let him remind himself that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we!- There's definitely a tendency to think that we can have a relationship with the Father and Son, and this is all that matters. John countered this tendency, by arguing that "If a man say [and apparently this *was* being said by some brethren], "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn. 4:20). Paul foresaw this same tendency here in 2 Cor. 10:7: "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him *of himself* think

this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's". "Of himself" suggests that our internal thinking, our self-perception, of ourselves as "in Christ" cannot be valid unless we perceive "Christ" as having our brethren "in Him" also. And Paul's own example showed what he meant; for in all his hardships he was comforted not just by the Father and Son directly, but by the faith of his brethren- even if that faith was weak (e.g. 1 Thess. 3:7). If we are sure we are the Lord's, let's remember that we aren't the *only* person He died for. Therefore we *must* receive one another, as Christ received us, with all our inadequacies of understanding and behaviour (Rom. 15:7). We are thereby taught of God to love one another; we must forgive and forbear each other, as the Lord did and does with us (1 Thess. 4:9; Eph. 4:32).

10:8 *I could boast, unashamedly and somewhat abundantly, concerning our authority- authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for casting you down*- This doesn't mean that the authority given could not be used for 'casting down'. For the same word is used about how Paul could do just that (:4; 13:10). The idea is that the power had been given Paul not so much for casting down, but for building up [edifying]. Paul had the power / authority to judge them, and he purposefully delayed visiting them lest the Spirit lead him to punish them, perhaps in a literal sense. His attitude reflects that of the Lord- who came more to save than to judge / condemn, although that doesn't mean that He will not judge / condemn some.

10:9 *But I will not, lest I appear to terrify you by my letters*- We see here how Corinthians is very much a flow of consciousness letter. He says he will not boast of his authority- but later he does, at great length (11:1,16). Likewise in chapter 7 he writes down his passionate feelings of love and confidence in the Corinthians- and then comes down to a more realistic view of them. And he begins this current section by saying he will have the meekness and gentleness of Christ (:1) when in fact chapters 10-13 are Paul at his most bitter, sarcastic and angry.

10:10 *For they say: His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account*- But was his physical presence indeed "of no account"? The Roman Governor Felix *trembled* at Paul's incisive logic- even in his prison uniform (Acts 24:25). Hardened Agrippa was almost persuaded by Paul, on his own public admission, to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). The Galatian converts would have pulled out their eyes from their sockets and given them to partially sighted Paul (Gal. 4:15). The aggressive crowd, baying for Paul's blood, were held in one of history's most uncanny silences by the sheer personality of that preacher. He beckoned with his hand, and " there was made a great silence...and when they heard how (Gk.) he spake... they kept the more silence" (Acts 21:39-22:2). Pagans at Lystra were so overcome by his oratory that they were convinced he was the god Mercury come down to earth; it took Paul quite some effort to persuade them that he was an ordinary man (Acts 14:12). This was the man Paul. He had undoubted ability as a preacher. Yet apparently the Corinthians mocked his weak physical presence; although Paul had undoubted charisma and power of personality, right up to the end. Was it not that he consciously suppressed the power of his personality when he visited Corinth? This was humility and self-knowledge indeed. Indeed, his reasoning in 2 Cor. 10,11 is that he could present himself to Corinth as quite a different brother Paul than what he did. Although Paul did have a significant physical presence, he doesn't dispute with the Corinthians about it. Instead he more humbly makes the point that presence or absence is insignificant in spiritual terms.

So I suggest that Paul made himself a weak person in his dealings with Corinth, just as the Lord also humbled himself, made Himself lowly as an act of the will. He

could truly be all things to all people, he wasn't constrained by his natural personality type as so many of us allow ourselves to be. This is why Paul could go on in :11 to warn Corinth that the next time he visits them, he won't be weak. He will 'be' as he is in his letters. In all this we see the full import of the sacrifice and crucifixion of self of which the Lord repeatedly speaks. Putting meaning into words, this means that we will genuinely 'be' the person we need to be in order to help others.

"His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible... though I be rude in speech... Christ sent me... to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17). This is all the language of Moses, Paul's hero. Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly *wisdom* and "mighty in words" (Acts 7:22), even though Moses felt " I am not eloquent (mg. a man of words)... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10). Maybe Paul likewise was mighty in words and wisdom, but felt like Moses that he wasn't. He allowed Moses' legendary humility to personally inspire him, rather than just admire it from afar, ticking the box, saying yes, Moses was humble…

It was believed that nature and destiny had decreed your place, and there was to be no questioning of it. Thus according to the first century principle of 'physiognomics', a slave was born with a muscular, servile body, an upper class female Roman was born beautiful, etc. The idea of education was to train them up to be as they were intended to be by nature. The ancient world believed that all that was decreed and predestined by nature would have some sort of physical reality in the appearance of a person. Hence the challenging nature of Paul's command not to judge by the outward appearance; and again, Divine providence overturned all this by choosing Paul as such a "chosen vessel", when his outward appearance and manner of speaking were so weak and unimpressive, literally 'lacking strength' (2 Cor. 10:10).

10:11 *Well, let such a person reckon this, that what we are in word by letters, when we are absent, such will we be also in deed, when we are present*- As noted on :1 *But being absent am bold toward you*, there is effectively no difference between Paul's presence and his absence, for in his physical absence he is still spiritually present with them, just as the Lord Jesus is. Paul is moving towards the position that when he does come and visit Corinth in the flesh, he is likely to be led by the Spirit to be seriously judgmental towards them. This is a far cry from his earlier positive comments in this letter that he is delaying coming to them so that when he does come, they will have fixed things up and made donation to his Jerusalem Poor Fund. These apparent contradictions within the letter have been explained by some on the basis that we have here various letters stitched together. But why do that? And the various proposed sections all join to each other seamlessly. I therefore have adopted the view that the letter was written under inspiration as a flow of consciousness, just as the inspired Psalmists both curse and bless their enemies within the same Psalm.

10:12 *For we are not bold enough to class or compare ourselves with those that commend themselves*- The sarcasm here seems at variance with Paul's opening statement in :1 that he is going to appeal to them with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Again, as noted on :11, this is a flow of consciousness letter, with Paul writing how he felt at the moment. The AV offers: "We dare not make ourselves of the number", and "the number" may be a technical term referring to a group of self-declared apostles who claimed that they were "the number", perhaps referring to how

the initial apostles are described with the term "the number of the names" (Acts 1:15). Although Paul says he will not compare himself with those who commend themselves, he goes on at length to do just that in chapters 11 and 12. Rather like he begins this section by saying he will appeal by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (:1) and proceeds to write in anything but that tone. Once again- this is a flow of consciousness letter, with Paul expressing one feeling and then going on to write in a different way. The only other time the Greek word for "compare" occurs is again to the Corinthians, where Paul insists we must compare spiritual things with spiritual things and not confuse the categories by comparing fleshly things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13). But here Paul will go on to do just that, justifying himself in fleshly terms in order to confirm his spiritual authority. Paul has said that he needs no commendation of himself, because that commendation is known in their consciences, if they have the Spirit within and are in touch with it (2 Cor. 4:2). But then he says that in order for them to answer those who glory in outward appearance, he will give them some good ammunition to use by boasting of his qualifications (2 Cor. 5:12; 6:4). He will now go on again to commend himself, claiming that it is their fault, and their refusal to commend him according to their own consciences, the Spirit within them, has compelled him to boast (2 Cor. 12:11). In all this we see the rather jumbled logic which accompanies a desperate desire to persuade by all means, and even under Divine inspiration of the record, the jumbled logic reflects this desire of Paul to by all means get them onside.

These are without understanding, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, which is unwise- Paul points out the weakness of all peer-reviewed criticism. They measured themselves by their own standards and benchmarks which they themselves had chosen, rather than by God's standards. And Paul will now use the same word for 'measuring' to describe how he has been given a measure by God to teach and pastor them (:13).

10:13 *But we will not boast beyond our measure but rather according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us- a measure to reach even to you*- The image of 'measuring' according to the measure God had given Paul connects with how the false teachers measured themselves according to measures and benchmarks of their own creation (see on :12 *Measuring themselves*). Paul considered they were geographically and spiritually within a measure or allotted territory given to him and therefore they should respect him and not follow the false teachers. Whether he was specifically given such an allotment of authority is not recorded. We wonder whether Paul is now using every possible argument he can to get the Corinthians onside with him, rather as we saw him doing in appealing for them to donate to his Jerusalem Poor Fund. We recall from 1 Cor. 1 that Paul initially claimed to be approaching the Corinthians with only a Christ-centered attitude, stating he had baptized few of them, and all following of personal preachers was wrong. But his desperate appeal for authority at this final stage of the correspondence seems rather more human than that initial approach. Christ is not "divided", Paul had originally argued (1 Cor. 1:13), but now he uses the same word to say that God had apportioned (s.w. "divided") to him and his team the authority and responsibility for Corinth.

10:14 *For we are not overextending ourselves in our boasting, as though we did not reach unto you*- "Overextending" may be a quote from what the critics were saying about Paul. Perhaps the argument from the false teachers was that they were the local pastors, and for Paul to claim any authority in Corinth was an overextension of his authority.

For we were the first to come as far as you in preaching the gospel of Christ- As noted on :13, Paul's claim to have authority over the Corinthians because he first preached to them is at variance with his attitude in 1 Cor. 1, where he rightly claims that Christ is paramount, and who preached or baptized them is irrelevant. And he repeated that in 1 Cor. 15:11, where he argues that God's grace working through the preachers is all important, and who preached the Gospel to the Corinthians is irrelevant because whoever it was ("I or they"), they were just vehicles for God's saving grace.

10:15 *So we are not boasting beyond our measure in other men's labours; but rather we hope that as your faith grows, our influence among you may be greatly increased*- The critics may have claimed that it was their labours which were responsible for the church at Corinth. Paul is paving the way to boast of all his labours for the Corinthians which we will read in chapters 11 and 12. Paul's hope was that his influence amongst the Corinthians would increase as they matured spiritually. But this desire for personal influence and loyalty (a card he played in his appeal for their donations to his Poor Fund in chapters 7-9) is a far cry from his earlier claim to not want any personal influence but just to see the influence of the Lord Jesus growing in his converts. See on :14. But the AV is again more literally faithful to the difficult Greek here: "Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly". This could mean that their spiritual maturity would enable his line or territory of work to be expanded. For Paul felt he would not be given new areas to preach in if the Corinthians had not matured in the faith. He in this case would be arguing that their immaturity and revolt against him was holding up his spreading of the Gospel further, as if God would "increase" his sphere of work if the Corinthians matured; and:16 seems to confirm this. Again, whether or not God had specifically stated that is unrecorded, and we could read this as another desperate argument to by all means keep the Corinthians loyal to him.

10:16 *So that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence*- See on :15. This can be read as a desperate appeal for Corinthian loyalty to him, lest other areas be as it were deprived of the Gospel. We are left to decide whether this was really the case or if it is just part of an increasingly desperate appeal for their personal loyalty. For Paul had earlier turned away from unresponsive Jewish audiences in order to go preach further to the Gentiles, rather than remaining with those Jews until they accepted his message. And in Romans 15 he openly speaks of his ambition to preach in Rome and Spain, the "lands beyond" Corinth. He gives no condition to be fulfilled for that, but rather perceives it all as part of his calling.

Paul spoke of how both he and other brethren had their specific “line" or sphere in which they were intended to witness (2 Cor. 10:16 cp. Ps. 19:4 AVmg.; Am. 7:17). We each have ours, whether it be the people who live in our block of flats, an area of our own country or city; or another part of the world. Paul clearly had a purpose- to spread the Gospel in a semi-circle around the Roman empire (2 Cor. 10:15), beginning from Jerusalem, through Asia and Italy, then Spain (Rom. 15:19), North Africa and back to Jerusalem. Speaking of how he planned his journeys, he comments in 2 Cor. 1:17: “When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes yes, and no no?”. Again we see a definite purpose, not the kind of human intention which vacillates between yes and no; for this is inimical to the person who has true purpose. The mission in our minds, the path ever before us, makes our decision

making so much clearer than it is for those who dither over which flavour coffee to have tonight... Truly could Paul say at the end: “But you have followed my teaching, my conduct, and my purpose in life; you have observed my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance, my persecutions, and my sufferings” (2 Tim. 3:10,11). And he is set up as a model for each of us (1 Tim. 1:16).

10:17 *But he that boasts, let him boast in the Lord*- This is the quotation from Jer. 9:24 with which Paul began his recorded letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:31). But I have shown in earlier commentary on this chapter that Paul's attitude is at variance with the non-partisan spirit which he had shown there. Despite knowing this principle, Paul is now as it were carried away to boast in the flesh. Again he states a principle and then appears to break it, as witnessed in his promise to entreat them by the gentleness of Christ (10:1) and going on to use bitter sarcasm and angry manipulation against them. This confirms my conclusion that this letter is an inspired 'flow of consciousness' recording of Paul's feelings. The context of Jer. 9:24 urges glorying in the Lord because judgment is coming- and that rather fits what Paul is going on to threaten.

10:18 *For it is not he that commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends*- For "commends", see on Lk. 12:8; 1 Cor. 4:5. And yet Paul goes on to commend himself in the next two chapters. Just as he says he will approach them in the gentle spirit of Christ (:1) and goes on to write to them otherwise. His immediate reference is to the false teachers who commended themselves (:12). Only the Lord's commendation is worth anything, and not the commendation of men. But in his desperate love for Corinth and desire to persuade them, he now embarks upon self-commendation, breaking his own principles and then blaming it on them for compelling him to do so (12:11).

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

11:1 *I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me*- Paul is asking them to bear with, or stick with, his reasoning as an unwise fool. He laments that they 'bear with' the false teachers, who demanded their loyalty and rejection of Paul; three times he uses the same word of how they 'bear with' these men who abuse them (:4,19,20). So the emphasis should be on the *me* in "[Please] bear with *me*", and not with these pretenders. This reading is confirmed by the way that :2 goes on to say that this is because Paul is as their father, who has betrothed them to Christ.

11:2- see on Mt. 3:7; Acts 13:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.

For I am jealous over you with a Godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband, that is, that I might present you a pure virgin to Christ- The betrothal period lasted a year; the father of the bride was expected to keep her sexually pure. This period of a year may refer to the year he has already waited for them to produce the collection money (9:2). But during that betrothal period, he feared they had not been faithful to Christ because of their alliances with the false teachers. Paul considered himself their father and them to be his children (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:13-15). This analogy demonstrates that preaching is not all about getting a response which leads to conversion; the end point in view is not baptism, but a person remaining faithful for Christ until the end. The image of betrothal suggests that some guarantee had been given, and the guarantee in our relationship with the Lord Jesus is the Spirit

given as the guarantee in our hearts; only here in 2 Corinthians is it spoken of in precisely that way (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 11:2 of 'presenting you' at the last day- he uses the same Greek work in a context of 'standing before' the judgment seat (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 4:14). Christ will present us to Himself at judgment day, as an unspotted bride / church (Eph. 5:27)- but Paul perceived that Christ will achieve this by working through people and pastors like himself. Paul aimed to "present" [s.w.] every man perfect in Christ by warning and exhorting them (Col. 1:28). We will present ourselves (2 Tim. 2:15 s.w.) to Him at the judgment; but He presents us, and others who have laboured for us will present us, because Christ will have worked through them to present us to Himself unspotted. The cross results in the suffering Lord being able to "*present* us holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" at the day of judgment (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27). Having said that, Paul goes right on to say that his goal is to "*present* every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:22,28; 2 Cor. 11:2). The sufferings of Jesus were not lost on Paul. He understood that he likewise must share in them, in order to "present" his brethren acceptable at the last day. For Paul, the events of Calvary were not far away in time and place, a necessary piece of theology... They compelled him to act, to stay up late at night preparing something, to pray, to live the life of true concern for others, to warn, encourage, write, endlessly review his draft letters to get them right, search through Scripture for relevant guidance for his friends… this was the life begotten in him by the cross. As the Lord died to present us "perfect", so Paul laboured to present us perfect. And neither the Lord Jesus nor Paul are mere history for us. This is all our pattern… In one sense, we present ourselves before the judgment seat (Rom. 14:10 s.w.; AV "stand before"). In other ways, we are presented there by our elders, e.g. Paul; and yet above all, we are presented there spotless by the Lord's matchless advocacy for us. And of course the essence of judgment is being worked out right now, as we daily present ourselves to the Lord, as the bodies of the animals were presented to the priest for inspection before being offered (Rom. 12:1). We are presenting ourselves to the judge right now.

11:3 *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve with his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*- Note the focus upon their minds. Throughout Corinthians, Paul has taught that the role of the Spirit in the heart / mind is crucial to spirituality. The mind was and is the battleground for temptation, and the arena in which we develop spirituality. Paul did not want their minds to be led astray [NEV "corrupted"] from Christ. NEV "the simplicity that is in Christ" could as well be rendered as NIV "*to* Christ". The idea is that the Christian is mentally focused upon a man, the Lord Jesus. The problem with false theologies and other gospels is that they remove that focus, they are a corruption of the mind, and hence a different spirit (:4) from that which is to be Christ's. The corruption of the mind from this focus is described in :4 as receiving "a different spirit". The focus is intensely upon the human mind or heart, and whether or not the spirit of Jesus is there. This, in summary, is what Christianity is all about and how a Christian is defined- whether the spirit of Christ is in the heart or not. All the *angst* about doctrinal correctness and the struggle for correct interpretation must be seen in that light. If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of His; and if we do, then we are His.

Paul's imputation of righteousness to the Corinthians is reflected in the way he likens them here to the innocent Eve in Eden, when previous correspondence has revealed the depth of their moral (especially sexual) depravity. Clearly Paul read the Genesis account of the serpent as literal, seeing the literal serpent as now representative of the Judaizers who were preying upon the minds of the believers.

11:4 *For if he that comes*- "He that comes" could be a generic reference to the false teachers who came to them, presumably sent from Jerusalem to destabilize Paul's work; their 'coming' suggests they were not local Corinthians. There could however be a specific individual in view, whom Paul is careful not to name because he was well known and perhaps for fear of difficulties which would be created by specifically naming him. This may be the reference of 12:7, which speaks of a particular messenger or envoy of 'Satan', the Jewish opposition, sent to be a pain in the side for his ministry. The coming one, "he that comes", was understood in Judaism as the Messiah, "he that comes in the name of the Lord". The false teachers in view are therefore presented as anti-Christs, fake Messiahs, teaching and embodying "another Jesus".

Preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept- Receiving the spirit and accepting the Gospel of Jesus are paralleled. The situation in 1 Cor. 14 [see notes there] was that the Corinthians claimed to have Holy Spirit gifts, but actually the manifestations of ecstatic utterances they were claiming to experience were not at all Holy Spirit gifts, but rather an imitation of the idol cults. The aorists here would seem to imply that they accepted a gospel, another Jesus and another spirit at one specific moment. As if an individual had come and preached a fake imitation of Christianity- replete with a Jesus, a gospel and a spirit to be received. We note that the true Gospel features a receipt of the Spirit when the real Christ is accepted. This is not a reference to the miraculous gifts, but to the guarantee of salvation received in the heart, which must be responded to (1:22; 5:5; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15). Perhaps the 'other Jesus' being taught was a Jesus who did not rise from the dead and was therefore currently inactive (recall the arguments of 1 Cor. 15) and who ministers no Spirit, therefore, to believers. This is worryingly similar, in practice, to the approach to Jesus taken by some conservative forms of Christianity today.

It seems you think you do well to go along with him- See on :3. They 'bore with' ["go along with"] these false teachers instead of bearing with Paul (:1).

11:5- see on 1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 23:6.

But I reckon that I am not in the least inferior to these so called super apostles- This group declared themselves to be "the number" (see on 10:12), the true apostles. But they had declared themselves as this, without any signs from the Lord affirming them as such. Paul "supposed", the same word translated "impute" as in 'imputed righteousness', that he was not inferior to these apostles, because he was a true apostle. He knew this was how his Lord counted him. But he felt himself as less than the least of all saints (Eph. 3:8) and quite unworthy of the title apostle: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:9-10). He felt the status and acceptance imputed to him, as we should.

11:6 *Although rude in speech, I am not in knowledge. No, in every way have we made this manifest to you in all things*- Paul was falsely accused of being an *idiotes* ["rude"], an uneducated and simple person who pretended to the intelligentsia. This was patently untrue. But Paul doesn't attack the lies, he argues that even if that is true, and he doesn't bother justifying himself, then it could not be said that he was lacking in true knowledge. Again he is appealing to them to stop judging after the outward appearance (see on 10:7), but to look to the essence, the Spirit within. Paul can say that they surely know what "knowledge" he has, because he has been thoroughly

manifested [Gk. *phaneroo*] to them in absolutely every way; there was nothing he knew which he hadn't shared with them. He is so open with them that he doesn't just write in a political, guarded way to them, watching every word.

11:7- see on Phil. 4:16; Lk. 3:5.

Or did I commit a sin- This kind of sarcasm is hardly in line with Paul's claim to now be appealing to them in the spirit of the Lord's gentleness and meekness (10:1). His bitterness reveals that his previous positivity about them in chapter 7 was uttered on the cusp of emotion, hoping against hope because of the love he had for them.

In abasing myself so you might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nothing?- Paul told Corinth that he had abased himself so that *they* might be exalted. This is one of Paul's many allusions to the Gospels; this time to Lk. 14:11; 18:14, which teach that he who abases himself will *himself* be exalted. But Paul was abasing himself so that Corinth could be exalted, so that they could share the exaltation he would receive on account of his humility. In all this, of course, he reflected to his brethren the very essence of the attitude of the Lord Jesus for toward us. It was through refusing funding for his work from the Corinthians that he *abased* himself that they might be *exalted*- all language of the crucifixion (cp. Phil. 2:8,9). Thus his refusing of legitimate help to make his way easier was an enactment in himself of the cross. We live in a world which has made the fulfilment of personal aims of paramount importance. It has affected the fabric of every society, and become embedded in every mind. To *live to serve*, to put oneself down that others may rise… this is strange indeed. John the Baptist had this spirit, for he rejoiced that he decreased whilst the Lord's cause increased. Paul likewise abased himself that others might be exalted, after the pattern of the cross. God's gentleness, His humility / bowing down (Heb.) has made us great, lifted us up (Ps. 18:35). And we respond to it by humbling *our*selves.

11:8 *I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you*- Accepting support from other churches was hardly robbing them, and the idea of robbing holy places / churches was particularly viewed as the language of sacrilege (Rom. 2:22). Paul uses this particularly arresting term to grab attention, but it is also true to say that he was exaggerating his case, as so often in his very emotionally charged relationship with the Corinthians. His refusal to take money from the Corinthians is presented as a self-abasement; but his decision must be tempered against the fact that he did in fact take support from others, just not Corinth.

Took wages- See on Acts 20:24 *The ministry that I received*.

2 Cor. 11:8-15, when properly translated, perhaps reflects Paul at his angriest and most abrasive: "I robbed other churches [an exaggeration!], getting money from them to be a minister to you!...as the truth of Christ is in me- I swear that this reason to be proud will not be stopped as long as I work in the area of Achaia! You ask me why do I do this? Do you think it's because I don't love you? God knows I do! It's because what I do- and I am going to go on doing it- shuts up some people who are trying to pretend they are as good as we are, those fakes! Such apostles are treacherous workmen. They deck themselves out as apostles of Christ and it's no wonder people are fooled… but they'll get what's coming to them!". Even through the barrier of words, time, culture and distance, the abrasion of Paul in full-flow comes down through the centuries. This was hardly the promised approach in the meekness and gentleness of Christ (10:1), which all goes to show that 2 Corinthians is written as a flow of consciousness letter- which explains many of the apparent contradictions and tensions within it.

11:9- see on 2 Cor. 13:4.

And when I was present with you and was in want- His time of "want" in Corinth was part of being "abased" whilst there amongst them (:7). The same word is translated "destitute" in Heb. 11:37. If he had asked for support or accepted it from the local Corinthians, the implication is that this abasement and want would have been avoided. Perhaps he was indeed destitute, until the Macedonians got assistance to him. "In want" is the Greek word translated "inferior" in :5. Paul was not at all lacking behind the so called "apostles"; but he had been lacking in material things. And that was his qualification as a true apostle. The fact Paul clearly at times had money, and came from a wealthy background, makes all the more impressive his being destitute and "abased" for the Gospel.

I was not a burden on anyone. For the brothers, when they came from Macedonia, supplied all my needs; indeed in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I remain- Paul had the same policy in Thessalonica where he also resisted being burdensome (1 Thess. 2:6 s.w.). Acts 18:3 says that Paul worked in Corinth as a tentmaker when he first arrived there. The fact his needs had to be supplied by the Macedonians would indicate that he was unable to continue being self-supporting in this way, presumably because of an economic blockade against him organized by the Jews.

11:10 *As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me boasting about this throughout the regions of Achaia*- Paul's boasting about his independence from the Corinthians seems rather strange and somewhat human rather than spiritual. Seeing that he had been supported by wages paid by the Macedonians (:8,9), his financial independence from the Corinthians was not a great thing to boast about.

11:11 *And why? Because I do not love you? God knows, I do!*- "God knows", along with his appeal to the truth of Christ within him (:10), all suggests that Paul's claims here would be received cynically by the Corinthians, and so Paul feels the need to swear in some way to his truthfulness. But he might have perhaps taken more comfort from his own observation earlier, that his authenticity as an elder having authority over them was in fact known by them within their own consciences (see on 5:11). Yet in this section (chapters 10-13) Paul often seems to stray from his own principles as he is overly caught up with his personal investment in the situation at Corinth. He should have left it at that, but instead, he makes all kinds of oaths ["God knows!"] and human self-justification. We too can clearly understand and espouse a principle yet allow the humanity of a situation to allow us to indulge in personal self-justification when we have claimed to understand that this is not the way to go.

11:12 *But what I do, that I will continue to do, so I may not provide an opportunity to those that desire such an opportunity, and so that their boasting will be shown to be not the same as ours*- Clearly there were some at Corinth seeking opportunity to bring Paul down. He was up against consciously organized opposition, which he understandably sums up as "the satan" / adversary. Paul's boasting is made, he claims, so that he can as it were out boast the opposition. He has made up his mind to go down the path of human boasting, and says he will continue to do so, because he will deprive his critics of any opportunity to boast. But as observed many times in this letter, we are here reading flow of consciousness writing. Paul is writing down his thoughts as they come into his mind, and all emotions are at first blush contradictory. For it is obvious that my justifying himself, he will not by any amount of autobiographical truth somehow shut down his opponents by outboasting them. Nor will be rid them of opportunity to attack him. And such a path of action is in

contradiction to his correct principle of not comparing ourselves amongst ourselves as men (10:12).

11:13 *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ*- Paul claimed Divine qualification and authentication of his apostleship, whereas these men had merely declared themselves ["fashioning themselves"] apostles. They branded themselves as "super apostles" (:5); Paul calls them *false* apostles. The transformation of these men into something they were not is the basis for :14; as these men 'fashioned themselves' so "Satan fashions himself". But the connection is not historical, to some supposed even in Eden when Satan turned into an Angel. For Genesis and the Bible are silent about this; it is an import from paganism. The present tenses here must be given their due weight. As the false apostles were fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ, so 'Satan' was fashioning himself into an angel of light. I take this as meaning that these men were part of a much larger system of adversarial opposition to Paul's work, which he sums as 'Satan', the adversary. And the context here and elsewhere points unmistakeably to a Jewish satan. I have written about this at length in *The Real Devil 2-4.*

There is indeed allusion to the deceit of the serpent in Eden, who was of course adversarial ['satan' = adversary], but this is not to say that Paul read the serpent as anything more than a literal "beast of the field" as indeed the serpent is presented in Genesis. As the serpent deceived Eve by his subtilty, so these false apostles worked deceitfully. These false apostles accused Paul of having the characteristics of the serpent- crafty and taking people in with guile (12:16). It is these very words and allusion to the serpent which Paul now uses about the false apostles here and in :3 and this explains the usage of serpent imagery. It all seems a rather tit for tat situation- he was trying to outboast them, and calls them the names they call him. This is all in contradiction of Paul's earlier arguments that he will not commend himself as others do nor compare himself with others. But he is carried away in a desire by all means and by every kind of argument to try to win the Corinthians to Christ and to himself.

11:14 *And no marvel. For even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light*- See on :13. For reasons why this is not supporting any idea of a cosmic satan, see my *The Real Devil 5-21* . It needs to be recognized that Paul's writings very often allude to extant Jewish and Gentile literature, sometimes quoting verbatim from them, in order to correct popular ideas. Thus Paul quotes Aratus (Acts 17:28), Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33) and Epimenides (Titus 1:12) – he uses odd phrases out of these uninspired writings by way of illustration. I've shown in *The Real Devil* that much of the Biblical literature does this kind of thing, e.g. the entire Pentateuch is alluding to the various myths and legends of creation and origins, showing what the truth is. The fact Paul's 21st century readers are largely ignorant of that literature, coupled with Paul's rabbinic writing style not using specific quotation rubric or quotation marks, means that this point is often missed. It's rather like our reading of any historical literature – parts of it remain hard to understand because we simply don't appreciate the historical and immediate context in which it was written. When Paul speaks of Satan being transformed as a bright Angel, he's actually quoting from the first century AD *Life of Adam and Eve* (12–16) which speculated that 'Satan' refused to worship the image of God in Adam and therefore he came to earth as a bright Angel and deceived Eve: "Satan was wroth and transformed himself into the brightness of angels, and went away to the river" (For references, see Susan Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 45. *The*

Life of Adam and Eve was apparently widely quoted and alluded to in the first century – see throughout M. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992)). Paul's quoting from that document; although in a preceding verse (2 Cor. 11:3) he has stressed that "the *serpent* beguiled Eve by his subtilty". He's reaffirming the Genesis account, which doesn't speak of a personal Satan, but rather simply of a serpent, created as one of the "beasts of the field". So we could paraphrase Paul here: 'I know that the Jewish writings say that the serpent wasn't really a serpent, it was 'Satan', and was actually in the form of a bright Angel. Now that's not the case – let's stick with Genesis, which speaks of a literal serpent. But OK, in the same way as in the Jewish myth Satan became a bright, persuasive Angel, well, these false teachers from the Jews appear as wonderful, spiritual people – but following them will lead you to the same catastrophe as fell upon Eve as a result of being deceived'.

The way Paul uses the word *metaschematizo* ["transform"] three times is interesting – "the stress is so heavy here because Paul is turning their own word against his opponents" (Neil Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) p. 269). If this is the case, then we would yet another example [of which there are so many in Corinthians] of Paul using a term used by his enemies in order to answer them – which would mean that he is not necessarily agreeing with it. Indeed the apocryphal Jewish *Apocalypse of Moses* claims that because Satan appeared as such a dazzling, shining Angel, Eve was inevitably deceived by him. Paul here would thus be alluding to this idea – not that his allusion means that he supported the idea.

11:15 *It is no great thing therefore if his servants also fashion themselves as servants of righteousness*- Servants or ministers of righteousness is a Jewish term, allusive to the priests. The Jewish satan or opposition to Paul's work had servants / ministers who appeared to be righteous people. Judaism presented the faithful as "the righteous" and the servants of righteousness were those who ministered to Judaist congregations. But they were in fact servants of what Paul terms 'the satan', his term [as previously referenced] for the Jewish opposition. And his later self-justification in this chapter implies that they presented themselves as true Jews of the seed of Abraham.

Whose end shall be according to their work- The lazy servant was punished out of his own mouth (Lk. 19:22); and even in Job's time, this principle of Divine condemnation was known (Job 9:20; 15:6). The Judaizers too were to have an "end [that] will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:14,15 RSV). Jewish theories of the time accept that God punished the Satan figure, but the demons got around the punishment and tempt men to sin– as if God somehow was outwitted in the supposed struggle. But here Paul says that these men will indeed be punished and will not get out of it. The *Apocalypse of Adam* likewise minimizes human sin by claiming that 'Satan' in fact raped Eve, thus leading to the fall; the *Apocalypse of Moses* claims that because Satan appeared as such a dazzling, shining Angel, Eve was inevitably deceived by him. Paul here alludes to this idea– not that his allusion means that he supported the idea.

11:16 *I say again, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, accept me as a fool so that I may also boast a little*- The accusation was that Paul was "foolish", lacking the wisdom which the false teachers claimed to have. Paul is breaking his own principles now, acting as a fool, comparing himself with others, boasting in the flesh rather than the Spirit, and not as earlier leaving the Corinthians to realize his sincerity in their own spirit / conscience. He is driven by a desire as he puts it elsewhere to

"speak in human terms" to by all means persuade them to remain with him and not go after the false teachers. Again we note that he (like the Lord Jesus) faces false statements and beliefs by going along with them and reasoning from their wrong perspective. If they thought him a fool, he will reason with them from the starting point that he is a fool- rather than protesting multiple times that he is being slandered and is no fool.

11:17- see on 1 Cor. 7:11.

What I will now speak in this confidence of boasting, I speak not after the Lord but as in foolishness- "After the Lord" is a reference to his opening statement in this section that he is now going to reason with them according to the gentle humility of Christ (10:1). He is not saying that this record of his words is not Divinely inspired. This is yet further evidence that 2 Corinthians is an inspired record of a flow of consciousness, whereby Paul wrote down what he thought and felt at the time. This explains the apparent tensions- in this case, between approaching them "after the Lord" Jesus, and yet now departing from His meekness and gentleness in order by all means to persuade them on the terms of comparison which they had set up.

11:18 *Seeing that many boast after the flesh, I will boast also*- He is seeking to outboast his boastful competitors, despite having earlier stated that he dare not ever compare himself with others, for that was "not wise" (10:12). As noted on :16 and :17, this was a departure from his own principles.

11:19 *For being wise, you bear with the foolish gladly*- This kind of sarcasm is not really much of an argument, and seems more reflective of Paul's anger, the anger of love unrequited, than any serious attempt to persuade the Corinthians. He is calling the competitors "foolish", and clearly thinks the Corinthians are not really "wise" because they are following such fools. But in terms of winning their hearts and minds for Christ and himself, such language and quips were surely hardly effective, indeed quite the opposite.

11:20 *For it seems you follow a man if he brings you into bondage, if he devours you, if he takes you captive, if he exalts himself, if he hits you on the face*- The "bondage" and "captivity" was to the Mosaic law, and Paul often uses this imagery in writing of the Law in Romans and Galatians. The 'devouring' probably referred to the financial demands made upon them by the false teachers. Why would immoral Gentile Christians be at all attracted by such Judaists? As noted on Titus, such false teachers were attractive to the weak Gentile Christians because their conscience about their misbehaviour was salved, on the basis of paying some money and doing a few symbolic acts of obedience. Many religions have swept to mass popularity on the same basis. These false teachers exalted themselves over their flock and were aggressive to them ("hits you on the face"). And still they returned for more. One wonders why aggressive priests in popular churches have any loyalty from their flocks when they behave likewise. But they do- because they are all about guilt tripping a spiritually weak flock and then demanding money and symbolic obedience. Smiting on the face was a punishment for heresy or blasphemy within the synagogue system (Mt. 5:39; Acts 23:2), although it was often administered gently and more as a symbolic gesture. They who were so immoral, replete with church prostitutes according to 1 Corinthians, were willing to be beaten for their supposed apostasy from Jewish ritual law. And doubtless after receiving it, they felt clean in their conscience and were willing to support and pay those who had punished them.

11:21 *To my shame, I can say, we were too weak to do that*- Such leadership as discussed on :20 was seen as "strong". Paul sarcastically says that he was too weak to have treated his flock like that.

Yet wherein any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also- What follows is some sort of encomium, a list of a person's biographical achievements. But it is presented as a sarcasm about Paul's encomium [see on Gal. 1:10]. Here in 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10, all the classic elements of the encomium are to be found- his origin and birth, training, accomplishments, comparison with others etc. But he has written that those who compare themselves with others (*synkrinontes*) are fools (2 Cor. 10:12), and that he himself has been speaking as a fool, a raving madman. That was what he thought of an encomium after the flesh. This is all a needful lesson for our generation, surrounded as we are by pressure to trust in education, achievements, being humanly cool and impressive. Paul goes on to say that actually, he prefers as a Christian to "boast of things that show my weakness" (2 Cor. 11:30). Instead of speaking of glorious "deeds of the body", he speaks of his labours, imprisonments, beatings etc. And thus he draws out the paradox, incredible for the first century mind- his real strength and power is in his weakness, for it was this that made him trust in God and in the grace of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 12:10). Instead of impressing those around him, Paul sought to impress the Father and Son above. His strength was not, as society then thought, in what he had inherited and developed from the communities into which he was born- it was rather in the grace of God transforming his character. His patron, his teacher and elder, was the Lord Jesus, and the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 8:11), rather than any visible 'elder' of his natural communities.

11:22 *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I*- Clearly the false teachers were Jews, confirming that the 'Satan' referred to in :14 is some kind of personification of the entire Jewish resistance to Paul's work. Paul could have argued on a more spiritual level, as he does in Romans and Galatians, that ethnic descent is irrelevant. But here he takes a more human approach, arguing with them on the same terms of reference which they use.

11:23 *Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as like a madman) I more, with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death*- We note that only a fraction of Paul's sufferings are recorded in Acts, which is a reminder that Biblical history is highly condensed. We see a fraction of the biography of the people we encounter in the pages of the Bible. Many of the imprisonments and beatings would have been at the hand of the synagogue system, which had the authority to discipline their members with temporary arrests and beatings. As we will also note on :24, Paul could have avoided these by making a clean break with Judaism, leaving the ministry to the Jew to Peter as the Lord intended, and going solely to the Gentiles. But he chose not to follow completely the Lord's intention for his ministry- and suffered for it. I have given multiple examples in commentary on Acts. This doesn't mean the Lord didn't work with him; but as in our own lives, going His way is easier than insisting upon our own ways. Some of the beatings may have been from the Romans; but in this case, we wonder why they beat him, seeing that they did not beat Roman citizens like Paul (Acts 22:25,26; 23:27). Perhaps he had been unable to prove his citizenship in some cases; or perhaps he preferred to identify as a Jew and downplayed his Roman citizenship, suffering for it, because he so wished to identify with Israel in order to bring Israel to the Lord Jesus. In Philippi he seems to have kept quiet about his citizenship until after he had been scourged. But again, so much of this could have been avoided if Paul had followed the path of ministry envisaged by the Lord, to go to the Gentiles and leave the Jews to Peter.

Paul was ever aware of his own proneness to failure. He saw himself as tempted to be like the man in the parable who thought he should have more, because he had laboured more abundantly than the others (Mt. 20:12 Gk. = 2 Cor. 11:23).

11:24 *Of the Jews five times I received thirty nines lashes*- When the world reviled him, Paul saw himself as the beaten prophets Jesus had spoken about (2 Cor. 11:24,25 = Mt. 21:35). But such punishments from the synagogue system could have been avoided if Paul had not gone to the Jews and left them to Peter; see on :23. Forty lashes were thought enough to kill a man, and the thirty nine lash punishment was only to be given to a man once in his lifetime, according to synagogue law. The repeated experience of such major beating would have left Paul's back a real mess. In Acts 22:25 we get the impression Paul was willing to be scourged yet again, but at the last minute played the card of his Roman citizenship to avoid it. Perhaps this was because the previous lashings had left him so deformed and infected that he realized that if he were to be lashed again he would probably die.

The pattern of preaching which we see in the Father and in the Lord Jesus must be our model. He identified with us in order to 'get through' to us; the power of His personality and work rests in the fact that He was genuinely human. God Himself chose this method, of manifestation in a Son of our nature, in order to redeem us. We can do likewise, in identifying with our audience; living as they do when in a mission field; learning their language, both literally and metaphorically; patient bearing with those suffering from depression, Aspergers, alcoholism, various neuroses... to win them. Thus to the Gentiles Paul became as a Gentile; and as a Jew in order that he might win them who were under the law (1 Cor. 9:20). This is exemplified by the fact that he underwent synagogue floggings (2 Cor. 11:24)- which were only administered to Jews who willingly submitted to the punishment because they were orthodox Jews. This was the extent to which Paul became as a Jew in the hope of winning the Jews. Fly by preachers, seeking to establish a colony of their home base, will never achieve much lasting success. Paul would pay any price in order to identify with his audience, in order to win them to Christ. He was living out the spirit of Jesus, who likewise identified Himself with us to the maximum extent in order to save us. “Forty lashes minus one” was a synagogue punishment, based on Dt. 25:2,3, which could only be administered to members of the synagogue community- and apparently, the members had the right under local Roman law to resign from the synagogue and escape the punishment. It would’ve been far easier for Paul to disown Judaism and insist he was not a member of any synagogue. But he didn’t. Why? Surely because this was the extent to which he was willing to be all things to all men, to truly be a Jew in order to save the Jews. And we too can choose daily the extent to which we identify ourselves with those whom we seek to save. It’s not simply the case of a Western missionary suffering privations along with the impoverished local population to whom he or she seeks to preach. It’s about us each getting involved in the mess of others’ lives, at great personal cost, in order to show true solidarity with them, on which basis we can more effectively witness to them. This is surely the way in which we are to ‘love the world’; this inhuman world, this enormous collection of desperate, lonely people, into whose mundane experiences we can enter simply through genuine, caring, person-to-person encounter. And by doing this we will find ourselves. For it seems to me that the truly creative and original personalities, the Lord Jesus being the supremest, are those who give of themselves in order to enter into the lives and sufferings of others. And that, by the way, may explain why there are so few truly freethinking minds. Paul

didn't just love the Jewish people in theory, he didn't draw a distinction between the Jews as persons, and their role or status before God. He loved them as persons, and so he suffered for them in order to save them.

11:25 *Three times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been adrift at sea*- Only one beating with rods is recorded (Acts 16:22 s.w.), but Acts records only a fraction of Paul's sufferings. Beating with rods was forbidden to Roman citizens by the *Lex Porcia*, but Paul kept quiet about his Roman citizenship in order to receive it (Acts 16:37). He so wished to identify as a Jew in order to save the Jews; all he had to do was utter the words *Civis Romanus sum* and he could have avoided these beatings with rods, which often caused the death of the victim. We must ask to what extent we are willing to suffer in order to achieve identity with those we seek to save by our witness. The shipwrecks were prior to that on the journey to Rome; the Acts record of Paul's travels says nothing of them and we wonder how many other dramas were not recorded.

Paul endured one of the most traumatic lives ever lived- beaten with rods, shipwrecked, sleepless, cold, naked, betrayed, robbed, beaten, and so much of this isn't recorded (e.g. the three shipwrecks and two of the beatings with rods he speaks of in 2 Cor. 11 aren't mentioned in Acts). And yet he implies that even more than all that, he felt the pressure of care for his brethren in the churches. His heart so bled for them… Paul lived a traumatic life, lived with weakness, fear, trembling, tears, distress, dying daily, burdened beyond measure, despairing of life, having the sentence of death, sleeplessness… and all this would have had quite some effect upon him nervously. Almost certainly it would have lead him to be depressive, and this may explain some of these flashes of anger. Yet these flecks of pride and anger reflect something of Paul's former self. He is described as fuming out hatred against the Christians like an animal; he was driven by hate and anger. Stephen's death sentence was against Pharisaic principles; and it was a studied rejection of the more gentle, tolerant attitude taught by Gamaliel, Paul's early mentor ("though I distribute all my belonging to feed the poor..." is Paul virtually quoting Gamaliel- he clearly was aware of his stance). People like Paul who come from strict, authoritarian backgrounds can have a tendency to anger, and yet in Paul there seems also to have operated an inferiority complex, a longing for power, and a repressed inner guilt. Although Paul changed from an angry man to one dominated by love, to the extent that he could write hymns of love such as 1 Cor. 13, there were times when under provocation the old bitterness and anger flashed back. We too have these moments, and yet in the fact that Paul too experienced them even in spiritual maturity, we have some measure of comfort.

11:26 *On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in danger at sea, in danger from false brothers*- Travel in the first century was a risky business; flash floods ["rivers"] in Asia Minor claimed many lives. And Paul additionally had to cope with the opposition of both Jews and Gentiles. To obey the great commission to take the Gospel out into the world was therefore a call to face danger and hardship. In spiritual terms, that same calling has not been made any less radical for we who face so many distractions and issues which would likewise discourage us from obeying it.

The "false brothers" were surely those of Gal. 2:4, the Jews bent on derailing Paul's missionary work by entering the churches he founded under the guise of being converts. Paul is here hinting that he knows exactly who the false teachers of Corinth

are; or as he puts it in 2:11, he was not ignorant of the devices of the [Jewish] satan. Paul mentions this problem last in this list because he wanted to highlight how aware he was of it.

11:27 *In toil and hardship*- Literally, weariness and pain. Perhaps Paul's traumatic life resulted in some form of M.E. or similar disease, causing pain and sucking his energy, resulting in insomnia.

In many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness- Paul loved Israel with the love of Christ: he describes his hunger, thirst, nakedness, insomnia and loss of all things in the very language used about Israel's condemnation (2 Cor. 11:27 alludes Dt. 28:48). In other words, he saw himself as somehow bearing their punishment for apostasy in his own life, as if he was some kind of suffering representative for them. His sufferings were the very opposite of what the Judaists believed should accompany an accredited spiritual teacher, for they practiced a form of the prosperity Gospel, having a proverb that "a goodly house, a fair wife, and a soft couch" were the prerogatives of the "disciples of the wise". Paul is in a way confirming their secular view that he was 'unwise'. But as he has stated in 1 Cor. 1, there is a total inversion of secular wisdom and blessing for those who are of the Spirit.

11:28 *Besides those things that are without, there is the daily pressure of my anxiety for all the churches*- Paul identified his biggest pressure as "the care of all the churches" which he said 'came upon (Gk. to throng / mob / rush at) (him) daily' (2 Cor. 11:28)- as if he woke up each morning and had these anxieties thronging his mind.

11:29- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

Who is weak, without me being weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?- The word he uses for "weak" is one which features frequently in his writings, and it nearly always refers to the spiritually weak (Rom. 4:19; 14:1,2,21; 1 Cor. 8:9,11,12). He was so sensitive to his brethren that when he considered their spiritual weakness, he felt the same. He identified with them, he could put his arm around someone who was all slipping way and say "I'm with you" and so evidently mean it. He had a genuine and obvious sense of solidarity with them. He wasn't critical of them to the extent that he made a barrier between him and them. They knew his disapproval of their ways, but yet it was so evident that his heart bled for them. And when Paul saw a brother being offended, he burnt. His heart burnt and bled as he saw someone drifting away with a chip on their shoulder. He didn't just shrug and think 'Well that's up to them, their choice'. He cared for them. That brother, that sister, and their future meant so much to him. If Paul had lived in the 21st century, he would have telephoned them, written to them, visited them, met with them regularly. To be weak and to be offended are bracketed in Rom. 14:21: "Your brother is offended, or is made weak". And here in 2 Cor. 11:29 we have the same idea: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?". The parallels imply that if the weak brother was offended, Paul himself was as it were offended, even though he himself didn't stumble. He could identify with the spiritual weakness of others to the point of feeling that he himself had committed it or was in the shoes of the sinner- even though he himself was innocent. Paul could share with the Corinthians that he 'burnt' every time a brother stumbled from the way, feeling weak with the weak. The 'burning' could be a reference to the figurative usage of fire as the end destruction of the condemned at the last day. Paul felt their condemnation as if it were happening to him. He did not shrug and turn away but rather felt their spiritual situation as being his, such was his identity with them. He was no mere platform speaker, or a church

member only theoretically connected with their brethren by common ascent to a statement of faith.

11:30 *If it is necessary for me to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness*- The supreme qualification was in his weakness. We noted on :21 that Paul has been presenting a kind of inverted form of the biographical list of achievements which was commonly known as an 'encomium'. And now he sums up his humiliations with an incident which for him epitomized the humiliation which characterized his entire ministry. His glorying in his infirmities in 12:5 is similar.

Paul has just defined weakness in :29 as moral weakness. And so he says that what he glories in most is how he as a sinner has been saved by the cross of Jesus. He continues to interpret his 'weakness' this way; for he says that his thorn in the flesh [a moral weakness?] was a weakness which was only met by the Lord's grace: "My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). Grace is sufficient for sin; Paul's weakness therefore refers to his sin. He sees in all his weaknesses a connection with the Lord on the cross, who was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4 "Who was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you"). Paul's moral weakness he sees as connecting him with the physical weakness of the Lord on the cross. The Lord on the cross therefore bids sinners come to Him, rather than scaring away by the exhibition of His righteousness. So Paul says here that he will only boast in his [moral] weaknesses; but in Gal. 6:14 that he will only boast in the cross of Jesus: "far be it for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world". This is why he now proceeds to talk about his situation in Damascus, which I will suggest on :32 is in fact a reference to his moral weakness. And then in 2 Cor. 12 in this same context he speaks of his thorn in the flesh, a moral weakness resolved only by the Lord's grace.

Weakness is a major theme for Paul in Corinthians. He was accused of weakness, and his answer is that this in fact is the basis of his connection with the Lord Jesus. And it is through that weakness that the Lord's power is seen and works. The sense of moral weakness merges with the idea of physical weakness, in that the Lord's physical weakness, in that He was human, enables Him to understand our moral weakness. The words for "weak" apply to both the physical weakness of our natures, and moral weakness [e.g. "him that is weak in the faith", Rom. 14:1; 4:19,21]. In His life and death, the Lord bore our weakness (Mt. 8:17); the [Lord the] Spirit helps our infirmities (Rom. 8:26). Paul was with the Corinthians "in weakness and in fear" (1 Cor. 2:3). We are sown in weakness, but raised in power (1 Cor. 15:43), out of weakness made strong (Heb. 11:34). But Paul glories in those weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5), "I take pleasure in infirmities" (s.w., 2 Cor. 12:10), because the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). He was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4); He was compassed with infirmity (s.w., Heb. 5:2), not untouched by the feeling of our infirmity although He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). We are "weak in Him" (2 Cor. 13:4). Our weakness is all the same "in Him"; that is the idea. We are not weak outside of Him; we are not left to cope alone with our weaknesses.

11:31 *The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed for always, knows that I do not lie to you*- The Corinthians considered Paul to be a liar, hence his frequent protestations that he is speaking the truth before God. Judaism spoke of God as the ever blessed One, but Paul here makes it clear that this title is true through His

being the Father of the Lord Jesus, through whom His blessings are now articulated to men.

11:32 *In Damascus, the governor, under Aretas the king, guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to capture me*- Paul has his historical facts correct, for Aretas was an Arabian king from Petra who briefly ruled over Damascus. If the Bible is a forgery or uninspired, there would be major blunders in historical fact; but there are not. The Jews clearly had influence with him, far more than the Acts record indicates, and had his whole garrison (AV- an appropriate term, seeing Aretas of Petra had only recently taken control in Damascus) trying to catch Paul. There was therefore a mobilization of a large number of soldiers in order to stop Paul escaping Damascus. Hence the impression it left upon Paul.

The reference to Aretas is obviously intentional; especially when we realize that he only briefly ruled over Damascus. Paul is making a point here. I think it is in order to define more precisely the point at which he escaped over the wall. And it was not immediately after his conversion. Possibly the idea is that he escaped over the Damascus wall twice; which is why different words for "basket" are used in Acts 9:25 and here in 2 Cor. 11:32. The earlier occasion would not fit with the brief time when Aretas the Arab was governor. I suggest that the chronology of events was something like this: : (1) Paul's conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–8); (2) Paul stayed in Damascus a while (Acts 9:9–24); (3) Paul preached in the Damascus synagogues (Acts 9:20–22); (4) He was let down by a basket [a different word is used, Acts 9:25] to escape Jewish opposition. Disillusioned with Jewish response and resisting the call to go to the Gentiles, in disobedience to his great call to missionary work to the Gentiles, Paul went into the desert area of the Nabatean kingdom of Arabia (Gal. 1:17 "I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus"). This wilderness period, rather like Elijah's, was in disobedience to his commission, as perhaps was Moses' 40 years in Midian; (5) Paul returned to Damascus and remained there three years (Gal. 1:17,18); clearly he was not preaching, because when he had preached there he was immediately persecuted and driven out. He only left because the Governor [not the Jews] wanted to arrest him. This would have been because Antipas went to war with Herod, and all Jews fled from Damascus as they were accused of being spies. That Paul remained suggests he had also effectively renounced his Jewishness, perhaps seeking to present himself as just a man from Tarsus in Cilicia. (6) Paul then nearly lost his life but just managed to escape from Damascus (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:32,33); and then made his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian (Acts 9:26–29; Gal 1:18–24).

So during a period of disobedience, resisting the commission he was given, thinking that the Jews would have forgotten his momentary conversion to Christianity... Paul was saved by grace. He was let down in a basked over the city wall, when the city was under watch. This was probably a basket full of excrement, let down into what was effectively the sewer. Covered in human excrement, this was indeed a moment of weakness and hardly one to glory in. But in it, Paul saw a connection with the Lord's crucifixion in weakness.

11:33 *And only through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall*- Paul sees this escape through a window in a basket as so humiliating because it associates him with David's escape from Saul's persecution. And Paul- the former Saul- saw himself as having persecuted David-Jesus and was ashamed of it. Paul seems to take a certain pleasure in this inversion of values. He boasts of how his greatest moment was when he was let *down* a wall in a basket, in fear for his life (2 Cor. 11:30-33). "In antiquity a Roman soldier who was first up a wall and into a conquered city would win a special award called a wall crown. Paul says he will boast of being first *down*

the wall"- running from the enemy (Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* p. 124). He was the very reverse of the classical ancient warrior. This inversion of values is just as hard and counter-cultural to live by in our world. It's quite possible that garbage was lowered over the wall into a rubbish tip at the foot of the wall, which would have added to the humiliation. Outside the city, with wild dogs howling amongst the stinking garbage... this was the Biblical picture of condemnation. And Paul experienced it and through that humiliation was saved. In essence, we pass through the same experience.

"Basket" is a word never elsewhere used in the NT, literally 'a plaited cord'. Baskets are mentioned, e.g. at the feeding miracles and in the first time Paul was let down the walls of Damascus; but a distinctly different word is used here. How could he have been let down by a cord when the city was being guarded? It could be that he was dressed in burial clothes and was lowered down the wall, in view of the guarding soldiers, as if a dead body- to be consumed in the equivalent of 'gehenna' outside the walls of Damascus. This would explain why in his experience of condemnation, he also felt identity with the dead body of the Lord Jesus, whose dead body was also in full view of soldiers. Or perhaps the unusual expression for 'basket' / plaited cord was used to heighten the obvious connection with the spies leaving Rahab's whore house. Could Paul be asking us to join the dots and see that he was cornered by the authorities whilst in a whore house? This would then connect with how his next example of his moral weakness is in that he had a thorn in the flesh; which alludes to Gentile women being a thorn in the flesh of Israelites. As if his moral weakness was in the sexual area.

And escaped his hands- "Escaped" is a word used by Paul about the futility of escaping condemnation. Sinners will not escape Divine judgment (Rom. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:3; Heb. 2:3). The idea may be that Paul was as a condemned sinner within Damascus, but escaped by grace. Which is why he cites this as an example of moral weakness, dealt with by grace, in which he can boast and glory.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

12:1 *I must go on boasting (though there is nothing to be gained by it). I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord*- I have earlier explained the various tensions and apparent contradictions within 2 Corinthians by proposing that Paul is writing down his feelings and emotions as a flow of consciousness, albeit recorded under inspiration. This explains the volatile change of feelings and approach, one moment passionately 'in love' with them, the next bitterly angry and resentful against them. He has explained that indeed boasting or attempting to outboast his competitors is not the way to go. Here in 12:1 he again recognizes that, but feels compelled to go on boasting. In chapter 11, Paul has as it were concluded his list of sufferings by citing what to him was the supremest humiliation- being lowered in a basket from the walls of Damascus into the rubbish tip beneath. But now he seems to revert to boasting about his qualifications in terms which might impress his competitors and their supporters. This reversion to a previous theme which he had supposedly concluded is evidence enough that indeed, we are dealing with a flow of consciousness record. "Visions and revelations" were the very things which the false teachers claimed to have.

12:2 *I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago*- Paul makes one of his most

significant boasts mindful that he should not be boasting really. This may explain his reference to himself only in indirect terms, in an attempt not to boast overmuch about such a holy thing. He does this elsewhere (see on Gal. 1:6). "I knew a man" would be better "I know a man" (RV); the person in view was still alive. The vision which he received may well have included something about Jew and Gentile unity; for 14 years previously on some chronologies would take us to the time of the Jerusalem Council. Or the reference could be to the trance in the temple (Acts 22:17) in which he was told to go to the Gentiles.

Whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know; God knows- Paul stresses this twice. Perhaps his idea was that the mode of the vision was unimportant; it was the message which was all important. The mode of revelation was important to the Jewish mysticists; whilst Paul is indeed trying to outboast them ['foolishly'], he is also saying that the mode is insignificant. Whether a man went to Heaven in a bodily form to get a revelation is irrelevant compared to the message.

Such a person was caught up to the third heaven- The picture of being "caught up" is presented right after that of Paul being let down the wall of Damascus as refuse, into the rubbish tip at the foot of the walls; an incident he presents as his greatest humiliation. But it was that bringing down which was the basis for his being lifted up so high, following the pattern of the Lord Jesus.

The idea of seven heavens currently held in Judaism and Islam is not Biblical. There were at Paul's time only three understandings of heaven: the literal air, the sky, and Heaven itself where God dwells. Paul may simply mean 'Heaven' but he uses this Jewish terminology because his opponents in view were Judaists. Another popular suggestion is that the first heaven refers to the Mosaic law; the second heaven to the Christian dispensation, and the "third heaven" to the Kingdom age. But this is problematic because one would expect 'heavens and earth' to be the phrase used for a dispensation of things. And before the Mosaic law there was also some form of Divine dispensation upon earth, which this schema ignores. So I read Paul as simply referring to 'Heaven', which he parallels with "paradise" (:4). Paradise was understood in Jewish terms as Heaven; although one could argue that it refers to the Kingdom of God on earth when the paradise of Eden is restored. We would note in that case that Paul has recently presented the Corinthian church as Eve in paradise, now tempted by the serpent of the Judaizers (11:3). If paradise was where the Corinthians were now situated, in prospect at least, perhaps Paul means that he saw a heavenly vision of how things really are for the church from the Heavenly viewpoint. It would be this vision which motivated Paul to keep on keeping on so tenaciously with the Corinthians, and would explain his obsessive insistence upon the success of the Jerusalem Poor Fund. This heavenly vision of how God saw the Gentile believers would have likewise inspired Paul to continually view them as being justified in Christ and acceptable to God. It would explain his extraordinary motivation for the Corinthians, and why he mentions this vision at this point. He doesn't utter in words what he saw- because his ministry for them was a public statement of his striving to achieve that ideal.

We are real life men and women, only too aware that although yes, we are in Christ, we are also all too human still. We still sin the sins and think the thoughts and feel the feelings of those around us. We are only who we are, born in such a town, living in such a city, doing a job, trying to provide for a family. In our minds eye we see the spotless lamb of God, moving around Galilee 2000 years ago, doing good, healing the

sick. But He was there, and we are here now, today, in all our weakness and worldly distraction. He was as He was, but *we* are as we are. Reading through his letters, it is apparent that Paul saw himself as two people: a natural man, a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen living in the Mediterranean world... and also, a man in Christ. This is why he here says of himself: “I knew a man in Christ”, who had great visions 14 years previously (at the council of Jerusalem of Acts 15), and who was subsequently given a “thorn in the flesh”. “Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory”, he writes (2 Cor 12:5), as if separating himself from this more spiritually exalted man who saw these visions. Paul is surely telling us that he sees himself as two people. He makes the point clearly: “I will not be a fool... I am become a fool” (:6,11). He was the greatest apostle; although he was nothing (:11). This language comes to a crisis in 12:10: “When I [i.e. the natural Paul] am weak, then am I [the spiritual Paul] strong”.

The Corinthians were mainly Gentiles, but Paul speaks of them as “When you were Gentiles…” (1 Cor. 12:2 RV). They had a new racial identity in Christ, and yet, he also reminded them at times that they were Gentiles. We too cannot obliterate who we are or where we came from. But superimposed upon this must be the realisation than now, we are in Christ.

Paul is in many ways a working model of how we should be aware of the two people within us. In writing to Corinth, he was highly sensitive to the danger of sinning by justifying himself as he needed to. To overcome this problem, he speaks (through the Spirit) as if he is two quite different people; the fleshly man, and the spiritual man. 2 Cor. 11 is full of statements concerning himself, which he makes "as a fool”. His frequent usage of this word "fool" points us back to the Proverbs, where a "fool" is the man of the flesh. Ecc. 10:2 says that a fool has a 'left handed' mind, which in Jewish thinking was a reference to the "man of the flesh" of the N.T. There are a number of apparent contradictions between passages in 2 Cor. 11,12 which are explicable once it is appreciated that Paul is speaking firstly "in the flesh", and then concerning his spiritual man. Thus he insists that he is not a fool (11:16; 12:6), whilst saying that he is a fool (12:11). He says he will not boast about himself, but then he does just that. He claims to be among the greatest apostles, and in the same breath says he is nothing (12:11). His boasting was "not after the Lord", i.e. the man Christ Jesus within Him was not speaking, but the fool, the man of the flesh, was speaking (11:17). The supreme example of this separation of flesh and spirit in Paul's thinking is shown by 12:2: "I knew a man in Christ (who heard great revelations)... of such an one will I glory, but of myself will I not glory". But 12:7 clearly defines this "man" as Paul: "lest I should be exalted... through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh". The "man in Christ" of whom Paul spoke was his own spiritual man, who was "in Christ". It is interesting that here Paul defines "myself" as his natural man, whereas in Rom. 7:25 he speaks of "myself" as his spiritual man. The point is made that at different times we identify ourselves either with the man of the flesh, or with the spiritual man within us. In 2 Cor. 11,12, Paul consciously chose to identify himself with the natural man, in order to boast to the Corinthians. It is worth noting that “fourteen years ago" takes us back to the Council at Jerusalem. The revelations given to Paul then were probably confirmation that the Gospel should indeed be preached to the Gentiles. This was the "third Heaven" dispensation. The wonder that Paul would be used to spread the Gospel world-wide so mentally exalted Paul that he needed a thorn in the flesh to bring Him down to earth. Yet, for the most part, we seem to shrug our shoulders at the wonder of our preaching commission.

12:3 *And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I do not know; God knows)*- See on :2 *Whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know; God knows*. The word for word repetition is the way Jews emphasized the totality of their truthfulness. Paul is emphasizing the wonder of the things heard; the form in which they were heard was utterly unimportant compared to the content of the message. And that principle remains true to this day.

12:4 *How he was caught up into Paradise*- See on :2 *Such a person was caught up to the third heaven*. Paul appears to equate paradise with "the third heaven", but it's also feasible that he is describing two stages of exaltation; one to the third heaven, i.e. Heaven, and then further into "paradise".

And heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter- Alluding to how Moses saw the greatest visions of God of any man in the Old Testament; visions which he could not repeat; he only repeated the words of command which he was given. He did not tell Israel what he saw in Ex. 34. It could be that Paul is saying that what is heard in Paradise cannot be spoken on earth; or at least, cannot be articulated 'lawfully', in the terms of the Mosaic law. In this case, such visions are not really any confirmation of having Divine authority in one's message. Therefore the claims of the Jewish false teachers, and those of Paul, were equal on one level- but were unimportant, because their message was not going to be comprised of what they may or may not have heard in Paradise. Because what is heard there is "unspeakable".

12:5- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

On behalf of such a one will I boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, save in my weaknesses- This is as stated in 11:30. Paul is inverting all human wisdom and worldviews here by saying that greatness and qualification is in weakness and not human strength. Earlier Paul has reminded them that he first preached the Gospel to them in "weakness" (1 Cor. 2:3 s.w.). He seems to have in view physical frailty of health, which would encourage the view that the thorn in the flesh which we will now read of was some physical weakness.

12:6 *For if I wanted to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be speaking the truth. But I will not boast, lest anyone should account me above that which he saw me to be, or hears from me*- This awkward statement would appear to be Paul's way of explaining why he has just written about himself in the third person, and apparently distancing himself from the Paul who really did have things to truthfully boast about. Paul has now twice stated in two verses "I will not boast", whilst he is evidently doing just that. His argument that 'This isn't really me...' has limited value. I would say that this letter is the record of a flow of consciousness, and Paul is baring his heart to them. The very genuine love he has for them and passion for their salvation and the unity of Christ's body has led him to get worked up into a frenzy of trying to persuade them by all means.

12:7 *That I should not be exalted overmuch*- The usage of words with the *huper* prefix is common in this section. The self proclaimed *huper* or super apostles could not be equalled by Paul because a true servant of Christ will be held back from being *huper* exalted. Paul repeats this phrase twice in this verse to emphasize the point.

A thorn in the flesh- An impediment of some sort. Whatever or whoever the opposition, there could be no thorn in the Spirit; any retardation of Paul's work was only on a human level. The thorn was Satan's "messenger", and I suggest below that this refers to an individual coordinating the Jewish campaign against Paul's

missionary endeavours. But there are other quite feasible suggestions about the thorn in the flesh; and these are not to be excluded. It's quite possible that the repeated beatings Paul suffered from the Satan [the Jews] resulted in various health issues such as poor eyesight which meant that indeed, the human "thorn" resulted in 'thorns' in Paul's physical health.

Here, then, are some other alternatives concerning the thorn:
Poor Eyesight
Gal. 4:10-13 speaks of an 'infirmity in the flesh' which would have led many to despise Paul's preaching; and yet the Galatians overlooked this when they first heard Paul's preaching. Speaking of the same period of time, Paul reminisces how they would have been willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to him (Gal. 4:15). This would seem to make a fairly firm connection between the "thorn in the flesh" of 2 Cor. 12:7 and the "infirmity in the flesh" of poor eyesight. Thus he concludes the Galatian letter with a reference to the large letter he had written with his own hand (Gal. 6:11); not " large" in the sense of long, but perhaps referring to his physically large and unimpressive handwriting. Paul "earnestly beholding the council" employs a Greek medical term for squinting as a result of poor eyesight (Acts 23:1).

Malaria
The description of Paul being with the Corinthians in "weakness and... trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3) uses a specific medical term describing the malaria shakes. "Weakness" is the same word as here in 2 Cor. 12:5, where the thorn in the flesh is a "weakness" given which actually qualifies Paul as an apostle. This would explain why he was "in peril of waters" (Gk. 'rivers'; 2 Cor. 11:26)- the breeding grounds of mosquitoes. Poor eyesight could be associated with malaria; although it us difficult to understand the malaria just beginning in mid-life as suddenly as the 'thorn in the flesh' passage seems to suggest. Paul may well have had malaria, as any such traveller was likely to- quite in addition to any physical 'thorn in the flesh'.

A Spiritual Struggle
However, there are reasons to think that whilst Paul may have had a physical ailment, the "thorn in the flesh" may have referred to a spiritual affliction. One would expect to read about a thorn in the *body* if Paul was only speaking of a physical weakness. But in Paul's thinking, "the flesh" so evidently refers to the more abstract things of human nature. The context of the "thorn in the flesh" passage would suggest that it was a spiritual weakness. Paul says that he will not boast of himself, "except in my infirmities" (2 Cor. 12:5). One of his "infirmities" was therefore his "thorn in the flesh". He is saying that he will not boast of his physical sufferings (which might include his weak eyesight) and achievements, rather he will exult in the fact that he, a man riddled with spiritual infirmity, especially one particular thorn in the flesh, had been used by God, and God's grace was sufficient to overcome all his spiritual weakness. Now this would fit in with the quintessence of Paul's belief: that by grace alone, not human achievement, God works through human weakness to bring about His purpose. Paul isn't adding to his list of physical glorying by saying 'And you know, on top of all this, I've had to struggle all my life with physical weakness'. This would only be continuing his boasting of 2 Cor. 11. But now he changes, and says that he wants to glory in his spiritual weakness, and how God has worked with him despite that.

Paul asked for the thorn to be taken away; but the answer was that God's *grace* was sufficient. Grace tends to be associated with forgiveness and justification, rather than with the ability to keep on living with a physical ailment. Likewise Moses, Paul's hero and prototype, asked a similar three times for entry to the land, and was basically given the same answer: that God's gracious forgiveness was sufficient for him.

Women?
When Paul talks about being buffeted by a thorn in the flesh, he is in fact almost quoting passages from the LXX of Num. 33:55 and Josh. 23:13, where "thorns" which would buffet the *eyes* of Israel were the Canaanite tribes (cp. Ez. 28:24); and especially, in the context, their women. If they intermarried, those women and what they brought with them would be made by God as thorns in Israel's flesh. The implication could be that Paul had not driven out his Canaanites earlier, and therefore God gave them to Him as a thorn in the flesh, just as He had done to Israel earlier.
There is fair reason to think that Paul had been married; he could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin and thus had the power to vote for the murder of the early martyrs unless he had been married and had children (Acts 26:10). His comment that he wished all men to be in his marital position (1 Cor. 7:8) has another slant in this case: he wished them to have had the marriage experience, but be in the single state. As a leading Pharisee, his wife would have been from an appropriate background. " ...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" would then have been written with a sideways glance back at his wife, children he never saw... all that might have been. In gripping autobiography, Paul relates the innocent days when (as a child) he lived without the knowledge of law and therefore sin. But then, the concept of commandments registered with him; and this "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:8). "Concupiscence" is a conveniently archaic word for lust; and in the thinking and writing of Paul, the Greek *epithumia* is invariably used in a sexual context.

As an ardent Pharisee, with all the charisma of the unashamed extremist and evidently rising leader, it is almost certain that the inevitable interplay of sexuality and spirituality, of flesh and spirit, would have played itself out. And after conversion, the inevitable attraction of the committed missionary would have been evident; not least in the charismatic preaching of a new and ultimately true religion which was largely comprised of young / middle aged females (according to contemporary historians). No wonder Paul's slanderers made him out to be immoral; it was the easiest slur to cast. At Thessalonica he was even accused of preaching solely in order to get the praise and financial support of women (so 1 Thess. 2:3-12 implies). And as a man, with the commandments of God producing in him all manner of concupiscence, he would not have lightly shrugged off all these temptations. If this " thorn in the flesh" became particularly strong at a certain time, this could be seen as reference to the beginning of some illicit relationship.
And yet it cannot be overlooked that as outlined above, there does seem to be an evident link between the thorn in the flesh and literal blindness (Gal. 4:10-13 = 2 Cor. 12:7). The explanation may be that because of Paul's wandering eyes and mind, his sight was severely impaired. He likens his ailment to a man plucking out his eyes with his own hands (Gal. 4:15), using language unmistakably recalling the Lord's command to pluck out, with ones' own hands, the eyes that offend, that we might enter the Kingdom. The command of Mt. 5:28,29 is in the very context of lustful thinking and looking. In His desire to save us, God has His way. Paul saw that his

weakness for women would have cost him the Kingdom, and that therefore the Lord had plucked out his eyes. He had been given a thorn in his flesh spiritually; and so the Lord had given him a thorn in the flesh physically, that he might conquer that spiritual weakness. The other reference to plucking out the offending eye is in Mt. 18:9, in a context regarding the paramount need not to offend the little ones. Could it be that Paul's limitation was to protect some of his converts from stumbling? And so with us, the offending eye or limb must be plucked out or cut off; and if we will not do it, the Lord will: either now, by grace, or in the final destruction of condemnation. We either fall on the stone of the Lord and are broken now, or that stone will fall upon us, and grind us to powder. We either chose the baptism of fire now, or we will be consumed anyway by the fire of judgment. The logic of devotion, self-control and self-sacrifice is powerfully appealing.

God *gave* Paul his thorn in the flesh. Whilst God tempts no man- for temptation is a process internal to human nature- He may still have a hand in controlling the situations which lead to temptation. Hence the Lord bid us pray that the Father lead us not into temptation. Each of us has his own specific human weaknesses. When the apostle wrote of shedding *the* sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1), he may have been suggesting that we each have our own specific weakness to overcome. This is certainly a comfort to us in our spiritual struggles. We aren't alone in them. They were given to us. We aren't alone with our nature. The purpose and plan of God for us is articulated even through the darkest nooks of our very essential being. Understanding this should make us the more patient with our brethren, whose evident areas of weakness are not ours.

A messenger of Satan- The Satan in view is the Jewish opposition to Paul's missionary work. An envoy / messenger / representative of that Satan had been allowed by God to operate in order to stop Paul being over exalted. And yet the work of this "thorn" was a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel. It is quite possible that the Lord's work suffers because He has to work in such a way so as not to allow our pride to arise to such a point that we are turned out of the way to salvation. If we had developed to the point that we were not so prone to pride or other weaknesses, His work would prosper the more. There is the implication that one particular “messenger” of the Jewish Satan organized the persecution of Paul – Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:20). The link between the messenger of Satan in 2 Corinthians 12:7 and those of 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 indicates that this person was a member of the ecclesia also. A primary application of the "man of sin" passage in 2 Thess. 2 may well be to this individual being in the temple (i.e. the church – 1 Tim. 3:15) of God, “whose coming is after the working of (the Jewish) Satan” (2 Thess. 2:9). This person could apparently do miracles – as could the Jewish Christians in the early church (Heb. 6:4–6). This man of sin is “the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3), a phrase used to describe Judas (Jn. 17:12). This suggests an allusion back to Judas, and indicates that the man of sin might also be a Jew, who was within the ecclesia, as Judas was, but who betrayed Christ because he wanted the aims of Judaism to be fulfilled rather than those of Christ. The “day of Christ” referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3, before which time the man of sin must be developed, was primarily the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 – which again indicates a primary Jewish fulfilment of the “man of sin”. Notice that organized Jewish opposition to Paul’s preaching was very intense at Thessalonica – Acts 17:5–13. The Lord Jesus could have returned in AD70 and therefore passages like 2 Thess. 2 had a possible fulfilment in the first century. His coming was delayed

because the various preconditions were not met- so that such prophecies will be fulfilled in spirit but perhaps not to the letter in our last days.

The work of this messenger of Satan resulted in Paul developing the spiritual characteristic of humility. The Satan stopped Paul from being proud. Pride is produced by the Devil – 1 Timothy 3:6,7. So we have the situation where Satan stops the work of Satan. Again, this does not make sense under the traditional interpretation of Satan. Mark 7:20–23 says that pride is a result of our evil heart. Thus the trial brought on Paul by a person acting as a Satan to him stopped his evil desires – another use of the word "Satan" – from leading him into the sin of pride. "Satan" can be used to describe a man (e.g. Mt. 16:23) and the Greek word for messenger / angel can also apply to men (e.g. Mt. 11:10; Lk. 7:24; James 2:25). "Satan" may also refer to the adversarial Jewish system, and thus the messenger of Satan is most likely a man acting on behalf of the Jews.

Everywhere in Paul's writings, as well as in Revelation, 'Satan' always has the definite article – apart from here. Likewise, this is the only time Paul uses the form *Satan* rather than his usual *satanas*. One reason for that could be that Paul is alluding to or quoting from known Jewish literature or ideas which mentioned a "messenger of Satan". Another possibility is that he refers here to an Angel–Satan – for the Greek word translated "messenger" is also that for Angel. In this case, he saw himself as Job, suffering affliction from an Angel–adversary, in order to bring about his spiritual perfection. I have noted the similarities between Job and Paul elsewhere (See my *Bible Lives* Section 3-3-8).

To harass me, that I should not be exalted too much- Paul uses the same word in 1 Cor. 4:11 concerning how Paul right then was being harassed. The reference was to Jewish instigated opposition to his mission. "The messenger of Satan" is probably the same as the ministers of Satan referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15, which we have interpreted as the Judaizers in the early church who were discrediting Paul and seeking to undermine Christianity. The buffeting done by this "messenger of Satan" is defined in v. 10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions..." (i.e. in my thorn in the flesh which God will not take away). Note the parallel between the thorn and those things it caused. The reproaches refer to the Jewish ministers of Satan saying things like, "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10), as previously explained. The necessities and persecutions quite clearly refer to the constant waves of persecutions he received by the Jews which the book of Acts describe. This would fit the language of "buffeting" – implying physical discomfort that he experienced periodically. The infirmities would refer to the ill health which his persecutions by the Jews no doubt resulted in – being beaten until he appeared dead (Acts 14:19) must have done permanent damage, as would receiving "forty stripes save one" five times and thrice being "beaten with rods" because of the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24–25). Thus the passage probably refers to an organized program of persecution of Paul by the Jews which began after the vision of 2 Corinthians 12:1–4, from which time he dates his experience of the thorn in the flesh. It was from this time that Paul's zealous preaching to the Gentiles no doubt stimulated the Jews to more violent opposition to him. Their complaint against him was often that he was adulterating the Jewish religion by allowing Gentiles the chance of salvation by what he preached.

12:8- see on Mt. 26:39.

Concerning this thing- The Greek could as well be translated 'this person', reinforcing the possibility that one particular envoy from the Jewish satan is in view. This singular "thing" is paralleled with the string of afflictions listed in :10 which

were all brought upon Paul due to the Jewish opposition to his ministry: "weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses...". They were all orchestrated not simply by the "satan", the Jewish system, but by a specific envoy of it. It would not be going too far to think that the man of sin envisaged in 2 Thess. 2 refers to this same individual. He was envisaged as taking power in the temple and being destroyed at the Lord's return. I would say that this was one of the possible scenarios which could have been fulfilled if there had been enough spiritual fruit to have enabled the Lord's return in AD70. There was not and therefore His return has been delayed until our last days, and the "man of sin" will have a slightly different fulfilment.

I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me- The Greek word for "thorn" can mean a "stake" – as was used for crucifying. This was to buffet Paul, as Christ was buffeted at the crucifixion (Mt. 26:67). Like Christ in His last hours, Paul prayed for the buffeting of Satan to be removed (2 Cor. 12:8 cp. Lk. 22:42). Paul "besought the Lord thrice" for this and so did Jesus in the Garden (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44). Also like Christ, Paul's prayer for release was not granted, ultimately for his spiritual good. Thus it is implied that because of Paul's sufferings at the hands of the Jewish Satan throughout his life, his whole life was "crucified with Christ" in that he experienced constantly the sufferings Christ had in His last few hours. This is exactly what we see in Acts 26:18.

12:9 *And he said to me*- We are left to speculate as to whether this was the answer Paul perceived in the lack of answer to his prayer, or whether the Lord actually spoke this to Paul in a vision. We can interpret God's silence as His word to us.

My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness- This is an allusion to the LXX of Gen. 33:11, where Jacob has been made weak with his thigh dislocated, in order to learn that God's grace is sufficient for him, and he needs literally nothing else. Paul would be saying that he has been taught (and learned) the same lesson as Jacob. Strength being perfected through human weakness is the whole lesson of the cross (13:4). It could be that the example of the Lord was the answer Paul received- perhaps there was no vision or statement from the Lord to Paul, but he deduced the Lord's word to him from the cross of his Lord. "My power" is interpreted in the next sentence as "the power of Christ". This would confirm such a line of interpretation. By sharing in the weakness of Christ, in His sufferings, then God's resurrection power shall be manifested in us. Paul has used the same word for "weakness" in saying earlier that human weakness shall finally be changed by experiencing a resurrection after the pattern of Christ's (1 Cor. 15:43).

Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me- As suggested above, connection with the weakness / suffering of Christ means that His power shall be manifest in us (13:4 "For he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you").

Paul earnestly asked three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed (:9). The wonder is that he only asked three times. He knew it was for his spiritual good, and he believed this. Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee". The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

12:10 *Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong*- It is in our very weakness, the weakness of the man made to realize the weight of his own mediocrity and failure to achieve, that *the power of God breaks forth*. Reading through his letters, it is apparent that Paul saw himself as two people: a natural man, a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen living in the Mediterranean world... and also, a man in Christ. He speaks of how "I bruise myself", as if the one Paul was boxing against the other Paul (1 Cor. 9:27 RVmg.). This is why in this autobiographical passage in 2 Cor. 12, he says of himself: "I knew a man in Christ", who had great visions 14 years previously (at the council of Jerusalem of Acts 15), and who was subsequently given a "thorn in the flesh". "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory", he writes (2 Cor. 12:5), as if separating himself from this more spiritually exalted man who saw these visions. Paul is surely telling us that he sees himself as two people. He makes the point clearly: "I will not be a fool... I am become a fool" (:6,11). He was the greatest apostle; although he was nothing (:11). This language comes to a crisis in 12:10: "When I [i.e. the natural Paul] am weak, then am I [the spiritual Paul] strong".

12:11- see on 2 Cor. 11:5.

I have become foolish. You compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you. For in nothing was I behind the super apostles, though I am nothing- Paul has written that it is inappropriate to commend ourselves or get involved in comparisons amongst ourselves. But carried away in a desperate desire to prove himself to them in their terms, which was surely rooted in love for them, he has done just that. But he now blames them for his lack of self control. And yet even in 1 Corinthians, Paul clearly had a tendency to boast: "For it is better for me to die, than that anyone should make my boasting void" (1 Cor. 9:15). Perhaps he would have been better to just admit his weakness here rather than blaming it on others. And we can take a lesson from that in many other aspects of life apart from a tendency to boast.

12:12 *Truly the signs of an apostle were done among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works*- Paul rightly considers his patience with the Corinthians as a sign even greater than all the miracles he had worked amongst them. We recall that the Acts record doesn't mention all these miracles performed by Paul in his 18 months in Corinth- reflective of the inspired record's lack of emphasis upon the miraculous element. The message was and is all important. All these miracles were done, but the Corinthians now doubted Paul's credentials as a Divinely approved apostle. Likewise Israel saw miracles daily in the wilderness through the provision of manna and water- but like the Corinthians, they did not believe. And so the role of miracles in eliciting real faith is demonstrated to be minimal. Not only does Pentecostalism need to consider this fact; but we too need not wish that God would miraculously intervene in human life in order to strengthen our faith. In the long run, even in the medium term, that is not what is achieved by the miraculous. The message, the Spirit within the heart, real relationship with the living, risen Lord Jesus- this is of the essence.

12:13 *For in what way were you made inferior to the other churches, except that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong*- Paul's sarcasm here will hardly win him the desired result- the return of the Corinthians both to him and to the truth of the Lord Jesus. We have here an example of his emotionally charged state shining through in the letter, especially when we recall how he began this section by writing

that he would now appeal to them in the meek and gentle spirit of the Lord Jesus (10:1). The "burden" in view appears to be financial- he had not asked them for material support, although he had been in need of it, and this was now misinterpreted as meaning that he had treated them as inferior to the other churches, especially those in Macedonia, who had supported him whilst he had lived in Corinth. Whichever way Paul turned, no matter how he argued, the Corinthians were falling out of love with him. And his desperation shows. The whole record here is a worked example of how relationships amongst baptized believers can go sour, and even if one party is innocent, the psychological processes will continue until there is a permanent rift.

12:14 *Behold, this is the third time I have been ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you*- The "burden" appears to be of asking for money, according to the second part of the verse. We could even read this statement as Paul saying 'Forget about all I wrote previously about your giving to the Jerusalem Poor Fund. I don't seek even that now'. This retreat from a previously held and strongly argued position is typical of the lover who is losing the beloved being willing to make any compromise. The "third time" doesn't have to mean that he was planning his third visit to them; rather does he mean that twice before he has planned a visit, but changed his plan because he realized that if he came, they would not be spiritually ready for him, and the Spirit would lead him to judge them. And now a third time he was contemplating making a visit to them, aware of the same possible negative outcome.

For I do not seek your things, but you. For the children ought not to save up for the parents, but the parents for the children- Paul was seeking 'them', their salvation, their relationship with him. He had earlier advised them to "save up" for his coming by putting aside something each week, so that they could present it to him as an offering for his Jerusalem Poor Fund (1 Cor. 16:2). But he appears to now be saying that they needn't do even that. They could forget all he had written about the Fund. He wanted by all means to preserve his relationship with them as his children. He even takes some false guilt over the matter by saying that it wasn't right of a father to ask his children to save up for him- it ought to be the other way around. Yet such passionate love comes just a verse after the bitter sarcasm of :13. Indeed this is a flow of consciousness being written and recorded under inspiration, giving us a unique insight into Paul's thought and feelings, and enabling us to thereby fully enter into the tragic falling out of love which happened between Paul and Corinth.

12:15- see on Lk. 15:24; Rom. 9:3.

And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less by you because of this?- Paul's spending and being spent was for "you" (:14), "your souls", i.e. yourselves. He refers to their salvation; not because he believed in an immortal soul, but in the sense that he understand that salvation is personal. They themselves, as persons or selves / souls, could be saved and he was prepared to sacrifice all for this end. He did so inspired by the Lord, who for our sakes became a pauper in his death on the cross (8:9). Confronted with spiritual weakness we can so easily just turn away, considering it 'their problem'. But Paul physically and mentally expended himself for them, motivated by the Lord's love on the cross. He sets us a huge challenge. And the more abundantly he poured out his love, the less they loved him. This is really the classic, tragic final stage of the falling out of love process, all recorded in great detail for our learning. They were guilty, in the bigger picture; but the situation was made the more painful for everyone by Paul's

way of seeing them as he wished them to be, rather than more realistically facing up to the fact that his hopes and expectations of them were not going to be realized.

Paul had enough self-knowledge to say that his love for Corinth was growing more and more (although this was expressed in an ever-increasing concern for their doctrinal soundness); he told the Thessalonians likewise that his love for them was increasing and abounding (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Thess. 3:12). And Paul could therefore exhort the Philippians and Thessalonians to also increase and abound in their love for each other, after Paul's example (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12). Paul's love for his brethren grew and grew, *even though they didn't notice this*. The 'you don't know just how much I love you' syndrome is surely one of the cruellest in human experience. A growth in true love, true concern, isn't always apparent to our brethren. But if our growth is after Paul's pattern then this will be our experience too.

12:16 *But granting that I myself did not burden you, you say I was crafty, and got the better of you by deceit*- Throughout Corinthians Paul is quoting phrases from their allegations and questions, but it is not always exactly apparent. Perhaps using quotation marks we could translate: "Nevertheless, "being crafty", I "caught you with guile"". The New Testament so often seems to mix interpretation with Old Testament quotation; here especially we need to imagine the use of quotation marks. Given these feelings about Paul by "you", the church at Corinth (for there is no hint that only a small subgroup is being addressed), we conclude that his earlier joy at their love for him, and his confidence in them in all things (7:4) was written on the cusp of emotion, making them be in his own mind what he hoped they could be. The imagery of craft and deceit recall the serpent in Eden; this would explain why Paul has earlier claimed that it is the Jewish false teachers who were like this, and not him (11:3). Paul's lack of demand for material support from them was being read by them now as an example of craft- because he wanted to only get money out of them in the longer term. When relationships deteriorate to this extent, every act or word past or present, no matter how sincere and loving, is going to be misinterpreted. Perhaps this whole miserable account is recorded for us as comfort- that when these things happen to us in our relationships, it's not a sign of failure on our part. For Paul went through the same.

12:17 *But did I really take advantage of you by any one of them whom I have sent to you?*- The fact Paul had not asked them to materially support him was being twisted by some conspiracy theory to mean that when Titus was sent to them, he was really working for Paul in order to get cash out of them for Paul personally. Yet in chapter 7, Paul has claimed that Titus was much encouraged by their attitude, and he himself was 'over the moon' with confidence in them because of the good news brought by Titus. But the visit of Titus was clearly interpreted as Paul craftily taking advantage of them; and we conclude again that his statements about the Titus visit in chapter 7 were his own wild over interpretation of a few ambiguous words. If Paul was capable of that, even with Spirit guidance, we are too.

12:18 *I urged Titus to go and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?*- The accusation was apparently that Titus was Paul's instrument and part of his crafty plan to extract money from them for his own benefit. Paul agrees that Titus had visited Corinth as a result of his 'urging', perhaps implying that Titus himself had doubted the wisdom of the visit. And Paul agrees that Titus shared Paul's spirit to the extent that effectively, his visit was Paul's visit. They 'took the same steps'. But he goes on to say that his spirit was solely to upbuild them (:19). Paul has elsewhere explained that he had changed his plans to personally visit them because he feared

that the Spirit would lead him to severely judge the Corinthians if he visited them. But here he says that the visit of Titus was effectively Paul's visit, because they took "the same steps". Both Titus and Paul were motivated by the same Spirit and therefore their steps were identical. This same association of the Spirit with "steps" is found in Gal. 5:25: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit". His refusal to personally visit Corinth was therefore surely playing some kind of game with God's Spirit, a form of brinkmanship. He and Titus were led by the same Spirit and therefore the visit of Titus was as it were the visit of Paul. They took the same steps as they were in step with the same Spirit- for "the same spirit... steps" refers to the Spirit and steps of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21 "That you should follow His steps"). But Paul did not go personally because he feared the Spirit would lead him to judge and condemn the Corinthians for their unspirituality. Perhaps Paul would have done better to follow the Spirit's lead and recognize Corinth for who they were, and judge them as the Spirit led him to- rather than wilfully misinterpret the reception of Titus by the Corinthians (see on 2 Cor. 7) and hold on to his own obsessively positive view of them against all evidence.

12:19 *You think all this time that we are excusing ourselves to you. But in the sight of God we speak in Christ*- "All this time" is a significant phrase, in that it means that Paul's exuberant rejoicing at the Corinthians' loyalty and warm reception of Titus (2 Cor. 7) was him believing these things in his own mind, having the love which turned hope and fantasy into reality in his own imaginations. As often demonstrated, this letter is a flow of consciousness piece of writing, recorded under inspiration, allowing us a unique insight into the feelings of Paul- a man who so loved the weakest of his converts and lived out in psychological reality the truths expressed in his great love poem of 1 Cor. 13. All along, "all this time", they had been sceptical, and Paul knew it; but he had the love that hoped and believed all things.

All things, beloved, are for your upbuilding- Paul had earlier written exactly this to the Corinthians, when urging that "all things be done unto upbuilding" (1 Cor. 14:26). The recurring theme of 1 Corinthians was that the upbuilding of others should be paramount in the Christian life; and it was "upbuilding" which the way of the Spirit was all about. And Paul can say that it was this Spirit which motivated both Titus and himself (:18). It was God who was upbuilding the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:9 s.w.), but He operates in this work through human agents- every willing member of the body of Christ. All and every effort to upbuild others will have His blessing and we will sense that we are His vehicle in the work. But as with the case at Corinth, this is not to say that those we work with will necessarily respond.

12:20 *For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not as I would wish, and should myself be found by you such as you would not wish. Lest by any means there should be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder*- The issues Paul had raised in 1 Corinthians had not really been dealt with; the extreme sexual immorality and use of church prostitutes had not been addressed. And yet he still places issue like gossip, belligerent attitudes and division as of primary concern, even before the sexual issues he will raise in :21. We noted on 1 Corinthians that he had done the same there. The presence of these things would mean that he would act towards them in an unpleasant way- through the direct judgment of the Spirit. The sober warning to us all is that the wrong attitudes listed here, so commonly encountered in church life, warrant direct Divine judgment just as much as the sexual immorality of the next verse. The list of wrong behaviours listed here corresponds with the list of works of the flesh in Gal. 5:20. We noted on :18 that Paul feels that he and Titus are walking according to the Spirit, not the flesh, and there

is a connection made with Gal. 5:25. Paul is therefore continuing his great theme to the Corinthians- that their problems with the flesh all arose from a refusal to allow the Spirit to operate.

12:21 *I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you*- Paul has in view that the Spirit may well lead him to severely judge them. But to be used in that way would be a very humbling experience for Paul. Any disciplining of others should likewise be a humbling for us, rather than any expression of pride or superiority (as in Gal. 6:1). The idea of being humbled is exactly that used by Paul regarding the Lord's death (Phil. 2:8 s.w.). Paul had earlier been humbled in Corinth, when he was left destitute and yet never asked the Corinthians for material help (2 Cor. 11:7). For Paul to meet the Corinthians and have to judge them as unspiritual would be humbling for Paul, as he had boasted about their strengths to others and inflated them in his own mind. To have to judge them for not being like that would be humbling for Paul.

And I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality and sensuality that they have practiced- Paul had earlier urged them to mourn over those they had to discipline for sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:2). All such discipline should be done in genuine mourning. The sexual issues raised with the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians are not raised by Paul in2 Corinthians until this point. He has been giving them exaggerated praise for separating from the immoral man of 1 Cor. 5, and trying to get them to donate to his Jerusalem Poor Fund. And he has written in very inflated terms about their devotion to him and the Lord in chapters 7-9. Through all that, he has not raised with them the obvious issue as to why they had not dealt with their issues of sexual immorality. Now he has apparently given up any hope of getting any donations out of them (see on :14) and is realizing the reality of things with them, he returns to these more obvious concerns. Paul knew they were impenitent of these sexual issues- and yet speaks so glowingly of them in chapter 7 and elsewhere. Yet again I have to make the point that he was so in love with them that he wrote on the cusp of emotion, and the inspired record has preserved his feelings and flow of consciousness- for our learning.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

13:1 *This is the third time I am coming to you*- Paul connects this "third time" with the need for two or three witnesses. Is he trying to argue that the three witnesses against Corinth equate with his three visits to them? For each time the Spirit would have witnessed against them. Here we have an example of the liberal interpretation of Old Testament passages; for the requirement of two or three witnesses obviously refers to two or three separate witnesses, and not one person witnessing the same behaviour two or three times. Such out of context allusion is common in the Bible and in rabbinic interpretations. This doesn't justify us in treating the text likewise (seeing we are not inspired), but it should also serve as a foil to the claim that context and logical corollary are all important in Biblical interpretation.

At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established- The quotation from Dt. 19:15 suggests that the consequences of the trial would be serious, perhaps involving death or being cut off from the Lord's people. Such severe punishments could be executed by the apostles in the first century; we think of Ananias and Sapphira. The same words are used as in Mt. 18:16,17 concerning

dealing with personal offences; but they are applied by Paul to dealing with moral and doctrinal problems at Corinth (= 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 5:4,5,9; 6:1-6).

13:2- see on 1 Cor. 15:10.

I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them- The enumeration of the visits is because Paul is viewing his two or three visits as the two or three witnesses against Corinth (see on :1). This threat of judgment for unrepented of moral sin had therefore hung over the Corinthians ever since the time of 1 Corinthians. This makes Paul's expression of confidence in them "in all things" in chapter 7 rather questionable. He appears to have written that on the cusp of emotion, obsessed with the possibility of their giving to the Jerusalem Poor Fund to the extent that he overlooked their unresolved gross moral failings. "I will not spare" calls for comparison with how Paul had earlier aborted a planned visit to Corinth in order to "spare" them judgment (2 Cor. 1:23). There is no record however that Paul ever made the threatened visit. The silence of the record is intentional, as we are left to struggle with the issues of whether patience with apostasy is to be limitless, or whether we are at times to act; and with the obvious question as to how far we can take precedent from an apostle who had the Spirit gifts of discernment and judgment.

13:3 *Seeing you seek proof that Christ speaks in me (who toward you is not weak but is powerful in you)*- Gk. "of the Christ that speaks in me". "Toward you" could as well be rendered 'among / within you'. His threatened judgment of them would be the final proof that indeed, he is of Christ. His words were those of Christ. And yet 2 Corinthians is a flow of consciousness letter, recording the emotions and gut reactions of Paul with all the contradictions and paradoxes which there are within human emotions. His final judgment of them, however, would be the word of Christ toward them. Again Paul returns to his favourite theme with the Corinthians- that Christ is indeed potentially within them through the gift of His Spirit / presence in their hearts (1:22; 5:5). They had not actualized it, they acted as if He was "weak" within them; but if only they would, they would perceive a perfect congruence between the Spirit in them and them and that within Paul. For Christ at least potentially is all and within all those baptized into Him.

13:4 *For he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you*- Paul's much mocked "weakness" in the flesh was on account of his identification with the crucified but glorified Christ. Because we are in Christ, His death was not an isolated historical event. We also are weak *with* Him, on account of having been baptized into Him (2 Cor. 13:4 RV), such is the identity between us and Him. When Paul reflected upon his own sickness [which the RVmg. calls his stake / cross in the flesh], he could say in all sober truth that he gloried in his weakness, because his identity with the weakness of Christ crucified also thereby identified him with the strength and power of the risen Lord (2 Cor. 11:9). The same spirit of Christ which is within us now is the basis upon which we shall be immortalized in a bodily form at the last day. Rom. 8:11 says this explicitly: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you [now], He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall [then, at the last day] give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you [now]". This is why if we do not have the Spirit of Christ transforming us now, we are none of His both now and eternally. That same "power of God" was as equally available to the Corinthians as it was to Paul; he would live

eternally with Christ on account of God's power "toward [within] you". All accusation and answers to them would unnecessary if they would only perceive that the same Spirit worked within Paul as was within them. It was Judaism which did not know "the power of God" (Mt. 22:29) and their influence led the Corinthians to likewise not recognize that power which was potentially within them by the Spirit.

Paul defines weakness in 2 Cor. 11:29 as moral weakness. And then in 2 Cor. 11:30 he says that what he glories in most is his weakness, how he as a sinner has been saved by the cross of Jesus. He continues to interpret his 'weakness' this way; for he says that his thorn in the flesh [a moral weakness?] was a weakness which was only met by the Lord's grace: "My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). Grace is sufficient for sin; Paul's weakness therefore refers to his sin. He sees in all his weaknesses a connection with the Lord on the cross, who was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4 "Who was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you"). Paul's moral weakness he sees as connecting him with the physical weakness of the Lord on the cross. The Lord on the cross therefore bids sinners come to Him, rather than scaring away by the exhibition of His righteousness. So Paul says here that he will only boast in his [moral] weaknesses; but in Gal. 6:14 that he will only boast in the cross of Jesus: "far be it for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world". This is why he now proceeds to talk about his situation in Damascus, which I suggest on 2 Cor. 11:32 is in fact a reference to his moral weakness. And then in 2 Cor. 12 in this same context he speaks of his thorn in the flesh, a moral weakness resolved only by the Lord's grace.

Weakness is a major theme for Paul in Corinthians. He was accused of weakness, and his answer is that this in fact is the basis of his connection with the Lord Jesus. And it is through that weakness that the Lord's power is seen and works. The sense of moral weakness merges with the idea of physical weakness, in that the Lord's physical weakness, in that He was human, enables Him to understand our moral weakness. The words for "weak" apply to both the physical weakness of our natures, and moral weakness [e.g. "him that is weak in the faith", Rom. 14:1; 4:19,21]. In His life and death, the Lord bore our weakness (Mt. 8:17); the [Lord the] Spirit helps our infirmities (Rom. 8:26). Paul was with the Corinthians "in weakness and in fear" (1 Cor. 2:3). We are sown in weakness, but raised in power (1 Cor. 15:43), out of weakness made strong (Heb. 11:34). But Paul glories in those weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5), "I take pleasure in infirmities" (s.w., 2 Cor. 12:10), because the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). He was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4); He was compassed with infirmity (s.w., Heb. 5:2), not untouched by the feeling of our infirmity although He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). We are "weak in Him" (2 Cor. 13:4). Our weakness is all the same "in Him"; that is the idea. We are not weak outside of Him; we are not left to cope alone with our weaknesses.

13:5- see on 2 Tim. 4:6.

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!- The Greek grammar suggests an emphasis upon "yourselves". They were to test themselves, rather than putting Christ and Paul to the test. As explained on :4, if they were in touch with the Spirit of Christ within them, then they

would perceive that it was the same Spirit within Paul. All examination of his legitimacy as a brother and apostle would therefore be unnecessary, because the answer would be found within them, in their own hearts and consciences where the Spirit ought to have been active (see on 5:11). This is why Paul urges them to realize that Christ was within them. And if they did not know that, then they had failed the test.

If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed. I wouldn't be so bold as to throw down this challenge to any of us in exhortation. But Paul does. It's a powerful, even terrible, logic. John writes similarly when he says that we can know that He abides in us by His Spirit which He gave us. 'Do I have the spirit of Christ?' is the issue. That is not the same as perfectionism, nor does it mean living without sin, as John also points out.

The NT speaks of "the faith in Christ" or "the doctrine of Christ". "The faith", the body of doctrine comprising the Gospel, is all epitomized in a real person. To know we are "in the faith" is to know that Christ is in us (2 Cor. 13:5). "The faith", the set of doctrines we must continue believing, is paralleled with the man Christ Jesus. Jesus was "the word made flesh", and "the word" very often refers to the word of the Gospel rather than the whole Bible. The life which the corpus of doctrine brings forth is essentially the life and living of the man Christ Jesus. He was and is the supreme and living example of the living out of all the doctrines. It has been well said by Frank Birch that "Faith is not simply the intellectual acceptance of a body of doctrine. Faith is ultimately shown in a person, the man, Christ Jesus".

There is a question which cuts right to the bone of each of us; right through the debates and semantics which increasingly shroud our Christian lives. 'Can we be completely certain that should Christ return now, we will be in the Kingdom?'. Posing this question provokes widely different response- from 'Of course not! How presumptuous!', to that of the present writer: 'By God's grace- yes!'. We can't say ultimately because we may fall away in the future- but we should be able to assess the spiritual state we are in at this present point in time. If we cannot do this, then our salvation is very much at risk; as Paul bluntly told Corinth: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). They sought proof that Christ was in Paul (2 Cor. 13:3), yet he challenges them to know whether Christ is in them personally. The implication was that if they could not judge that, they were in no position to ask whether Christ was in Paul- or any other. This is vintage Paul; the logic is irresistible. We see here the tendency to enquire about others' salvation, rather than our own. Rather like the close of John's Gospel, where Peter is sidetracked from his personal following of the Lord by wondering about John's status with the Lord.

13:6- see on Mt. 3:11.

But I hope you shall know that we have not failed the test- Paul's hope as ever is for their repentance, through recognizing the Spirit of Christ within them and walking according to the Spirit. If they did that, as explained on :4 and :5, they would perceive

that the same Spirit was within Paul, and he too had not failed the test but was legitimate.

13:7 *Now we pray to God that you do no evil. Not so we may appear to have met the test, but so you may do what is right*- This prayer raises the question as to whether our prayers can influence the moral behaviour of others. And surely we can have such influence, otherwise such prayer would be unnecessary and pointless. In the final unenterable algorithm of salvation, there is a role played by the prayers and faith of third parties. when the Lord saw the faith of the friends, he forgave the sins of the paralyzed man (Mk. 2:5). In His wisdom, God has set up the whole algorithm to include these factors. This is why we like Paul should continually be in prayer and concern for our erring brethren, and why we should invite their prayers for our salvation and forgiveness. This is one reason why we need fellowship with each other- real fellowship, sharing our real spiritual situations with each other, and not simply spending a few hours each week in the same hall going through well established rituals which salve our religious consciences.

David's requests in areas apart from forgiveness and salvation largely centred around his desire for God to grant spiritual help to others. There are many examples of praying for God to help others spiritually: 2 Kings 19:4; 2 Chron. 30:18; Job 42:10; Rom. 10:1; 2 Cor. 13:7; Phil. 1:9,19; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Jn. 5:16. Surely this was also the spirit behind Abraham's intercession for Lot to be saved out of Sodom. Granted a certain modicum of spirituality in those being prayed for, Noah, Daniel and Job all delivered the souls of others by their prayerful righteousness (Ez. 14:14). When we pray for others, God sees it as them praying (if they have a modicum of spirituality), in the same way as when the Lord Jesus prays for us, He interprets what He knows to be our spirit to God, recognizing that we don't know how to pray in words as we should (Jer. 11:14). The Lord Jesus prayed for us concerning spiritual issues which at the time we did not understand (Lk. 22:32; Jn. 17:9,15,20), and Paul especially seems to have grasped this example.

Though we may seem to have failed- The idea may be as Vine suggests: "We pray God that you do no evil, not in order that your good conduct may attest the excellence of our teaching and example, so that we shall be approved; but in order that you may do what is good, thus rendering it impossible for us to prove our apostolic authority by administering discipline. In that case we shall be as men unapproved". We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment. And thus Paul can say that “we be *as* reprobates” (2 Cor. 13:7), using a Greek word elsewhere translated “castaway”, “rejected”, in the context of being rejected at the judgment seat (1 Cor. 9:27; Heb. 6:8). Yet he says in the preceding verse that he is most definitely *not* reprobate (2 Cor. 13:6). Here we have the paradox: knowing that we are not and by grace will not be rejected, and yet feeling and reasoning as if we are.

13:8 *For we can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth*- If our motivation is for the salvation of others to God's glory, whatever choices we make in exercising that conscience cannot be ultimately against that final truth of eternal salvation. The Paul-Corinth had focused upon specifics- whether he was correct to ask them to support the Jerusalem Poor Fund, right or wrong in his attitude to taking material support from them, justified or not in considering himself their spiritual father etc. But these questions are merely cosmetic. The essence comes down to our motivation, and if that is pure, then we cannot be legitimately accused of doing anything "against the truth". The tension between *kata* ["against"] and *huper* ["for"] is

to be found in Mk. 9:40, to which Paul surely alludes: "He that is not against us is for us". God likewise is "for" us and therefore nothing and nobody can be "against" us (Rom. 8:31); and that same positive spirit is found in His ultimate usage of all we seek to do towards the salvation of others to His glory.

13:9 *For we rejoice, when we are weak and you are strong*- The 'weakness' could mean that if they were truly strong in the Lord, then Paul would be 'weak' to administer discipline. *We* are weak and *you* are strong connects to the paradox established in 12:10, the only place where these words for "weak" and "strong" occur. Paul had learned that when *he* was weak, then *he* was strong. But now he speaks of how he wishes *his* weakness to be *their* strength. He wished the strength he experienced from his weakness to be shared with and experienced by them. The strength he gained through weakness was the strength of Christ; and he wished that same strength to be experienced by them. And he believed that his sufferings for them in his weakness could actually lead to their spiritual strengthening (see on :7). The same ideas are expressed in :4, where Paul says that the power of God which shall energize him is the same "power of God toward *you*".

This we also pray for, even your perfecting- Their perfecting was perhaps the outcome Paul wished to arise out of his visit to them; for he uses the same word in 1 Thess. 3:10 of how he longed to visit the Thessalonians and "perfect that which is lacking in your faith". He would far rather that be the outcome to his visit than judgment unto condemnation. Again we see that the efforts of a third party, in this case through visiting weaker believers, could result in their spiritual strengthening towards salvation (see on :7). God is able to "perfect" the faith and spirituality of His children (Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10); and this surely is done by the work of the Spirit on the hearts of believers. This is why Paul concludes by wishing that this process of perfecting [s.w. "mending"] would be permitted by them in their hearts (:11); and connected with this wish is his final desire that the *koinonia*, the participation ["fellowship"] of the Holy Spirit would be experienced by them.

13:10 *For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present with you deal sharply with you, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down*- "Deal sharply" may be a technical term for a rebuke from the Holy Spirit; it is only elsewhere used in Tit. 1:13 "rebuke them sharply". If they did not change, then Paul's Spirit power would have to be used to 'cast them down'. But the Spirit was given for their building up [more than] their casting down. We are surely correct to read in this ellipsis. 'Not A but B' doesn't have to mean 'not at all B'; but rather 'More for B than for A'. Paul was desperately hoping that they would change so that his visit would not result in judgment for them.

13:11- see on 1 Cor. 11:18.

Finally, brothers, farewell. Be perfected- Being perfected by the Lord's ongoing work with us is in view in Lk. 6:40 and 1 Pet. 5:10. He is indeed active in human hearts by the Spirit. See on :9 *Your perfecting*. There are times when Paul's inspired commentary opens up some of the Lord's more difficult sayings. "Be you therefore perfect" has always been hard to understand (Mt. 5:48). Paul's comment is: "Be perfected" (2 Cor. 13:11). This is quite different to how many may take it- 'Let God perfect you' is the message.

Be comforted. Be of the same mind. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you- The *parakleo* or comfort in view was that of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. This is Paul's final appeal for them to allow the Spirit given in their hearts at baptism to work and transform them (1:22; 5:5). The "same mind" appealed for is

not asking them to have identical positions on everything. Rather it is an appeal to accept the mind of Christ, the Spirit. As demonstrated in notes :4 and :9, this was the real basis for unity between the Corinthians and Paul; and between them and the Lord Jesus. Allowing the work of the Spirit in their hearts would empower them to live in peace with each other, as they were seeking to emulate the same one mind [that of the Spirit, of the Lord Jesus]. And through this they would experience the presence of the God of love and peace.

13:12- see on Rom. 16:16.

Greet one another with a holy kiss- According to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the early church kissed each other at the breaking of bread meeting. This would have been the one time in the week that the church gathered together, as typically many would have been at work, as a fair proportion of the converts were apparently slaves. This was the time when the letters from Paul would be read.

13:13 *All the saints greet you*- Paul was writing from Macedonia, where he claimed the brethren would be disappointed if Corinth didn't come through on the promise to support the Jerusalem Poor Fund. All the same, they sent their greetings to these weaker brethren.

13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all*- Paul's parting statement is an appeal for them to allow the gift of the Spirit to be with them. "Grace" is *charis*, 'gift'. The gift of the Lord Jesus is the Comforter, the Spirit given to every baptized believer in Him- including the Corinthians (1:22; 5:5). Despite having received it, they were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). There is a fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) in the sense that all who live the same spiritually-centred life will thereby be bound together in a powerful and inevitable fellowship. When, for example, two Christian mothers strike up conversation about the difficulty of raising children in this present evil world, when two brethren talk about the difficulties of living as Christ would in today's business world… there is, right there, in those almost casual conversations, the fellowship of the spirit. It isn't just a social connection because we belong to the same denomination.

Paul's farewell is no standard wish for their general wellbeing; it is a desire that they allow this gift to be with them. This is the fellowship or participation of the Holy Spirit in their lives which was and is the key to all spiritual progress. The "all" in "be with you all" is the last word, but is significant- for there were some without the knowledge of God, deeply in sin and now ignorant of the basic Gospel they had once espoused. But still Paul wished the activity of the Spirit in their hearts; he was not writing to some subgroup of more committed believers at Corinth. It was and is the only hope for transformation towards salvation.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: GALATIANS

GALATIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

GALATIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)*- Consider how in Galatians Paul uses so many negatives, as if his passion and almost rage at the false teachers is coming out: "An apostle *not* from men... the gospel preached by me is *not* man's gospel... *nor* was I taught it... I did *not* confer with flesh and blood, I did *not* go up to Jerusalem... I do *not* lie... Titus was *not* compelled... to *false* brethren we did *not* yield... those 'of repute' added *nothing*" (Gal. 1:1,11,12,16,20; 2:3,4,6). The way he says "Ye have known God, or rather, are known of God" (Gal. 4:9) seems to indicate [through the "or rather..."] a very human and passionate touch in his writing, as if he was thinking out loud as he wrote. Throughout 2 Corinthians particularly his writing in places can be described as an inspired flow of consciousness.

Authority in spiritual ministry doesn't depend upon any human authorisation. Paul's authority is linked specifically to the fact God raised Jesus from the dead. That resurrection led to the great commission and the Lord's empowerment of all witness to Him as risen and exalted. But this empowerment is given not only to Paul. All demands for authorization of ministry, e.g. to perform baptisms or decide who to fellowship in the church, is therefore utterly missing the point. We are authorized by the Lord, and the great commission applies to us all. In any case, once we start arguing that only some are authorized to perform ministry, the question is raised as to *how* they are authorized. And the Bible is silent about that. All manner of secular power brokering philosophy comes into play, but Paul and anyone led by the Spirit of the risen Lord will have nothing to do with that.

1:2 *And all the brothers that are with me, to the churches of Galatia*- Those *sun* Paul may refer to brothers who supported Paul's position on the Law, which was going to be the burden of this letter. It was Paul who was the inspired author but he is making the point that there were other brethren who agreed with his position. The churches of Galatia could have referred to quite a few of the congregations Paul is recorded as founding in Acts; because he sees his responsibilities as being to his own converts and his letters are generally addressed to those he has converted. These groups were largely Gentiles. I have noted elsewhere, especially on Titus, Corinthians and 1 Timothy, that Gentile converts often brought with them immoral practices. Yet they became attracted to Judaism because their religious conscience could be more easily salved by obedience to a set of ritual requirements, and their more fundamental moral habits would then be left unquestioned. Legalism to this day remains incredibly attractive to those who subconsciously seek to justify themselves in immoral practices. This is why the Galatian letter begins with strong theological arguments against returning to the Law, and then moves on to tackle practical issues of immorality.

1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ*- Although Paul is going to upbraid them, he sincerely wishes them, as no mere formality, the peace with God which comes from His grace, rather than legalistic obedience to Jewish laws.

1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins*- He "poured out His soul unto death", He offered up "Himself", gave Him*self* for me (Gal. 2:20), His *soul* was made an offering for sin. In response to this, the Macedonians firstly gave themselves to the Lord Jesus, in response to His giving to them (2 Cor. 8:5). But Jesus is His body. Giving ourselves over to Him means giving ourselves to the body of Christ. We are to allow ourselves to be motivated by the example of the Lord in His death, to give ourselves, as He gave His *self* for us. And it is that "self" which is represented by the wine at the communion service, representing His life, His being.

That he might deliver us- Paul so often alludes to the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, because it was this which was one of the large 'cattle prods' in his conscience which converted him. Here, he uses the same word Stephen uses to describe how Joseph and then Israel were delivered out of prison and out of Egypt (Acts 7:10,34). We too have been snatched or torn out of [Gk.] this world and our situations within it. Not perhaps physically [we may still remain in the 'world' as we were before our] but mentally. The same word was used by the Lord to Paul in promising him that He would be active in "Delivering you from the people of the Jews and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you" (Acts 26:17). But here Paul says that we also will be delivered out of this world; and so we have yet another example of Paul presenting his own conversion as programatic for us all.

Out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father- The Lord's death is presented as the supreme sin offering, which had an outcome in practice-separation from this present evil world. Judaism tacitly allowed the Gentile converts to remain effectively in that world, but with a conscience cosmetically salved by a few acts of ritual obedience. The purpose of the cross was so that we might be separated out from this present evil world. To remain in the world, to stay in the crowd that faced the cross rather than walk through the no man's land between, this is a denial of the Lord's death for us. See on Gal. 6:14. Paul had his inspired mind on the phrase in the Lord's prayer which requests deliverance from evil. Clearly enough, Paul didn't understand "the evil" to be a personal cosmic Satan, but rather the moral "evil" of this world and those who seek to persecute believers. The appeal of Galatians is for the converts not to return to Judaism, or as Gentiles, not to join Judaism. The "present evil world" may well therefore refer to the "world" of Judaism, as the term often means in John's Gospel.

Paul writes here of this "present" world. The Greek means that which is instant, immediate, right now before our eyes. He rather harps on this theme of not being fazed by what is "present", but rather to look with the eye of faith at a different dimension, which is the ultimate reality although it is unseen. Or, only visible with the 'new pair of eyes' given in Christ. "Things present" will not separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:38), we live now in "the present distress" (1 Cor. 7:26). But the Lord's death delivers us from living as this world does, feeling and judging and understanding things just as they appear before our eyes at this present time.

Much of Paul's writing is understandable on various levels. In some places he makes allusions to contemporary Jewish writings and ideas – with which he was obviously very familiar given his background – in order to correct or deconstruct them. This is especially true with reference to Jewish ideas about Satan and supposedly sinful Angels ruling over this present world. The idea of deliverance from this present evil world or age is an example. As more and more Jewish writings of the time become more widely

available, it becomes increasingly apparent that this is a major feature of Paul's writing. The Jewish writings all held to the teaching of the two ages, whereby this current age was supposed to be under the control of Satan and his angels, who would be destroyed in the future age, when Messiah would reign and Paradise would be restored on earth (see 1 Enoch 16.1; 18.16; 21.6; Jubilees 1.29; T. Moses 1.18; 12.4). Paul frequently uses terms used in the Jewish writings concerning the Kingdom age, the eschatological age, and applies them to the experience of Christian believers *right now*. When Heb. 2:14 states that Christ killed the Devil in His death on the cross, this is effectively saying that the future age has come. For the Jews expected the Devil to be destroyed only at the changeover to the future Kingdom age. In 4 Ezra, "This age" (4.27; 6.9; 7.12), also known as the "corrupt age" (4.11) stands in contrast to the "future age" (6.9; 8.1), the "greater age", the "immortal time" (7.119), the future time (8.52). 4 Enoch even claims that the changeover from this age to the future age occurs at the time of the final judgment, following the death of the Messiah and seven days of silence (7.29–44, 113). So we can see why Paul would plug in to these ideas. He taught that Christ died "in order to rescue us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22). Therefore if the old age has finished, that means Satan is no longer controlling things as the Jews believed. For they believed that Satan's spirits "will corrupt until the day of the great conclusion, until the great age is consummated, until everything is concluded (upon) the Watchers and the wicked ones" (1 Enoch 16:1, cf. 72:1). And Paul was pronouncing that the great age had been consummated in Christ, that the first century believers were those upon whom the end of the *aion* had come (1 Cor. 10:11).

1:5 *To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen*- Christianity seeks to give eternal glory to the Lord Jesus; this is what we shall be doing eternally, and we must begin now. But Judaism devalued the role of Messiah. And we too can usefully assess teachings according to how far they give glory to the Lord Jesus.

1:6 *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you to the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel*- Paul describes himself as having been called by God, by grace; and in this context he comments how *he* called the Galatians to the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6 cp. 15). His response to his calling of grace was to go out and preach, thereby calling men to that same grace, replicating in his preaching what God had done for him. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. And so here Paul writes of his preaching to the Galatians in the third person: "him [Paul] that called you into the grace of Christ" (Gal. 1:6 AV). And likewise he talks about himself while at the Jerusalem conference, where he was given so clearly the ministry of converting the Gentiles, as if he hardly identifies himself with himself: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... I knew such a man... of such an one will I glory, yet of myself I will not glory" (2 Cor. 12:1-4- the context makes it clear that Paul refers to himself, seeing that he was the one given the thorn in the flesh as a result of the revelations given to this "man"). In 1 Thess. 1:5 Paul could have written: 'We came with

the Gospel', but instead he uses the more awkward construction: 'Our Gospel came...'. He, Paul, was subsumed beneath the essence of his life work- the preaching of the Gospel.

And yet we could also argue that Paul had a way of turning things rather too personally. They had deserted the grace of Christ, yet Paul expresses this in terms of them turning away from him personally. This tendency to over personalize things, it could be argued, was at the root of so much of his pain with the Corinthians as expressed in 2 Corinthians.

"Deserting" translates *metatithemi*, literally 'handed over', implying there was some other hand at work. As there is no cosmic satan doing this, I conclude that this higher hand was God's, confirming them in the way they wished to go. Romans 1:26,28 speaks of God doing likewise, giving people over to the mindset they themselves desired. He confirms us in the path we wish to go.

1:7 *Not that there is another one; but there are some who trouble you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ*- A distorted Gospel was no Gospel. The Judaizers were not calling for a wholesale abandonment of Christianity; rather they were preaching a Judaized version of the Gospel which was so distorted that it was not a Gospel. We note from this that a belief system which merely names the name of Christ is not therefore acceptable just because it claims to be an interpretation of Christianity. The 'troublers' are described with the same word in Acts 15:7 concerning the Jewish Christians who went out from the Jerusalem ecclesia to urge the Gentile converts to be circumcised; and of the Jews in Thessalonica who troubled the crowds to persecute Paul. It would seem that the same elements were involved- Jews driven by jealousy and anger at the perversion of the Jewish faith, as they saw it, by Paul's message of Christianity. It was part of a well organized system of derailing the churches Paul founded, referred to by him at times as the 'satan', the adversary. The same word is used in Gal. 5:10 about some single individual who was the troubler in Galatia; as if in that locality they were controlled by a particularly charismatic and influential individual whom Paul leaves nameless.

1:8 *But though we, or an angel from heaven*- God can deceive people to confirm them in the way of understanding they wish to go in (Ez. 14:9; 2 Thess. 2:11). But this could simply be hyperbole. But perhaps the individual troubler of Galatia in 5:10 (and see on :7 above) was being presented as an angel, a Divine messenger. This would then enable us to understand 2 Cor. 11:14 as referring to the same individual troubling Corinth which the same Judaistic message- the satan there was apparently revealed as an Angel of light, and he had his followers; just as there was one specific 'troubler' in Galatia (Gal. 5:10) who had fellow 'troublers' (Gal. 1:7).

Should preach to you any gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be accursed- Again it could be argued that Paul was over personalizing the issue by writing of the Gospel "which we preached to you". The *anathema* ("accursed") was a Jewish synagogue term meaning excommunication. This may be the closest we get in Paul's writings to a request to actually excommunicate anybody in a religious sense; and it was clearly necessary. Seeing he is not afraid to ask for someone to be excommunicated, it is noteworthy that he doesn't recommend it for dealing with the huge raft of immoral individual behaviour and other moral and intellectual failure which filled the early churches.

1:9 *As we have said before, so I now say again: If anyone preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed*- The *anathema* (see on :8) was for those who were teaching a false Gospel. Paul's approach to his churches, full as they were of moral and doctrinal failure, was to insist that the platform be secured; it was the false teachers who were to be removed. But he exemplifies endless patience with the flock who had been misled or were simply weak in the faith. Paul often refers to the 'receipt' of the Gospel; he saw "the Gospel" as definable and something which was received upon hearing the preaching of it. And yet clearly there was no lengthy package of theology in view.

1:10 *For am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ*- Although Paul made himself all things to all men, he didn't just seek to please men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). He sought their salvation and approached them in appropriate terms, but he didn't just seek to please them from a human viewpoint. He didn't cheapen the Gospel. The argument here suggests that serving *Christ* is being placed in opposition to serving *men*. Thus he sees one application of serving mammon as acting in a hypocritical way in order to please some in the ecclesia (Mt. 6:24 = Gal. 1:10).

1:10 *For am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ*- We all have a strong human tendency to perceive what others would like us to say or be. And we then are tempted to do this. But we overcome this through the strong sense that we are personal servants or slaves of Christ. Our sense of personal relationship with Him leads us to no longer seek to please men- because we are all about pleasing Him who has called us. Paul uses the same terms in 1 Thess. 2:4,15, where he argues that he preached not as pleasing men but God; because men "please not God". So many people live their lives dominated by this sense of being men pleasers, to the point that they are no longer in touch with their real selves. God and His Son are the only ones worth pleasing. 2 Tim. 2:4 makes the same point: "No soldier in service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he

may please whoever enrolled him as a soldier". This is the image of total following of a true leader, the only One who will not disappoint.

Cultured, educated people in the first century presented themselves to others by means of an 'encomium'. This was a document or major speech which included five sections, clearly defined in the various manuals of rhetoric which survive, and which surely Paul would have been taught. The purpose of the encomium was to demonstrate how the person was an upright member of the community and worthy of honour within it. Students of the letter to the Galatians have detected these five sections of the encomium followed in an almost classic manner by Paul in Galatians 1:10-2:21:
1. Opening (*prooimion*) 1:10-12: Paul's Gospel
2. Lifestyle (*anastrophe*) 1:13-17: Paul as persecutor of the church and preacher of the Gospel. Gal. 1:13 uses the very word *anastrophe* ("way of life")
3. Achievements (*praxeis*) or "deeds of the body" 1:18-2:10- Paul's work in Jerusalem, Syria and again in Jerusalem
4. Comparison with others (*synkrisis*) 2:11-21- Paul and Peter; Paul and the Jews
5. Conclusion (*epilogos*)- 2:21 Paul and grace.

The encomium was essentially self-praise and self-justification within society. Paul almost mocks the encomium, by using its elements to show how radically different are the standards of thinking and behaviour for the Christian. In Gal. 1:15 Paul speaks of his birth (*genesis*), which in the usual encomiums would've been a reference to his family of origin, which as we've shown was all important in a collectivist society. Paul never speaks of his parents, as would've been normal in an encomium- and seeing he was born as a free man, he could've made an impressive point at this stage had he wished. But the birth he speaks of is that which came from God, who gave Paul birth by grace. His place in God's invisible household was all important, rather than what family he belonged to naturally. An encomium would typically have a reference to a man's education- and Paul could've made an impressive case for himself here. But rather he speaks of how God Himself revealed Christ to him, and how his spiritual education was not through interaction with any other men of standing in the Christian community, but rather in his three years alone in Arabia (Gal. 1:18). It has been suggested that Paul actually coined a new Greek term in 1 Thess. 4:9, when he spoke of how he had been taught-by-God (*theodidaktos*). To claim an education 'not by flesh and blood' (Gal. 1:16) was foolishness to 1st century society. In the description of his "deeds", Paul could've made a fair case both as a Jew and as a Christian. But instead he spends Gal. 2:1-10 speaking of how he had laboured so hard to avoid division in the church of Christ, to teach grace, avoid legalistic obedience to the norms of Jewish society, and to help the poor. *These* were the works he counted as significant. It was usual in an encomium to speak of your courage (*andreia*) and fortitude. Paul uses the word *andreia*, again in conscious imitation of an encomium, but he relates it to how he courageously refused

to "yield submission even for a moment" to the pressures to conform to Jewish societal expectations (Gal. 2:5). When it comes to the *synkrisis*, the comparison with others, he chooses to compare himself with Peter, who caved in to the pressures from the Jews, agreeing to act smart before men rather than God, whereas Paul says he withstood this and insisted upon a life of radical grace which paid no attention to what others thought of his appearances.

1:11 *For, brothers, I make known to you, as regards the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not from man-* The implication was that the Judaist opposition were claiming that Paul had just made up his interpretations and called it "the Gospel". Or perhaps there was some conspiracy theory that he was the agent of some other man. Whilst the Gospel was not "from man", *kata anthropos*, yet Paul uses that same term in saying that he can reason at times in that way, "after the manner of men", humanly speaking (3:15). But the core of the Gospel was from the Lord Jesus and not from men.

1:12 *For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through direct revelation from Jesus Christ-* See on :1. As a rabbi, it was important to justify teaching by explaining that he had been taught it by some greater rabbi. Paul cuts right across these expectations (see on :10), and says that his message had not been taught to him. He had received it directly from the Lord Jesus, who is the central part of the message he preached.

1:13 *For you have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God- T*he Greek for "persecuted" means literally to pursue or follow after. Paul's conversion meant that his pursuing after the church was changed to pursuing after the church in love. He uses the same word in saying that we are to "follow after" love for the church (1 Cor. 14:1), 'following after' peace and the things which edify or build up the church (Rom. 14:19). His conversion is set up as a pattern for every man. Conversion is therefore about a reorientation of our energy and passion. Not a total change of our personality to the point that we are unrecognizable to the person we once were. But rather a psychological restructuring of the material of which we are psychologically comprised. The man with a passion for making money, eagerly out to clinch every business deal, becomes reorientated as a man who pursues clinching the deal of winning others for Christ. Once he sat down to a business lunch with a client, out to clinch the deal. Now he sits down in a cafe with a homeless man and seeks by all means to clinch the deal for Christ; to lead that man to the waters of baptism. And when he wins the deal, and he knows from past experience that you can't win every time, he has a far greater sense of satiscation. Not self satisfaction, but glory that he has brought glory to his Lord, his ultimate boss and controller, the Lord Jesus.

And made havoc of it- "Made havoc" is literally 'destroyed', and the same word is used in 1:23 of how he 'destroyed' "the faith". He draws a parallel between the church and the faith; for the true church is based upon the true faith. The same word is used of how he "destroyed" the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 9:21). This clearly means he murdered Christians, including perhaps some of those who were converted in Jerusalem at Pentecost. This sort of behaviour was a way of life elicited by Judaism; and Judaism is therefore to be judged by its fruits as seen in Paul. Whilst repeatedly taking full personal responsibility for his actions, Paul sees that they had been elicited by Judaism, "the Jews' religion". To return to that was therefore serious indeed.

1:14- see on Mt. 15:2.

And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of my own age among my fellow countrymen, being even more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers- Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else. But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me [materially?], those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I way win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). As noted on :13, whilst not at all dodging his personal responsibility for his actions, he sees the murder and hatred towards Christians as the fruit of zeal for Judaism. The traditions of Paul's fathers [cp. "our fathers" when referring to the patriarchs] refers surely to Paul's rabbinic forefathers. Casuistic following of the implications of previous expositions and judgments of those who have gone before resulted in murder. This was the fruit of Judaism, and all belief systems are to be judged by their fruits.

The language of 'I was very zealous' may be consciously alluding to Elijah's self professed great zeal for Yahweh (1 Kings 19:14). Elijah was clearly one with a zeal which lacked grace, and he was effectively fired from his prophetic position because of his arrogance. Paul may be saying that this was how misplaced was his zeal. The allusion certainly doesn't show Elijah in a very positive light. His boasting about having slain the prophets of Baal is presented as being as bad as Paul's boasting of having slain Christians. The Lord likewise read Elijah negatively in rebuking the disciples for wanting to be like Elijah in calling fire from Heaven to destroy men. The parallels with Elijah are developed by Paul here in Gal. 1. As Elijah was stopped in his tracks by the threat of persecution from Jezebel [representative of the Jewish authorities in Revelation], so Paul was stopped in his tracks and fled to Arabia; just as Elijah fled to the same area, "Horeb" (1 Kings 19:1,2,8). Gal. 4:25 clarifies that Sinai / Horeb is in Arabia. Elijah went there in depression, to resign his prophetic commission.And it seems Paul did likewise,

until Barnabas came to Tarsus and urged him to continue. But the great missionary ministry of Paul almost never was. Barnabas practiced the spirit of the lost sheep parable, and saved him.

'I was very zealous' is also an allusion to Phinehas, who was famed for slaying the apostate Israelite together with the Gentile idolater (Num. 25:7-13). But Phinehas and Elijah were often proclaimed role models for the Jewish right wing group who were militant for freedom from Rome. They believed in murdering apostate Jews just as Elijah and Phinehas had done. And Paul through these allusions is confessing that this was what he had done- considering Jewish converts to Christianity to be the classic case of Hebrew apostates.

1:15- see on Acts 18:18.

But when- "But when" suggests there was a specific time when God decided to call Paul to manifest His Son. But we should not too quickly assume that this time was on the Damascus road, for the Lord there made the point that Paul had been pushing against the pricks of conscience for some time. Perhaps the calling was at the time of Paul's birth, when the umbilical cord was cut and he was separated from his mother's womb. The calling of grace is an idea Paul uses in Romans to exemplify God's grace, and he thereby makes himself the parade example of grace to all believers. In Gal. 1:15,16, Paul speaks as if his calling to preach the Gospel and his conversion co-incided. He clearly understood that he had been called so as to spread the word to others. Paul uses the word *kaleo* to describe both our call to the Gospel, and the call to preach that Gospel (Gal. 1:15 cp. Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 7:15; Gal. 1:6; 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). He doesn't separate his call from that of ours; he speaks of how God called "us" (Rom. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:7). We may not all be able to live the life of itinerant preaching and spreading the word geographically which Paul did. And yet clearly enough Paul sets himself up as our pattern in the context of his attitude to preaching. Our lamps were lit, in the Lord's figure, so as to give light to others. We are mirrors, reflecting to others the glory of God as far as we ourselves behold it in the face of Jesus Christ.

It was the good pleasure of God- Our salvation was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by... renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). Thus in Paul's case "it pleased (lit. 'willed') God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal.1:15) - not Paul's works. Thus our obedience to the truth was "through (on account of) the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:22). Against this must be balanced Rom. 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing... the word of God". God's Spirit was involved in bringing about our calling, and is also present in the word by which we are called.

Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace- Paul seems to have admired the humility John the Baptist manifested in his preaching, for he often alludes to John- perhaps because he heard him live. For he was living in Jerusalem at the same time as John's ministry. He knew he had been chosen from the womb for his mission, as John had been (Gal. 1:15 = Lk. 1:15). There is also allusion to Jeremiah being likewise known from the womb. Paul felt he had been "separated unto the [preaching of the] gospel of God"; and he uses a word which the LXX uses for the separation of part of a sacrifice to be consumed (Ex. 29:24,26). The Greek word for "witness" is *martus*, from whence 'martyr'. To witness to Christ is to live the life of the martyr; to preach Him is to live out His cross in daily life. Yet the Lord's servant being called from the womb (Is. 49:1) was applied by Paul to himself (Gal. 1:15)- see on Rom. 8:31. Choice from birth, calling, ministry to the Gentiles all recalls the servant known from birth (Is. 49:1,5). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ. He saw himself as in Christ, and so the Lord's mission became his as it becomes ours.

1:16- see on Acts 9:20.

To reveal His Son in me- Saul of Tarsus must've seemed the most unlikely of men to convert to Christ. But he later refers to how God chose "to *reveal* his son in me". The Greek word *apokalupto* means literally 'to take the cover off'. The implication is that Christ is passively within each person converted to Him who has received the Spirit of Christ within, but has to be revealed in them, through response to the Gospel. Witness is essentially about revealing to others the Christ within us. If we don't have the Spirit of Christ within us, then we are merely teachers of theology and will not win anyone to Christ Himself. The Galatians passage could equally mean that Paul was called as an apostle to 'take the cover off' Christ to others; and yet Paul felt his calling was to all people on earth, to the ends of the world (Acts 13:47)- to every single person of all the Gentile nations (Rom. 15:11; 2 Tim. 4:17).

That I might preach him among the Gentiles- To preach Christ is to reveal Him to men through ourselves- this is the purpose for which we are called, that our lamp was lit, to reveal Christ to others through us. And thus Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the 'broken body' of the Lord we remember] the stigmata of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17). The whole burden of his message was therefore the Lord Jesus, rather than theology or clever apologetic arguments.

Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood- The idea is that Paul was motivated solely by his personal relationship with Jesus. His self understanding didn't depend upon the opinions of others. He was not who he was because of his status with others, but rather because of his relationship with Jesus. And this is to be our pattern. "Conferred" only occurs elsewhere in Gal. 2:6 where he says that those "who seemed

something *in conference* added nothing to me". The word literally means 'to add to'. He means that he had nothing added to him by the acceptance or rejection from his own brethren. He was who he was because of the Lord's acceptance. And so he can tell the Corinthians that it is a very little thing to be judged by them, because his only judge is the Lord Jesus.

And yet Paul's attitude to his brethren seems to have changed markedly over the years. He begins as being somewhat detached from them; perhaps as all new converts are initially. We see the Truth for what it is, we realize we had to make the commitment we did, and we are happy to do our own bit in preaching the Truth. But often a real concern and care for our brethren takes years to develop. Paul seems to tell the Galatians that the Gospel he preached had not been given to him by men, because in the early days after his conversion he was rather indifferent towards other Christian believers; "(Paul) conferred not with flesh and blood" after his conversion, neither did he go to see the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss how to preach to Israel; instead, Paul says, he pushed off to Arabia for three years in isolation. He was unknown by face to the Judean ecclesias, and even after his return from Arabia, he made no special effort to meet up with the Apostles (Gal. 1). The early Paul comes over as self-motivated, a maverick, all too ready to fall out with Barnabas, all too critical of Mark for failing to rise up to Paul's level of fearless devotion (Acts 15:39).

1:17- see on Acts 26:16-19; 1 Cor. 9:17.

Nor did I go to Jerusalem to those that were apostles ahead of me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus- As noted on :12, Paul resists the Rabbinic style of saying that his message is supported by the opinions of other learned men from the same religion who had preceded him. This is the force of his statement that he did not go to see those who had been in Christ "ahead of me". Arabia could refer to various desert areas; we are left to imagine that this period in the wilderness formed his spiritual position by direct contact with the Lord Jesus. But it could also be read as a recognition of weakness- that instead of going to preach the Gospel he went instead into isolation. And thus he was glorying in his weakness as a qualification; see on :10. The return to Damascus, where he had almost been lynched and escaped it in a most humiliating way (2 Cor. 11:31-33), is really impressive; just as Paul returned to cities where he had been badly persecuted. Such was his care for his converts.

1:18 *Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days*- The mention of three years may be another hint that he had not got on with witnessing to the Gentiles as he might have done; he is glorying in his weakness, as noted extensively on :10. "Visit" translates a term which can mean 'to learn from'; we see here Paul's humility. He as the literate, intellectual rabbi went to Jerusalem not to sit at the feet of some learned rabbi, but to be taught by an illiterate fisherman from Galilee. This again is a reversal of all the qualifications Judaism boasted in; see on :10.

1:19 *But none of the other apostles did I see, except James, the Lord's brother*- Judaism stressed which big names were supporting a position or individual, and Paul is consciously subverting this. See on :10. We likewise should be unashamed to subvert the peer review qualifications which are so popular these days. Observe how Paul counts James as an "apostle" although he was not one of the 12, perhaps anticipating the objection raised in Corinth that Paul was not really an apostle because he was not one of the 12.

1:20- see on Gal. 1:1.

In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!- Clearly Paul's version of events was questioned. All manner of conspiracy theories and slander had arisen, as they do in the life of anyone who devotes themselves to preaching Christ in truth. The origin of the 'troublers' of 1:7 was likely Jerusalem (see note there). Paul is answering the objection that 'Jerusalem' did not support him by strongly agreeing with it- and insisting that he had higher authority than Jerusalem, namely, his direct relationship with the Lord Jesus.

1:21 *Then I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia*- Cilicia was Paul's home area. Again, he may be glorying in his spiritual weakness, saying that he had returned to his roots rather than going out into the world as he had been commissioned. For Barnabus had to come to Tarsus and as it were drag Paul with him on his first missionary journey. Such boasting in weakness is a subversion of any attempt to present a humanly strong case for authority; see on :10. "Regions" translates *klima*, which according to Vine referred "originally to an inclination or slope of ground: the supposed slope of the earth from the equator to the pole". Here we have an example of scientifically incorrect terms being used in the Bible without correction; and this helps explain the language of demons being used in the Gospels regarding mental illnesses.

1:22 *But I was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ*- Paul speaks warmly of these churches in 1 Thess. 2:14, showing his eagerness to believe the best about others, with the love that believes all things. The churches which were in Christ suggests there were some 'churches' not in Christ. The term *ekklesia* was used for any gathering or assembly, and referred to the synagogues in small town and villages, some of whom had become Christian, and thus become assemblies which were in Christ. Christianity would have spread by the conversion of such synagogue assemblies here and there. The Lord did not ask His people to leave the synagogue system as part of their acceptance of Him; He just predicted that the time would come when His converts would be thrown out of that system (Jn. 16:2). This reflects how there was no concept of guilt by association, no demand of breaking association with an apostate system. If Jesus was accepted as Christ and preached as such, then the systems antithetical to that would themselves cast out the Lord's people. The *angst*

about separation from error which has blighted the body of Christ was therefore unknown in the first century church.

1:23 *They only heard say: He that once persecuted us now preaches the faith of which he once made havoc!-* See on :13 "made havoc". Paul had arranged their persecution without seeing their faces (:22). But he was a household name amongst the Christian synagogues (see on :22).

1:24 *And they glorified God in me-* The house churches in the area around Jerusalem ["Judea"] were obvious targets for Paul, who sought to drag Christians Jews into Jerusalem for punishment. They glorified not Paul but God's grace which had worked within Paul to bring about his conversion.

Chronology of Paul's Life

Standard Chronology Of Paul's Life	John Robinson's Chronology Of Paul's Life (2)
AD 35 Paul's conversion 36-38 In Arabia (1) 38-43 Preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem 44-46 Working in Antioch and Syria 46-48 First missionary journey 49-50 Jerusalem Conference 50-52 Second missionary journey 53-57 Third missionary journey 57-59 Arrest- Jerusalem-Caesarea 59-62 To Rome; first imprisonment 63-66 Release; travels in Asia, Greece, Spain 64-68 Nero's persecution of the Christians 67 Arrest, imprisoned in a dungeon in Rome 68 Final trial; executed.	AD33 Conversion 35 First visit to Jerusalem 46 Second [famine-relief] visit to Jerusalem 47-48 First missionary journey 48 Council of Jerusalem 49-51 Second missionary journey 52-57 Third missionary journey 57 Arrival in Jerusalem 57-59 Imprisonment in Caesarea 60-62 Imprisonment in Rome

Notes

(1) "Arabia" is from the word 'Arabah', and occurs in the LXX in Dt. 2:8; 3:17; 4:49 to mean simply the wilderness. Since Paul went there from Damascus, it has been suggested that he mixed with the Damascene Essene group. There are extensive

parallels between the Qumran texts and the letter to the Hebrews, which could lend support to this suggestion- as if Paul wrote to an audience he knew.
(2) J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) pp. 52,53.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also taking Titus with me*- See chronology of Paul's life on 1:24. The events and agreement mentioned in 2:1-10 need not be identical with the council of Acts 15. It could've occurred at the visit of Acts 11:30. Paul's various visits to Jerusalem recorded in Acts are hard to mesh into what he writes in Galatians. It seems that his visit to Jerusalem of Acts 9:26 is that referred to in Gal. 1:18-21; and the visit spoken of in Gal. 2:1-10 is that of Acts 11:1-18 rather than that of Acts 15. The fact Titus wasn't compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3) matches the outcome of Acts 11:18; and Paul's description of the meeting as private (Gal. 2:2) sounds more like the visit of Acts 11 rather than the public council of Acts 15. In a long and fascinating study, Paul Achtemeier makes a good case that the decree of Acts 15 was not "the *result* of the conflict in Antioch reported in Gal. 2:11-14, but the *cause* of that conflict"- Paul J. Achtemeier, *Paul and the Jerusalem Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005) p. 58. This would mean that the advice Paul gave to the Corinthians about food which was contrary to the Acts 15 decree was actually given before that decree was given (1 Cor. 9:19-22; 10:32).

2:2 *And I went up there by revelation*- He means that he didn't go and attend a unity meeting from any political reasons, there was no human buying in or selling out. He was told by Spirit revelation to go there, and he did.

And I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles- Paul says something similar in 1 Cor. 15:1, where he again declares to the Corinthians the content of the Gospel message he had preached to them. The content he summarizes in 1 Cor. 15:1 ff. is quite basic. The message of the Gospel was simple, not complicated.

But privately before them who were of repute- This is a lovely example of considering others' positions and being sensitive and wise. Paul didn't want to engage the well known names in public debate. He knew that human pride being what it is, they might be unable to humble themselves before others and accept what he was saying as right. He knew he was in the right, but he engaged them privately so that there would be no public showdown. He knew that if there were to be that, then the Lord's work might well be damaged and his overall work would be in vain if converts turned away because of division. The problem with those who know they are in the right is that they often feel thereby empowered to get involved in public debate and demonstration of the error of others; my earlier years were characterized by such wrong attitudes. Possession of truth is like driving a very powerful car. You don't drive it as fast as you can just because you have that car and you can drive it fast. We must consider the slowness of others. The Lord knew the truth about demons, but He used that truth appropriately. And Paul did likewise in this matter of Gentile inclusion and the passing of the Mosaic law. He considered his audience and their weakness, realizing

that it is so hard for public figures to backtrack and admit being in the wrong. He sought an appropriate forum in which to engage them- and that was a private meeting. There's so much we can learn from this. The same word translated "repute" is found in 2:6,9 and James, Peter and John who were 'reputed' pillars of the church are clearly in view. We note that even believers of their standing were liable to find it hard to backtrack on publicly advertised positions. And Paul showed the grace to appreciate that, rather than launching a head on public attack on their positions. By contrast, Paul records how later, after Peter had privately agreed with Paul's position in Jerusalem, Paul had to publicly confront him at Antioch when Peter backtracked on the private agreement (:11). There's a place for public confrontation, but only after private entreaty. Indeed the whole account here sounds like a parade example of following the Lord's advice in Matthew 18, to approach a brother privately and only then publicly rebuke him before the church.

Lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain- Unity and avoiding division is vital. Paul even argues in Gal. 2:2 that all his colossal missionary effort would have been a 'running in vain' if the ecclesia divided into exclusive Jewish and Gentile sections. This may be hyperbole, but it is all the same a hyperbole which reflects the extent to which Paul felt that unity amongst believers was vital.

2:3 *But not even Titus who was with me, being a Gentile, was compelled to be circumcised*- See on Gal. 1:1. Paul's comment that Gentile Titus was not compelled to be circumcised would suggest that actually, James and the Jerusalem elders were now compelling Gentiles to be circumcised.

2:4 *In view of the false brothers unknowingly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus*- Did Judaizers pose as Christians and get baptized even, in order to infiltrate and undermine the Christian church? But "unknowingly brought in" translates a Greek word used for smuggling in; as if there were Judaists already embedded within the church who smuggled in others who they knew would purposefully disrupt the church. "Spy out" suggests a conscious, cunning plan; to observe the "liberty" and then subvert it, in order to return the community to bondage to the Mosaic law. This "Jewish plot", as Harry Whittaker labelled it, was perhaps Paul's thorn in the flesh; a group of Judaists who intentionally sought to derail his ministry of grace. I have expanded upon this at great length in "The Jewish Satan" in The Real Devil. Peter was up against the same problem, when he writes of false teachers secretly entering in (2 Pet. 2:1). His usage of the same word as Paul here uses is a reflection of Peter's humility. For here, Paul is criticizing Peter for allowing this false teaching to enter unopposed. And Peter in his maturity realizes his error, and appeals to others not to repeat it. This is the humility of maturity in Christ.

That they might bring us into bondage- The term used in Acts 15:10 about the Judaizing element within the church, seeking to bring believers into the bondage of the Mosaic law. We naturally wonder why they went to such an extent in doing this. But this is all an essay in the power of legalism, and the way legalists consider that anything justifies the end of maintaining a traditional, legalistic system. Such defence of entrenched legalism is a psychological classic- it releases extraordinary energy and bitterness because of the belief that the end must justify any means. These same "false brothers" are referred to with the same word in 2 Cor. 11:26 as a group who literally endangered Paul's life. They were within the ecclesia. But legalists within ecclesias today show a similar hatred which the Lord judges as murder.

2:5 *We did not yield to them in submission*- Even though they "seemed to be somewhat" and were [in the eyes of some] "in repute" (Gal. 2:6 ASV). The same

Greek word translated “subjection” is found in 1 Cor. 16:16; Tit. 3:1 and 1 Pet. 5:5 about submission to elders in the ecclesia. Paul’s example shows that merely because an elder demands subjection, this doesn’t mean we should automatically give it- even if others do. We should be “subject” to those who are in our judgment *qualified* to demand our subjection (1 Cor. 16:16); and “subjection” in Paul’s writings usually refers to our subjection to the Lordship of Jesus. Our subjection must be to Him first before any human elders.

Even for a moment- There would have been a temptation to just make a momentary acquiescence to the demands of the legalists. But such politics was not acceptable to Paul.

So that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you- If we give in to legalists, then others lose the truth of the Gospel. The salvation of others can be affected by third parties. We really can make others stumble, and legalism is one of the most common forms of this happening. We enter the one body of Christ by baptism into the one body of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 12:13). We therefore have a duty to fellowship all who remain in the body (1 Cor. 10:16). Paul describes Peter as not walking according to the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:14) by effectively saying there were two bodies, of Jews and Gentiles, and only fellowshipping one of these groups rather than the entire one body. Paul says that this would mean that the truth of the Gospel would be lost. Paul put all the ecclesial politics behind him and withstood Peter "to his face". If we know "the truth" of Christ's Gospel, we will fellowship all those in Him and in that Truth. If we don't, Paul foresaw that ultimately "the truth of the Gospel" would be lost (Gal. 2:5). Tragically, in man-made attempts to preserve the Gospel's Truth the rest of the body has often been disfellowshipped. But by fellowshipping all the body, the "Truth" is kept!

2:6 *But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me*- The Greek is hard to translate. The idea, I suggest, is that when these brethren were "in conference" [AV] they had something added to them; but this meant totally nothing to Paul. This is indeed true to experience- when men, even brethren, come together, they can have an aura and power greater than the sum of their component parts. But this 'buzz' was seen through by Paul as he kept strictly to spiritual principle and would not be swayed by the power attached to men publicly together as it were on the platform. "Added nothing to me" can be translated "contributed nothing to me" and there may be a reference to financial support for his ministry. He received such support from dirt poor Gentile converts in Philippi, but not from Jerusalem.

2:7 *But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel to the circumcision*- “The gospel of the circumcision” being given to Peter and that of the Gentiles to Paul evidently means ‘the duty of preaching the gospel’. The Gospel is in itself the duty of preaching it.

I have noted throughout the commentary on Acts that Paul in fact went to the Jews in practice, and suffered because of it. So what he is saying here may be theory rather than practice.

2:8 *For he that worked through Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, worked through me also to the Gentiles*- In Gal. 2:7,8, we read that Peter was given a ministry

to preach to Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. But in Acts 15:7 Peter says that God used him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles- and the implication of 1 Peter is that he had made many converts in Gentile areas of Asia Minor. The reconciliation of these statements may be that God changed things around- Peter's ministry to the Gentiles was handed over to Paul, and Paul's initial work amongst the Jews was not for him to continue but for Peter. And so the Father may work with us, too. My simple point is that we are each given our group or area of potential responsibility for preaching, and we should be workers together with the Father and Son to achieve what they have potentially made possible for us. And we each, in God's master plan, have an area of opportunity opened up to us for us to preach in, and this area may be changed, reduced, moved or expanded according to our freewill response to God's desire to use us.

2:9 *And when they perceived the grace that was given to me, then James, Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*- Yet the Lord promises each believer that we can become "pillars" in His future temple (Rev. 3:12). We will all therefore in spirit take on the position of elders. In no way are we to see Christianity as a spectator religion, with a group of specialists acting effectively as priests. We are all to enter the spirit of responsibility which goes with eldership.

That we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision- James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to Gentiles, whilst they would teach the Jews (Gal. 2:9 NIV). This was contrary to what the Lord had told Paul in Acts 9:15- that he had been converted so as to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. And Paul took no notice of the 'agreement' they tried to force him into- he always made a priority of preaching first of all in the Jewish synagogues and to the Jews, and only secondarily to Gentiles. He did this right up to the end of the Acts record. Paul got drawn into politics in the church. Although he went along with the Acts 15 decree and even agreed to propagate it, he never mentions it in his writing or speaking, and later he writes about food regulations and the whole question of Gentiles and the Law as if he disagreed with it. Perhaps as he matured, he saw the need to speak out against legalism in the ecclesias rather than go along with it for the sake of peace.

We can ourselves so easily form into groups of brethren and ecclesias, papering over our differences as happened in Acts 15, adopting a hard line (as Jerusalem ecclesia did in Gal. 2:9 over Gentile believers), then a softer line in order to win political support (as in Acts 15), then back to a hard line (as in Acts 21). We ought to be men and women of principle. We look back at the senior brethren of those days arguing so strongly about whether or not it was right to break bread with Gentile believers, "much disputing" whether or not we should be circumcised… and it all seems to us such an elemental disregard of the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and so many clear Old Testament implications. But there were background factors which clouded their perceptions, although they themselves didn't realise this at the time. And so it can be with us, if we were to see ourselves from outside our own historical time, place and culture, it would probably be obvious that we are disregarding some most basic teachings of the Word which we know so well. Like them, our blindness is because the environment we live in blinds us to simple Bible truth.

2:10 *Only they asked us to remember the poor, which very thing I was also zealous to do*- The Jewish poor at Jerusalem. Paul's attempts to do this via the

Jerusalem poor fund weren't particularly successful; another indication that this compromise was not ultimately blessed by the Lord.

2:11 *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned*- This is extreme language. Peter's name Cephas is used because he had reverted to his Jewish roots. Refusing to fellowship our brethren because of pressure from more conservative brethren can make us stand condemned. There is a *direct* relationship, in God's judgment, between how we treat others and what will happen to us. This is to the extent that what we do to others, we do to ourselves. If we condemn others, we really and truly do condemn ourselves. Thus when Peter refused to fellowship Gentiles, Paul "opposed him to the face, because he stood condemned". Just as Peter had condemned himself by denying the Lord, so he had done again in refusing to fellowship the Lord's brethren. Realizing the seriousness of all this, Paul didn't just let it go, as many of us would have done in such an ecclesial situation. He realized a man was condemning himself; and so he risked causing a lot of upset in order to save him from this. Many of us could take a lesson from this.

The Peter who had come so far, from the headstrong days of Galilee to the shame of the denials, and then on to the wondrous new life of forgiveness and preaching that grace to others, leading the early community that developed upon that basis…that Peter almost went wrong later in life. Peter and the Judaizers makes a sad story. And as always, it was a most unlikely form of temptation that arose and almost blew him right off course. As often, the problem arose from his own brethren rather than from the hostile world outside. There was strong resistance in the Jewish mind to the idea that Gentiles could be saved without keeping the Mosaic law. And more than this, there was the feeling that any Jewish believer who advocated that they could was selling out and cheapening the message of God to men. Paul has to write about this whole shameful episode in Gal. 2. It becomes apparent that Peter very nearly denied the Lord that bought him once again, by placing on one side all the evidence of salvation by pure grace, for *all* men whether they be Jew or Gentile, which he had progressively built up over the past years. Paul, using Peter's old name, comments how Cephas seemed to be a pillar- but wasn't (Gal. 2:9). Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (2:11). Peter and some other Jewish believers "dissembled" and along with Barnabas "was carried away with their dissimulation", with the result that they "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (2:12-14). Paul's whole speech to Peter seems to be recorded in Gal. 2:15-21. He concludes by saying that if Peter's toleration of justification by works rather than by Christ was really so, then Christ was dead in vain. Paul spoke of how for him, he is crucified with Christ, and lives only for Him, "who loved me and gave himself for me". These were exactly the sentiments which Peter held so dear, and Paul knew they would touch a chord with him.

Yet Peter very nearly walked away from it all, because he was caught up in the legalism of his weaker brethren, and lacked the courage to stand up to the pressure of the Judaizers on him. Peter had earlier stayed with a tanner, a man involved in a ritually unclean trade (Acts 9:43). This would indicate that Peter was a liberal Jew, hardly a hard-liner. His caving in to the Judaist brethren was therefore all the more an act of weakness rather than something he personally believed in. For it was Peter, too, who had gone through the whole Cornelius experience too! And many a humble, sincere man in Christ since has lost his fine appreciation of the Lord's death *for him* and the whole message of grace, through similar sophistry and a desire to please 'the brethren'. In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on

to the true grace of God, lest "ye *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall…" (2 Pet. 3:17). Ye *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the law*less* to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world. Peter was carried away with the "dissimulation" of the Judaizers (Gal. 2:13), and he uses the same word when he appeals to the brethren to lay aside "all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1); he was asking them to do what he himself had had to do. He had been a hypocrite, in living the life of legalism within the ecclesia whilst having the knowledge of grace. We may so easily pass this off as a mere peccadillo compared to the hypocrisy of living the life of the world 6 days / week and coming to do one's religious devotions at a Christian church on a Sunday. But Peter draws a parallel between his own hypocrisy and that of such brethren; this is how serious it is to bow to the sophistry of legalism. It may be that an unjust disfellowship ought to be contended, and we say nothing. Or that a sincere, spiritual brother who places his honest doubts on the table is elbowed out of being able to make the contribution to the community he needs to. In our after the meeting conversations and in our Sunday afternoon chats we can go along with such things, depending on the company we are in. And it seems just part of Christian life. The important thing, it can seem, is to stay within the community and keep separate from the world. But not so, is Peter's message. His ecclesial hypocrisy was just as bad as that of the worldly believer whom Peter wrote to warn. Paul seems to go even further and consciously link Peter's behaviour with his earlier denials that he had ever known the Lord Jesus. He writes of how he had to reveal Peter's denial of the Lord's grace "before them all" (Gal. 2:14), using the very same Greek phrase of Mt. 26:70, where "before them all" Peter made the same essential denial.

The sad thing about Peter's reversion to the Judaist perspective was that it was an almost studied undoing of all the Lord had taught him in the Cornelius incident. There he had learnt that the Lordship of Jesus, which had so deeply impressed him in his early preaching, was in fact universal- because "He is Lord *of all*", therefore men from *all* (s.w.) nations were to be accepted in Him (Acts 10:35,36). God shewed him that he was not to call any man common or unclean on account of his race (Acts 10:28). But now he was upholding the very opposite. And he wasn't just passively going along with it, although that's how it doubtless started, in the presence of brethren of greater bearing and education than himself. He "compelled" the Gentile believers to adopt the Jewish ways, as if Peter was a Judaizer; and every time that word is used in Galatians it is in the context of compelling believers to be circumcised (Gal. 2:14 cp. 2:3; 6:12). So it seems Peter actually compelled brethren to be circumcised. And the Galatian epistle gives the answer as to *why* this was done; brethren chose to be circumcised and to preach it lest they suffer persecution for the sake of the cross of Christ (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14). Consistently this letter points an antithesis between the cross and circumcision. The body marks of Christ's cross are set off against the marks of circumcision (Gal. 6:17); and the essence of the Christian life is said to be crucifying the flesh nature, rather than just cutting off bits of skin (Gal. 5:24). Peter's capitulation to the Judaizers, Peter's revertal to circumcision, was effectively a denial of the cross, yet once again in his life. There was something he found almost offensive about the cross, an ability to sustainedly accept its message. And he turned back to circumcision as he had earlier turned to look at John's weaknesses when told he must carry the cross. And we turn to all manner of pseudo-spiritual things to excuse our similar inability to focus upon it too.

Eventually Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:12). But he had learnt to eat with Gentile brethren in Acts 11:3; he had justified doing so to his brethren and persuaded them of its rightness, and had been taught and showed, so patiently, by his Lord that he should not make such distinctions. But now, all that teaching was undone. There's a lesson here for many a slow-to-speak brother or sister- what you start by passively going along with in ecclesial life, against your better judgment, you may well end up by actively advocating. It can be fairly conclusively proven that Mark's Gospel is in fact Peter's. Yet it is there in Mk. 7:19 that Mark / Peter makes the point that the Lord Jesus had declared all foods clean. He knew the incident, recalled the words, had perhaps preached and written them; and yet Peter acted and reasoned as if he was totally unaware of them.

Paul gently guided Peter back to the Cornelius incident, which he doubtless would have deeply meditated upon as the inspired record of it became available. Peter had been taught that God *accepted whoever* believed in Him, regardless of their race. But now Paul had to remind Peter that truly, God "*accepteth* no man's person" (Gal. 2:6). The same Greek word was a feature of the Cornelius incident: whoever believes *receives*, accepts, remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and they *received*, accepted, the Holy Spirit as well as the Jewish brethren (Acts 10:47). With his matchless humility, Peter accepted Paul's words. His perceptive mind picked up these references (and in so doing we have a working model of how to seek to correct our brethren, although the success of it will depend on their sensitivity to the word which we both quote and allude to). But so easily, a lifetime of spiritual learning could have been lost by the sophistry of legalistic brethren. It's a sober lesson. And yet Peter in his pastoral letters (which were probably transcripts of his words / addresses) makes these references back to his own failure, and on the basis of having now even more powerfully learnt his lesson, he can appeal to his brethren. And so it should be in our endeavours for our brethren. Paul warned him that by adopting the Judaist stance, he was *building again* what had been destroyed (Gal. 2:18). And Peter with that in mind can urge the brethren to *build up* the things of Christ and His ecclesia (1 Pet. 2:5,7 s.w.), rather, by implication, that the things of the world and its philosophy.

2:12 *For before that certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision*- The whole nature of the agreement in Gal. 2:6-10 could be read as smacking of dirty politics- Paul could continue to convert Gentiles and not force them to be circumcised, but James and Peter would continue their ministry to the Jews, and Paul would get his Gentile converts to donate money to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It all could be read as having the ring of a 'deal' rather than an agreement strictly guided by spiritual principles. James [not necessarily the same James who wrote the epistle] seems to have acted very 'politically'. He sent his followers to pressurize Peter not to break bread with Gentiles in Antioch (Gal. 2:12). Then there was a conference called at Jerusalem to discuss the matter. There was "much disputing", there wasn't the clear cut acceptance of Gentiles which one would have expected if the words of Jesus had been taken at face value, and then James said 'Nobody ever came from me telling any Gentile they must be circumcised and keep the Law. They are all welcome, just that they must respect some of the Mosaic laws about blood etc., and keep away from fornication'. This contradicts Paul's inspired teaching that the Mosaic Law was totally finished. Gal. 2:12 records that James *had* sent brethren to Antioch trying to enforce the Law upon Gentiles! And then later, the Jerusalem ecclesia boasted of how many thousand members they had, "and they are

all zealous of the law". They then asked Paul to make it clear that he supported circumcision and keeping the Law (Acts 21:19-24). In passing, we note how hurtful this must have been, since Paul was bringing funds for their ecclesia which he had collected at the cost of damaging his relationship with the likes of Corinth. He meekly obeyed, perhaps it was playing a part in the politics in the church, although he had written to the Colossians and others that there was no need for any to be circumcised nor keep the Law, indeed these things were a denial of faith in Jesus.

2:13- see on Mt. 23:28.

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy- Peter uses the same word in warning his flock against hypocrisy (1 Pet. 2:1); knowing full well that he had publicly rebuked for being a hypocrite. In this we see the humility which made him a true elder, appealing to others not to make the same mistakes he had made.

Paul withstood the pressures of the 'circumcision party' within the early church, and rebuked Peter for caving in to them (Gal. 2:12,13). But then he himself caved in under pressure from the same group, and obeyed their suggestion that he show himself to be not opposed to the keeping of the Mosaic Law by paying the expenses for the sacrifices of four brethren.

2:14 *But when I saw that they did not walk straightly according to the truth of the gospel*- Gk. 'with straight feet', like the cherubim. Correct walk / behaviour is therefore related to the fact we have believed the *true* Gospel, i.e. we hold the right Gospel rather than the wrong one. The true Gospel was simple- believe in the Lord's death and resurrection and the salvation in Him, identify with it in baptism, and indeed it shall be true for us. In this lies the importance of doctrine. This is why Is. 29:13,24 speaks of repentance as 'learning doctrine'; Israel went astray morally because they allowed themselves to be taught wrong doctrine.

I said to Cephas before all: If you, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?- Paul uses Peter's old name because he feels Peter has slipped back to his old positions and is at this time not living according to the Lord's hope and expectation of him, which was that he would be a rock, Peter, the rocky one.

2:15- see on Acts 23:6.

We being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles- Paul is using here terms well known within Judaism, appealing to people, as we should, in their own terms and language. But Paul returns to allude to this term "sinners" in :17. There he reasons that if we seek to be justified by the Law whilst in Christ, then we shall be left unredeemed sinners. Thus, he reasons, you who are so defiantly Judaistic are declared sinners, and even worse than ignorant "sinners of the Gentiles".

2:16 *Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law*- Paul seems to be saying that their very reason for belief in Jesus for justification was because they knew there was no justification through keeping the Law. In our commentary on Acts 7, we sought to develop the idea that Paul was deeply touched by the inability of Law to save, and this led to the pricks in his conscience towards throwing himself upon faith in Jesus for justification. The motive for 'belief in Jesus' is therefore no mere agreement with an impressively interlinking set of theologies, but rather a desperate

awareness that apart from Him, I cannot be saved from my sins. See on :19 *I through the law...*

But through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified- Like Abraham, we are justified by the faith in Christ; not faith in Christ, but more specifically the faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). The use of the definite article surely suggests that it is our possession of the same doctrinal truths (the Faith) which Abraham had, which is what leads to faith in Christ and thereby our justification. The life Paul lived was by the Faith of Christ; not simply by faith, as a verb, which is how grammatically it should be expressed if this is what was meant; but by the Faith (Gal. 2:20). There is an intended ambiguity in the phrase "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16); this 'ambiguous genitive' can mean those who share "the (doctrinal) faith", which Abraham also believed; or those who have the kind of belief which Abraham had.

2:17 *But if, while we seek to be made righteous in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners*- See on 2:15 *Sinners of the Gentiles*.

Is Christ then a servant of sin? God forbid!- Christ would be bringing people into sin if He on one hand offered justification by faith in Him, and yet on the other, demanded obedience to the Mosaic law. "Servant", *diakonos*, means that "sin" is a personification. If Paul had believed in a personal Satan, surely this would've been the place to use that word.

2:18 *For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor*- The "things" of justification by the Mosaic law. The same word is used by the Lord in saying that He had not come to "destroy" the Law but to fulfil it (Mt. 5:17). Paul surely alludes here, and understood the Lord to be saying that He had indeed come to destroy the Law, but through fulfilling it; and that although He had not at that early point in His ministry destroyed the Law, yet He would do so- in His death. Paul thus sees his own part in the things which the Lord Himself achieved, just as we too can play our part in things like reconciling the world to God, which were personally achieved by the Lord's sacrifice.

2:19 *For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God*- This is very much the language of baptism in Romans 6. Paul understood that at baptism, he had died, which meant that he was no longer bound to obey the law, but rather, more positively, he was obligated to "live to God". Peter makes the same point, probably also in a baptism context (1 Pet. 4:2,6). Paul says that "through the law" he had come to this position; and his autobiographical comments in Romans 7 suggest that it was through his experience of failure to obey the law that he was driven to throw himself upon Christ and death with Him. This was his point in 2:16- see notes there.

Galatians was one of Paul's earlier letters. In it, he speaks of his own baptism: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live" (Gal. 2:19-21). Years later he writes to the Romans about *their* baptisms, in exactly the same language: "All of us who have been baptized… our old self was crucified with him… the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:1-10). He clearly seeks to forge an identity between his readers and himself; their baptisms were [and are] as radical as his in their import. Note how in many of his letters, especially Galatians and Corinthians, he switches so easily between "you" and "we", as if to drive home the fact that there was to be no perception of distance between him the writer and us the readers.

2:20- see on Mt. 27:26; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:16.

I have been crucified with Christ- Another reference to his baptism and the subsequent life spent living out those principles in practice (see on :19). Rom. 6:6 uses the same term for baptism- "crucified with Him". This is the idea of co-crucifixion, and the word is used about the thieves being crucified with Jesus (Lk. 23:42). The repentant thief is a type of us all. We died with Christ there; everything within us cries out that 'I would not have done this'. But we did. We through baptism are counted as having died and risen with Him. To be crucified is not so much a command we are to obey but a fact about our status in Christ which is to be believed. We count ourselves as dead to sin with Christ on the cross (Rom. 6:11).

And it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me- "I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not *my* life, but the life which *Christ lives* in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me". The spirit of the risen Christ lived out in our lives is the witness of His resurrection. We are Him to this world. His cross affects our whole life, our deepest thought and action, to the extent that we can say with Paul, in the silence of our own deepest and most personal reflection: “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

I live in faith- The Gospel of the Lord Jesus isn't a collection of ideas and theologies bound together in a statement of faith. It is, rather, a proclamation of facts (and the Greek words used about the preaching of the Gospel support that view of it) concerning a flesh and blood historical person, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. The focus is all upon a concrete and actual person. Paul in Gal. 2:20 doesn't say: 'I live by faith in the idea that the Son of God loved me'. Rather: "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (RV). Faith is centred in a person- hence the utterly central importance of our correctly understanding the Lord Jesus. We are clearly bidden see the man Jesus as the focus of everything.

And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up- A reference to the unique method of the Lord's death, consciously giving up His last breath in the words "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit", a life not taken from the Lord but consciously given up by Him. And that supreme act of self giving was "for me".

For me- There is the sustained implication that the personal relationship between Jesus and each of His followers is totally personal and unique. The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed “in their generations" (Gen. 17:7). The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood, to each of us. Paul appreciated this when he spoke of how the Son of God had loved him and died for him personally, even though that act of death was performed for many others (Gal. 2:20). This is one of the most essential mysteries of our redemption; that Christ gave Himself *for me*, so that He might make *me* His very own; and therefore I wish to respond in total devotion to Him and His cause, to make Him the Man I fain would follow to the end. And yet He did it for *you* and for *you*; for *all* of us His people. All

the emphasis on fellowship and family life, good as it is, must never blind us to this ultimately *personal* relationship with the One who gave Himself for us. Each time a believer enters into covenant with Christ through baptism, blood is in a sense shed; the Lord dies again as the believer dies again in the waters if baptism. The Hebrew word translated 'to cut a covenant' is also translated 'cut off' in the sense of death (Gen. 9:11; Lev. 20:2,3; Is. 48:9; Prov. 2:21). Death and blood shedding are essential parts of covenant making. In Gal. 2:20, Paul wrote of "the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me"; and yet some years later he wrote in conscious allusion to this statement: "Christ loved *the church* and gave himself *for it*" (Eph. 5:25). He looked out from beyond his personal salvation to rejoice in the salvation of others. He learnt that it was God manifestation in a multitude, not individual human salvation, that was and is of the essence. And we follow a like path, from that day when we were asked 'why do you want to be baptized', and we replied something to the effect 'because I want to be in the Kingdom'.

2:21 *I do not make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*- Strong language, but this is what all trust in legalistic obedience to law amounts to. We can frustrate the intention of God's grace, we can void or frustrate [s.w.] the will of God against ourselves by refusing baptism (Lk. 7:30). So much can be wasted, like the wine / blood of Christ pouring out on the earth unless we become new wineskins. "Make void" means literally to abrogate; perhaps the idea is that Paul had abrogated the Law, and not God's grace. And all this terrible waste of God's grace can come about, in the context of this chapter, by being pressured by legalistic brethren into rejecting salvation by grace alone.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1- see on Rom. 1:18; Gal. 4:16.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?- Literally, 'cast the evil eye over you'. Paul didn't surely believe in such things, but like the Lord Jesus, he uses the language of the day without as it were footnoting the fact he doesn't literally believe in those things. Paul is writing to those who thought they were now going to be saved by obedience to the Jewish law. But Judaism taught that obedience to the Law shielded Judaists from the 'evil eye' and magic spells. Paul is saying that the opposite is, as it were, the case. They had been "bewitched" to return to the Law, and were thus under, as it were, the curse which comes to those who seek justification by it. He goes right on to talk about the "curse of the law" and how believers in Christ are saved from this (Gal. 3:10,13). His references to salvation from this "curse" must be read in the context of this opening play on the idea of being bewitched or under a curse.

It was before your own eyes that Jesus Christ was openly displayed as crucified- Gk. 'placarded' or 'written' (s.w. Rom. 15:4 "things writtten...", Eph. 3:3 "as I wrote..."). The word of the cross was made flesh in Paul. People don't read Bible text, initially- they meet us. And we are the word to them. When Paul preached to the Galatians, he placarded forth Jesus Christ crucified in front of them: his preaching of the Gospel involved a repeated and graphic portrayal of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as a historical event, but witnessed in himself before their eyes (Gal. 3:1). We are "in Christ" to the extent that we *are* Christ to this world. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us. Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians; to the Corinthians he was "the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV). It was this marred visage of Paul which had impressed the Galatians with how

much Paul was Christ-manifest: “You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus” (Gal. 4). He could truly say in Gal 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ”, and that before their eyes “Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth [‘placarded’], crucified among you… for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal. 3:1; 6:17). Thus to preach through cross carrying means sharing in the Lord’s sufferings. It may mean being crucified by our brethren for it as He was, physical hardship and pain… but this is the ground of credibility for our witness.

Crucifixion with Christ is essentially a matter of the mind. Here we have continued the idea of Gal. 1:16, that it was 'Christ in me' which was then publically revealed in Paul's preaching to others. God chose to "reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him". Witness is essentially about revealing to others the Christ within us. If we don't have the Spirit of Christ within us, then we are merely teachers of theology and will not win anyone to Christ Himself.

It seems that Paul had gone through the process of crucifixion with them so realistically, that it was as if Christ had suffered before their eyes. If you have seen that, Paul says, and the vision remains with you, how can you turn away? And this is a powerful motivator for us too. The man who sees, really sees, something of the Lord's agony, simply won't turn away, doctrinally or practically. But if we turn away from the consideration, the motivation will not be there to keep on responding. In this sense the crucifixion record *almost* has a mystical power in it, if it is properly apprehended. Thus Paul could tell the Galatians that in him they had seen Jesus Christ placarded forth, crucified before their own eyes (3:1). Paul knew that when people looked at his life, they saw something of the crucifixion of the Lord. The Galatians therefore accepted him " even as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4:14). He could describe his own preaching as “this Jesus, whom I preach unto you…” (Acts 17:3), as if Jesus was right there before their eyes, witnessed through Paul. As the Lord was Paul’s representative, so Paul was Christ’s. The idea of representation works both ways: we see in the Gospel records how the Lord experienced some things which only we have; and we show aspects of His character to the world which nobody else can manifest.

If we can rise up to all this, placarding forth the Lord's crucifixion sufferings in our lives, then there will be a power and credibility to our preaching which will be hard to resist. It was before the eyes of the Galatians that they saw in Paul, Jesus Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). But the only other reference to the eyes of the Galatians is in Gal. 4:15- where we read that they had been so transfixed by Paul's preaching that they had been ready to pluck out their eyes. And where's the only other reference to plucking out eyes? It's in the Lord's teaching, where He says that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out [Mt. 5:29- same Greek words used]. The connection is surely this: Paul's personal reflection of the crucified Jesus was so powerful, so compellingly real and credible, that it motivated his hearers to rise up to the spirit of the very hardest demands of the moral teaching of that same Jesus. Insofar as we genuinely live out the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, our preaching of His radical moral demands will likewise be heeded. The crucified Christ that Paul placarded before their eyes was " the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 4:14-16); and the integrity and reality of that truth was confirmed by the congruence between the example of Paul, and the reality of the crucified Jesus whom he manifested to them. In Paul's body language, in his character, in his response to problems and frustrations great and small, in the way he coped with

physical weakness, his audience somehow saw the crucified Christ. In the same letter, Paul reminds the Galatians how they had initially seen him preaching to them in a weak bodily state, and had seen Christ in him then (Gal. 4:13,14). He says in Gal. 3:1 that they saw Christ crucified in him. Perhaps the way Paul handled a sickness or bodily weakness which he then had, somehow reflected to his audience the spirit of Christ crucified.

The effort we should consciously make to allow the life of Christ to be lived in us, is a natural outflow of the basic doctrine: that Christ was our representative. If we love Him and the record of His life, we will see in Him and His living the essence of our own: the same betrayal, barriers with His family and all close relationships, the pouring out of the love of God to a world and people who misunderstood, who thought they understood but didn't, who were blind, who thought they saw, who only broke from the petty materialism of their lives to listen to Him because they thought they might get some personal benefit…all the time, He poured out His grace and the Father's love. And He kept on to the final unspeakable, unwriteable, unenterable agony at the end. And even there, we sense He was not gritting His teeth trying to be patient, trying not to sin…He was pulsating with a love for men, a care for Pilate (comforting him that another had a greater sin); concern for the women who wept crocodile tears, that they might really repent; praying for forgiveness for those who knew not [i.e., fully] what they did; preaching to the thieves in whispers, each word taking an agony of pain, heaving Himself up on the nails to get the air to speak it… To love one's neighbour as oneself is to fulfil the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10); and yet the Lord's death was the supreme fulfilment of it (Mt. 5:18; Col. 2:14). Here was the definition of love for one's neighbour. Not a passing politeness and occasional seasonal gift, whilst secretly and essentially living the life of self-love and self-care; but the love and the death of the cross, for His neighbours as for Himself; laying down His life "for himself that it might be for us" in the words of Bro. Roberts. In Him, in His time of dying, we see the definition of love, the fulfilment of the justice and unassuming kindness and thought for others which was taught in the Mosaic Law. And we through bearing one another's burdens, through bearing with their moral and intellectual and spiritual failures, must likewise fulfil the law, in a voluntary laying down of our lives for each other (Gal. 6:2). And in this, as with the Lord, will be our personal salvation.

1 Cor. 11:26 AVmg. makes the act of breaking bread a command, an imperative to action: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew ye the Lord's death, till he come". If we are going to eat the emblems, it is axiomatic that we will commit ourselves to shewing forth His death to the world, like Paul placarding forth Christ crucified in our lives (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). The Passover likewise had been a 'shewing' to one's family "that which the Lord did unto me" (Ex. 13:8), the redemption we have experienced.

3:2 *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing works of the law, or by hearing with faith?*- This is not a reference to receipt of the miraculous Spirit gifts; for only some received these in the first century. 3:5 is clear about the difference: "He that supplies to you the Spirit and works miracles among you". Not all had the miraculous gifts, indeed Paul downplays their importance in 1 Corinthians. But all the Galatians are spoken of as having 'received the Spirit'. I suggest this refers to the gift of the Spirit which all believers in Christ receive at baptism (Acts 2:38)- the internal power towards holiness and spirituality, Christ in us, His mind / spirit within

us. The same words are used in Jn. 7:39 of how the Spirit was to be received once Christ was glorified and had poured out this gift upon His people. This Spirit is received by the believers, not by the world, and is *within* us (Jn. 14:17). The receipt of this Spirit means that we in our hearts can cry "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Later in our chapter here, Paul speaks of receiving the Spirit as receiving the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:14)- the blessing which in Acts 3:26 is defined as the power to turn us away from sin. Paul's immediate point here is that the Spirit was received by them not because they obeyed law, but because they had believed and been baptized into Christ. Gal. 4:6 is quite clear that the Spirit received by all the Galatian converts was a gift of Divine relationship within their hearts: "And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father".

Paul's whole argument from now on in Galatians is that they have been given the Spirit as a result of faith in Jesus as Christ. They would not have gotten this from obedience to the Mosaic law. So they should not seek to return to the law. In this context, he will expound the promise to Abraham. We are familiar with this promise as referring to an eternal inheritance of the land promised to Abraham, and it is clear from Hebrews 11 and Acts 7 that in a physical sense, Abraham and his seed didn't receive that promise in their lifetimes. They will be resurrected and receive it when the Lord returns to earth. But the promises to Abraham were not solely about that. They also involved the promise of Yahweh being their personal God, and Acts 3:26,27 interprets the promised blessings as involving the psychological turning of the seed away from sin. For the path to eternal inheritance of the earth involves personal transformation and forgiveness of sin, which we receive right now. All this was also implicit in the promises to Abraham. And so here Paul dwells more on this dimension of the promises. He will go on in chapter 4:6 to speak of God sending the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of the Galatians, so that they along with Jesus can address Yahweh as Abba, daddy. As He was the begotten Son of God, so believers can go beyond being merely adopted sons to being actual sons, in that they are "in" the Son of God, and all that is true of Him becomes true of them. The groundwork for that reasoning is here in Galatians 3- that all that is true of the singular seed of Abraham (who is Christ, :16) becomes true of us who are baptized into Him. And so the singular seed in this way becomes a plural seed, as many as the stars of the sky. As explained on :14, "the promise" to Abraham is specifically the promise of the Spirit, in this context. Galatians will go on to develop this theme; Christians are those who have been born after the Spirit (Gal. 4:29), allowing the Spirit to bring forth fruit in them (Gal. 5:5,16-18, 22,25) through sowing to the Spirit (Gal. 6:8).

3:3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit*- The reference is to having begun spiritual life at their baptisms by receiving the Spirit (see on :2).

Are you now perfected in the flesh?- The function of the Holy Spirit is to guide our spiritual development unto maturity or 'perfection'. Obedience to Law will not achieve this. The same word is used in describing how the Lord has "begun a good work [with]in you" and will perform or 'perfect' it until the day we meet the Lord (Phil. 1:6). This work is essentially *within* us. We are in a program of development, and attempting to justify ourselves by work will interrupt that program.

3:4 *Did you suffer so many things in vain? If it be indeed in vain*- The connection is with Paul's thought in Gal. 2:21 a few verses earlier- that if we are justified by works, then Christ has suffered in vain. And our sufferings, which are a sharing in His

sufferings, will likewise be in vain. Paul several times uses this powerful idea of life "in vain". If we do not enter the Kingdom, if we refuse to be new wineskins, then the blood of the new covenant flows out wasted on the ground. All is vain, compared to salvation. This general attitude to life under the sun and all human endeavour is indeed powerful. However, we can also understand the Greek used here for 'suffering' as meaning 'experiencing'. So the sense then becomes "Did you experience so many things [i.e. the work of the Spirit] in vain?". The same word is used in Acts 28:5 "suffered no harm". There is no account in Acts of the Galatian churches 'suffering' persecution, but it is of course quite likely that they did.

3:5 *Does he that supplies to you the Spirit*- As noted on :2, this refers to the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers after baptism. The same word for "supplies" is used in Col. 2:19 of how the Lord Jesus as the head of the body supplies nourishment to every part. Because we are baptized by one Spirit into the one body, and are made to drink into that one Spirit. The Lord Jesus is indeed an active Lord. He ministers psychological, spiritual strengthening to all parts of His body, which is the church. The gift of the Spirit at baptism is as it were supplemented. We are 'filled up' with the Spirit, but that filling up needs to be continually experienced. The 'supply' of the Spirit is different to the 'working miracles among you' which is mentioned in the next clause. It is this non-miraculous supply of the Spirit which Paul has in view when he writes of "through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ... my God shall supply all your need according to His riches" (Phil. 1:19; 4:19). And His enrichment is through the gifts of His Spirit (1 Cor. 1:5).

And works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?- See on :2 *Did you receive the Spirit*. Note the present tenses. Despite the apostasy in Galatia, the Lord Jesus still actively ministered His Spirit and enabled miracles to be done, just as God did to an apostate Israel in the wilderness. Even in the first century, the work of the Spirit was not just confined to the miraculous gifts; thus "He that supplies to you the Spirit *and* works miracles among you" suggests that there was a non-miraculous work of the Spirit then. It seems clear that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not possessed by all first century believers; and yet the epistles often imply that all believers had received the Spirit (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:22). The resolution of this is in the fact that all believers then and now receive the non-miraculous effect of the Spirit. Indeed, Jude 19 suggests that 'having the spirit' could just refer to someone who is not "sensual", i.e. of the flesh. John was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb... (going) in the Spirit and power of Elijah... waxed strong in spirit" (Lk. 1:15,17,80); but "John did no miracle " (Jn. 10:41). David associated having God's holy Spirit with having free fellowship with Him due to sins being forgiven, paralleling the holy Spirit with "a right spirit within me... a clean heart" (Ps. 51:10,12); and Paul spoke of God's willingness to forgive us as "the spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29), i.e. His spiritual gift. Paul's reasoning in Gal. 3:5,6 is similar- the Spirit is ministered to us by faith, in the same way as Abraham's faith resulted in righteousness being imputed ('ministered') to him. Thus imputed righteousness is made parallel to the gift of the Spirit.

3:6- see on Phil. 3:6.

Even as Abraham believed God, and that faith was imputed to him for righteousness- His faith was weak, just as faith was weak in Galatia. See on Rom. 4:1-4,18,19. Paul's point in Rom. 4:3-5 is that Abraham was counted as righteous for

his faith and not because of his works; the promises of the Kingdom salvation were made to him whilst he was uncircumcised.

3:7 *Know that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham*- 'Of' in the sense of being the descendant of. Faith is the defining family characteristic of the Abraham family- and not race or physical descent. "The real descendants of Abraham are the people who have faith" (GNB).

3:8- see on Rom. 9:17.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would make the Gentiles righteous by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham- Abraham was promised that "all the nations" [i.e. "the Gentiles"] would be blessed. Paul strains from this [so it could seem to those not used to rabbinic exegesis] that this blessing was not stated to be in response to any works- so it must therefore have been offered purely on the basis of faith. If they were to be given a blessing not on the basis of works, but on account of Abraham' singular seed, Jesus... then such blessing would involve them being counted righteous, i.e. worthy of blessing, just because they believed this promise.

When it says: In you shall all the nations be blessed- This was 'preached to Abraham'; and he chose to believe it. It was spoken to him before he had done any works of obedience or before he had believed anything. He was told, effectively, that he would be blessed / saved. And he believed it. The Gospel likewise comes to us out of left field, as it were. We are promised that we shall be saved- and if we believe it, we shall be.

3:9 *So then, they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*- "With" translates *sun,* the idea being that believers are blessed by association with Abraham. And :27-29 explain that this is through baptism into Christ, who is Abraham's specific seed.

Verses 10-13 are a parenthesis concerning the curse of the Law. If read without the parenthesis, the flow of thought goes straight on: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (v.9)... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles" (v.14).

3:10 *For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse*- See on 3:1 *Bewitched you*.

For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the law- The quotation is from the LXX of Dt. 27:26. The Masoretic text is different: "Cursed is he who doesn't confirm the words of this law to do them". This is an example of where so often the NT seems to prefer to quote the LXX over the MT. This has significant implications for any who insist upon the earth being 6000 years old as based upon the OT genealogies, for the figures are significantly different in the LXX.

3:11 *Now it is evident that no one is justified by the law before God! For, The righteous shall live by faith*- The thought is very similar to that in Romans. Rom. 2:13 uses the same phrase *para Theos* to reason that the *doers* of the law are justified before God; and nobody does the entire law. But here (as in Rom. 1:17) Paul uses a related but slightly different argument. He says that we are not justified by deeds "before God" because of the very existence of the concept of justification *by faith*; and he quotes Hab. 2:4 as an exemplification of this.

3:12 *And the law is not of faith*- Today likewise, legalism does not induce faith. It is our awareness of our disobedience and a deep sense of inability to be righteous which leads us to the faith which is a throwing of ourselves upon Divine grace and the Lord's cross.

But: He that does the commandments shall live in them- The 'living' in view, in the context, seems to be 'living eternally'; for Paul has just said that the righteous shall live [eternally] by faith (:11). He therefore understood Lev. 18:5 to mean that life eternal was possible through perfect obedience to the Mosaic law: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances; which if a man does, he shall live in them". Notice that "in them" is added by the translators to make better sense of the simple statement that the obedient man "shall live". The truth of this interpretation is in the fact the Lord Jesus was indeed perfectly obedient to the Law and therefore lived for ever; He had to die for multiple reasons, but it was not possible that death should hold Him, seeing He had the right to eternal life through His perfect obedience; and therefore He was resurrected. An alternative understanding is that the person who thinks only in terms of obedience, will simply live a life of trying to obey laws. He will "live in them". It will be the atmosphere of his life and culture. But he will not thereby be saved.

3:13- see on Acts 5:30.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us- See on 3:1 *Bewitched you*.

For it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree- The idea is not that for some reason, being hung on a tree made a person "cursed". Those who had sinned unto death, according to the law of Moses, were "cursed" by that law; and those dead, legally cursed people were then hung on a tree. The point is that we have each become cursed by the Law of Moses through failing to completely obey it. And the perfect Lord Jesus was our representative; He there on the cross was and is everyman. It flows naturally from this that we would wish to immerse ourselves into His body there on the cross, identifying with Him, so that His resurrection can become ours. That is of course the meaning of baptism, but the spirit of that identification is to carry on through daily life and thought afterwards.

Note that Paul likens the Lord on the cross to the body of the criminal lifted up *after* death, not in order to lead to death (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23)- as if he understood the Lord to have been effectively dead unto sin at the time the body was lifted up on the cross. It was as if the idea of the cross had been lived out throughout the Lord's life; He was dead as He lived, and dead to sin at the point that His body was lifted up on the tree.

3:14 *This was so that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*- The blessing promised to Abraham is here understood as the Spirit which has been promised. See on :2. The Holy Spirit gift is that promised in Acts 2:38,39: "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off". This gift was understood as "the promised Holy Spirit" which the Lord received to give to us at His ascension: "Therefore, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33). This is the reference of Eph. 1:13: "In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise", or, 'the promised Holy Spirit'. This sealing is within the human heart, as 2 Cor. 1:21,22 makes clear: "Now he that establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts". The Holy Spirit Comforter was clearly promised in the uppper room discourse of Jn.

14-16. The blessing to Abraham is defined in Acts 3:26 as being turned away from our inquities: "To you first, God, having raised up His servant, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you away from your sins". The blessing was not only of eternal inheritance of the earth; it was the blessing of having God as our personal God, and of course the path to eternal inheritance is only through forgiveness and being changed into spiritual people.

Paul was so positive about his Galatians, many of whom he says seemed to be departing from the Christian faith. He feared he may have "laboured in vain" for some of them (Gal. 4:11), but he writes of his expectations in a totally positive way: "Christ hath redeemed us… that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit [i.e. salvation]" (Gal. 3:13,14). "For ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ… then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29)- yet Paul could write this despite knowing his readers' lack of faith in Christ (Gal. 1:6; 3:1,3-5; 4:9,11,19,21; 5:4,7). "And because ye are sons… thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God though Christ" (Gal. 4:6,7). "So then brethren we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free" (Gal. 4:31). If we believe that we ourselves will be there, we will spark off an upward spiral of positive thinking in the community of believers with whom we are associated. Think carefully on the Lord's words to the Pharisees: "For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Mt. 23:13). If we don't believe we will be there, we end up discouraging others.

3:15- see on 1 Cor. 15:57.

Brothers, I speak in human terms. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds thereto- The confirmation of the covenant was 'previous' to the giving of the Law of Moses (:17). The confirmation was in the fact that God made an oath by Himself (Heb. 6:13-18); the promise itself, and then His word of oath, made two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie. The simple covenant of salvation was that anyone who believed the promises to Abraham and associated themselves with his seed will be eternally saved and blessed. Nothing has been added or subtracted from that ever since it was given. The Lord's death was yet another act of confirming that covenant, and appealing to men and women to believe it and participate in it; but His life and death did not of themselves add anything to the salvation covenant promise given to Abraham, and which forms the basis of the Gospel. And likewise, the law of Moses did not void nor add to that covenant.

3:16 *Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He did not say: And to seeds, in the plural, but in the singular: And to your seed, who is Christ!*- A case can be made that the whole New Testament is a form of *Midrash* on the Old Testament, re-interpreting it in the light of Christ. In this case, Gen. 22:18. Paul so often employs the same literary devices found in the rabbinic *Midrashim*, e.g. *al tiqra* [read not thus, but thus- Gal. 3:16 is a classic example]. The promises were made to Abraham's future seed, the Lord Jesus. He did not personally pre-existed. But they are true for us if we are in Christ by baptism (:27-29). All that is true of the Lord personally becomes true for us. The promises were made to a singular seed, the Lord Jesus. But the promises themselves contain an ambiguity between singular and plural. That singular seed was to be as many as the stars of the sky. And this comes true through our becoming "in" Christ, the seed. Likewise the promises were "and to your

seed [singular seed, so Paul says here] after you… and I will be *their* God" (Gen. 17:8).

3:17 *This is what I mean; the law which came years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise of no effect*- The confirmation of the covenant [s.w. :15 "confirmed"] was in that God swore it with an oath. The promise to save people who believed in His offer of blessing / salvation was absolutely certain. The logic of the argument here could suggest that actually, salvation was open to Gentiles in Old Testament times if they simply believed in the Abrahamic covenant. For it was not in any sense annulled; the Lord's death was simply an extra confirmation of it, and enabled believers to identify with the seed. We note that despite having confirmed the covenant of salvation with an oath at the time, it was also confirmed by the Lord's death. We remember this when we take the wine which represents the blood of the covenant. But just one word from God is enough. As the argument goes in Heb. 6:17,18, we have the word of promised salvation confirmed by God's oath- and also by the death of His Son. These are things in which it is impossible for God to lie, because God wished to "more abundantly shewunto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel... that we might have a strong consolation". This should be an end of all strife, of all worry as to whether we shall really be saved. Likewise God commended His love to us, as if it needed any confirmation, in that Christ died for us whilst we were sinners.

Gal. 3:15-20 stresses how the Law came after the promises to Abraham, and cannot disannul them. Reasoning back from Paul's writing, we can arrive at some understanding of what the Judaists were saying. Their position was that baptism of Gentiles into the Abrahamic covenant was fine, but they must keep the Law for salvation. Paul is pointing out that the promises to Abraham offer eternal inheritance in the Kingdom on the basis of faith and grace, and neither the Law of Moses nor any other form of legalism can change that fundamental basis. An appreciation of the promises will therefore root us in the wonder of salvation by grace, to the point that we will reject all forms of legalism whenever they are proposed in the ecclesia, and whenever our own flesh seeks to justify itself by works achieved rather than by humbly accepting forgiveness of sins. That the Lord's death took away the Law can be assented to us and passed by. But the RV of Romans draws a difference between "*the* law" and "law" without the article, i.e. legality. Because we are saved by grace, no legal code, of Moses or anyone else, can save us. Therefore we are free- but that freedom is so wonderful that we are under “the law of Christ", the rigid principle of always seeking to act as this Man would do, who freed us from law. Otherwise, we end up replacing one form of legalism [under Moses] with another, a set of laws given by Jesus. He *has* saved us in prospect, outside of any law. And we are to rejoice in this and yet respond to it. Dostoevsky's epic *The Brothers Karamazov* is really a parable of the terrible burden of this freedom and the forgiveness of sins. In it, Jesus returns to earth. He is arrested, and the Inquisitor visits Him in the middle of the night. He tries to explain to Jesus that people do not want freedom. They want security. He argues with Jesus, that if one really loves people, then you make them happy- but not free. Freedom is dangerous. People want law, not responsibility; they want the neurotic comfort of rules, not the danger of decision making and the burdens it brings. Christ, says the Inquisitor, must not start up this business about freedom and grace and the commitment and responsibility it demands. Let things be; let the church have its laws. And will Jesus please go away. The life of grace to the extent that it must be lived is a radical confrontation- it creates the necessity of making pure freewill decisions to do and think acts of grace in response to God's grace. Grace has

been presented as the easy way out. It isn't. It is far, far more demanding than legalism.

3:18 *For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise*- The inheritance of "the land of promise" was made possible *before* the Law of Moses was given. Israel were given Canaan on the basis of the promises to Abraham, and not the Law of Moses.

But God has granted it to Abraham by promise- Abraham was not given any set of laws he must obey. He was simply asked to believe, and go inherit the promised land. And the Gospel to us is really also that simple. Its very simplicity is why the demand for faith is so intense, and why people would prefer to slip back into some legal system, with a promised reward for obedience which can never be a certain hope because of our disobedience in some ways.

3:19 *For what, then, was the law? It was added because of transgressions*- The descendants of Jacob / Israel were not righteous, although they were God's people. The law of Moses was given to them "because of transgressions". And yet the very existence of the Mosaic Law generated sin, and thereby the experience of God's wrath upon His people (Rom. 4:15). So why were Israel given the Law? In some ways (and this isn't the only reason) to confirm them in their sinfulness. The original Mosaic Law was "holy, just and good" in itself (Rom. 7:12). But later, God gave Israel "laws that were not good" (referring to the Halachas of the Scribes?) so that they would go further away from Him (Ez. 20:25). He must have done this by inspiring men to say things which were genuinely communicated by God, but which were false.

Until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. The law was given through angels by the hand of a mediator- The promise was made to the Lord Jesus, therefore, when as yet He did not exist. In this sense the promises were spoken to Christ, the seed of Abraham (:16). God's word of promise likewise spoke to us right back then in Abraham's time- even though we had not then associated with his seed. The word "until" clearly shows that the law of Moses was never intended to be eternal. It was given "until" a certain point.

3:20 *Now an intermediary implies more than one party, but God is one*- The oath of God to Abraham was a unilateral undertaking. He alone passed through the burning pieces. Likewise the mediation of the Angels implied two parties in a contract- but actually the covenant was unilateral, only God bound Himself by terms and conditions. He simply wanted to pass on the blessing to us. All we have to do is believe it and accept the covenant.

Reflect a moment upon the sheer power and import of the fact that the Father *promised* things to us, who are Abraham's seed by faith and baptism. The Law of Moses was a conditional promise, because there were two parties; but the promises to us are in some sense unconditional, as God is the only "one" party (Gal. 3:19,20). And as if God's own unconditional promise isn't enough, He confirmed those promises to us with the blood of His very own son. Bearing this in mind, it's not surprising that Ps. 111:5 states that God "will *ever* be mindful of His covenant". This means that He's thinking about the covenant made with us *all* the time! And yet how often in daily life do we reflect upon the fact that we really are in covenant relationship with God... how often do we recollect the part we share in the promises to Abraham, how frequently do we feel that we really are in a personal covenant with God Almighty? In Genesis 15, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered

and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties passed between the dead animals- but only Yahweh does. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant. The Lord laboured the point that the "unforgivable sin" was to "blaspheme the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 3:28-30; Mt. 12:31-37; Lk. 12:10). But it's been demonstrated that this is a reference to Jewish writings and traditions such as Jubilees 15:33 "where not circumcising one's child is unforgivable, because it is a declaration that one does not belong to the covenant people".

3:21 *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could give life, truly righteousness would have been of the law*- Under inspiration, Paul so often addresses the unspoken thoughts of his readers. If salvation was promised by faith alone under the Abrahamic covenant, then why ever introduce a law which was impossible to keep? This connects on the same large scale canvas with the question as to why God allowed sin, why there is even the concept of sin. And Paul speaks to these natural and obvious concerns. His answer is that we had to realize our desperation, our need, our hunger, our inability to achieve salvation by any other means- so that we would throw ourselves upon God's grace in Christ as it is presented in the Abrahamic covenant. Perhaps it was the lack of human interest in that wonderful covenant which led God to introduce the Mosaic Law- in order to thereby drive man to Christ. Likewise God uses human sin in order to bring us to Him. If there were no sin, no Law to place accent upon human desperation, then who would need Christ? How much less glory would be given to God and His grace if in fact there was no sin, if there had been no law... It was in this sense that the Law was a teacher / teaching slave to bring us to Christ. Not in that people understood the types and patterns as being Messianic; for here in Galatians 3, Paul says that mankind was "shut up" to all that; but rather in bringing us to know our desperation.

To be given life is paralleled with being given righteousness. Those without sin can live for ever; so the imputation of righteousness means eternal life.

3:22 *But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*- See on :14. Sin occurs as a major them in Paul's writings– not just in Romans, where he speaks so much about sin without hinting that a supernatural 'Satan' figure is involved with it. He sees sin as playing an almost positive, creative role in the formation of the true Christian, both individually and in terms of salvation history. He speaks of how the Mosaic law was given to as it were highlight the power of sin; but through this it lead us to Christ, through our desperation and failure to obey, "that (Gk. *hina*, a purpose clause) we might be righteoused by faith" (Gal. 3:24–26). The curses for disobedience were "*in order that* (Gk. *hina*) the blessing of Abraham would come upon the Gentiles" (Gal.

3:10–14); "the Scripture consigned all things to sin, *in order that* (Gk. *hina*) what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who have faith" (Gal. 3:22). Note that it was the Law, "the Scripture", which consigned things to sin– not a personal Satan. My point is that sin was used by God, *hina*, 'in order that', there would be an ultimately positive spiritual outcome. Indeed this appears to be the genius of God, to work through human failure to His glory. This view of sin, which any mature believer will surely concur with from his or her life experience, is impossible to square with the ideas of dualism, whereby God and 'sin' are radically opposed, fighting a pitched battle ranging between Heaven and earth, with no common ground. No – God is truly Almighty in every sense, and this includes His power over sin. The life, death and resurrection of His Son were His way of dealing with it – to His glory.

The promise by faith refers not only to the promise of future eternal inheritance of the land, as explained on :2. It is the promise of the Spirit (:14) which is in view. Paul is arguing here that this is the concrete evidence in their possession that faith in Jesus is valid, and they would not get that from returning to the law.

3:23 *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law*- Paul sees the Law as a prison house, a law which held us captive in bonds. In the first century, a person was defined not so much by their unique personal character, credit was not given for who they had become or stopped being... but rather by the place in society into which they were born. And so these group-oriented people came to live out the expectations of society- and so the whole process rolled on through the generations. It was continuity rather than change, tradition rather than transformation, which was valued. Change was seen as some kind of deviancy- whereas the Christian gospel is all about change! The past was seen as more glorious than the present and the future, a pattern to be followed- whereas the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God on earth taught that the best time is *ahead*. And so often Paul compares the "past" of our lives with the much better "now" in Christ (Gal. 3:23-27; 4:8,9; Rom. 6:17-22; Eph. 2:11-22; 5:8).

Imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed- On one level, the Mosaic Law was a set of such intricate regulations that was almost impossible to keep. And yet it led men to Christ as a gentle slave leading the children to the teacher. I don't think that the Law of Moses led people to Christ in the sense that they cracked the various types and worked it all out. There's not one example that I can think of where an Old Testament character did this. Indeed it could appear from Gal. 3:23 and other New Testament passages that until Christ actually came, the Old Testament believers were "shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed". Therefore the types etc. of the Law of Moses couldn't have been perceived by them in the same way as we understand them. Hence the Lord's comment that many righteous men had longed to understand the things of Jesus which the disciples saw and heard in reality. "In other ages" those things of Christ were not made known to men as they were revealed in the New Testament by the preaching of the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5). The Old Testament prophets even seemed to understand that the things they saw and wrote were not so much for themselves as for us (1 Pet. 1:12). Or as Paul says here in Gal. 3:23: "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith [in Jesus] which should afterwards be revealed". The Law was a shadow created as it were by the concrete reality of Christ. We can look back and see it all now, but I don't think the types predicted anything to the people of the time. So how then did the Law lead people to Christ? Was it not that they were convicted of guilt, and cried out for a Saviour? "The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin

abounded, grace did much more abound: that… grace might reign… unto eternal life by Jesus" (Rom. 5:20,21). This was the purpose of the Law. And thus Paul quotes David's rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from "he" to "they" (Rom. 4:6-8). David's personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know the true 'blessedness' of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace. Perhaps Gal. 3:22 sums up what we have been saying: "The Scripture [in the context, this refers to the Mosaic Law] hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe". And Paul goes on to say in this very context that the law brings us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). It brings us- not those who lived under the law. How does it do that? By convicting us of sin, 'concluding' us as being under the control of sin.

3:24 *So that the law became our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith* - The ultimate teacher must be the Lord Himself, not the pastor or speaking brother. The Law was a *paidogogos*, a slave who lead the children to the school teacher. And the teacher, Paul says, is Christ (Gal. 3:23-25). He uses the whole body to make increase of itself in love- not just the elders. As explained under 3:21, the law's bringing men to Christ was not in that people understood the types and patterns as being Messianic; for here in Galatians 3, Paul says that mankind was "shut up" to all that; but rather in bringing us to know our desperation, to highlight our sin, our chronic lack of steel within the soul to bring ourselves to obedience.

3:25 *But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor*- The idea could be that the "tutor" was in fact a slave who lead the child to the teacher, and remained with them until the teacher came. The terms "Christ" and "faith" are thus put for the same thing- 'justification by faith in Christ'. "Faith" is put for the object of that faith, which is Christ.

3:26 *For you are all sons of God , through faith in Christ Jesus*- The "all" suggests that as Christ is the son of God, so are we. For by being baptized into Christ, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. Entering the body of Christ carries this implication. We must aspire to be united, with neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female etc., because "ye are all one man in Christ" (Gal. 3:28 RV). We "are all sons of God" (3:26 RV) because of our baptism into the Son of God. And so Paul goes on to reason that just as Christ was "the heir" (cp. "this is the heir…"), who is "lord of all", "even so we…" were kept under the law for a time (Gal. 4:1-3). The basis of our unity is that there is only one Jesus, and by being in Him we are living lives committed to the imitation of that same man. It's painless enough to read Gal. 3:27-29- that all those baptized "in Christ" therefore are in a status where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, no human barriers between us. But this is actually something we have to live out in life in order for it to become reality. Paul will go on in 4:6 to explain that we become more than adopted children, but actual children of God, through the rebirth of the Spirit. And that is his context here. Faith in Christ gives the promise of the Spirit (:14). And this is why we should not return to the law, because that does not give the Spirit; see on :2.

3:27 *For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*- Elsewhere Paul urges already baptized believers to clothe themselves with Christ, to put on [s.w.] the new man etc. Baptism is a putting on of the Lord Jesus, a union with Him; but it is something essentially ongoing. The Lord Himself

spoke of sharing His baptism as being the same as drinking His cup, sharing His cross (Mk. 10:39); which, again, is a process. Likewise Peter saw baptism as not only the one off act, but more importantly a pledge to live a life in good conscience with God (1 Pet. 3:21). 'Obeying the truth' is not only at baptism, but a lifelong pursuit (Gal. 5:7). The whole body of believers in Christ are being baptized into the body of the Lord Jesus in an ongoing sense (1 Cor. 12:13 Gk.), in that collectively and individually we are growing up into Him who is the Head (Eph. 4:15). See on Col. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:23.

3:28 *There can be neither Jew nor Gentile, there can be neither slave nor free, there can be no male and female- for you all are one in Christ Jesus*- For Paul to calmly teach that baptism into Christ meant that there was now no longer differentiation between male and female, slave and free, Jew, Greek or any other ethnic group- this called into total question all the first century understandings of society. Indeed, the idea that Gentiles could become spiritual "Jews", and that the Jews weren't the *real* children of Abraham, was an intentional reversal of the categories around which society had been built. Much of the early 'geography' of the first century involved stereotypical descriptions of ethnic and geographical groups, usually ending up with praising the Greco-Roman peoples as being superior in every way to all others. Yet this worldview, which was accepted even by the despised ethnic groups about themselves, had to be ended for those in Christ. Being in *Him* was to be their defining feature. This was equally radical for the Jews, who held themselves above these stereotypes about themselves. Contrary to what is often claimed, Paul went out of his way to show that contemporary views of women were unacceptable for those in the Lord. His teaching here is that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female, is surely conscious allusion to the Jewish traditional morning prayer for men: “My God, I thank thee that I was not born a Gentile but a Jew, not a slave but a free man, not a woman but a man”. He is surely saying that for those in Christ, the Jewish male world-view is unacceptable.

It was hard psychologically for Jews to convert to Christianity. There were elements of Christian teaching which were a direct affront to Judaism. Part of being a Christian was to expect to be treated by the Jews in just the same way as they had treated Jesus. The Sabbath was replaced with keeping the first day of the week for worship; the food laws were reduced by Paul’s inspired teaching to parts of “the weak and beggarly elements”. The Jewish hatred of the Christians is revealed by the riots that ensued when the Gospel was preached in the synagogues, and in the persecution of the Christians at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem, Damascus and in the Asian cities (according to the letters in Rev. 2,3). The insistence that Jewish converts be baptized would have been hard of acceptance; for Gentiles took just such a ritual bath when they converted to Judaism. For orthodox Jews to submit to baptism demanded a lot- for it implied they were not by birth part of the true Israel as they had once proudly thought. The Jews thought of Israel in the very terms which Paul applies to Jesus: "We Thy people whom Thou hast honoured and hast called the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, Near and Beloved One". The New Testament uses these titles to describe the Lord Jesus Christ- and we must be baptized into Him in order to be in His Name and titles. The Lord Jesus was thus portrayed as Israel idealized and personified, all that Israel the suffering servant should have been; thus only by baptism into Christ of Jew and Gentile could they become part of the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal. 3:27-29). The act of baptism into Christ is no less radical for us in our contexts today than it was for first century Jews. All we once mentally held dear, we have to give up.

Gal. 3:27-29 explains that through baptism into the Abrahamic covenant, there is a special unity between all in that covenant. Slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile are all thereby united, as they were in the early church. David Bosch comments: "The revolutionary nature of the early Christian mission manifested itself, *inter alia*, in the new relationships that came into being in the community. Jew and Roman, Greek and barbarian, free and slave, rich and poor, woman and man, accepted one another as brothers and sisters. It was a movement without analogy, indeed a sociological impossibility". Likewise ecclesial life today can seem "a sociological impossibility", but through the power of the most basic facts of the Gospel preached to Abraham, this incredible unity is possible. As a nexus "without analogy", the true Christian community of itself ought to attract the attention of earnest men and women- just as the Lord predicted. Our unity should be the basis of our appeal to men. And yet our divided state is a tragic witness against us in this regard. Because there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ means that in practice, amongst those that "have put on the new man [a reference to baptism into Christ]… there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman [clear allusion to Gal. 3:27-29]. But Christ is all, and in all. Put on *therefore*… a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Col. 3:10-13 RV). *These things* are what the promises to Abraham are all about in practice! Because we are all now united in Christ in our status as Abraham's seed, *therefore* we must see to it that through kindness, patience etc. there really *is not* Jew and Greek, or division of any kind, between us.

3:29- see on Mt. 25:34.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and the heirs according to the promise!- The promise was made to two people- Abraham and his seed, the Lord Jesus. By being in Christ, all that is true of the seed is true of us. And so the paradox is fulfilled- the singular seed (:16) is also as many as the stars of the sky.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *But I mean so long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a slave, though he is lord of all*- The argument carries straight on from 3:29, where those baptized into Christ have been declared heirs along with Abraham. But Paul is saying that heirs don't receive anything "until the day appointed by the father" (:2). Inheritance in the first century wasn't necessarily received on the death of the parent. We think of the younger son in the parable demanding his inheritance whilst his father was still living. The father appointed a time or age at which the heir would receive the inheritance. Until that day, although the child was heir, even of absolutely everything ["though he is lord of all"], it was of no real meaning- the child had as much legal right to it as a slave. Children had no real value as persons- they were effectively treated as slaves. Many women were in the same position, which explains why the early critics of Christianity mocked it as a religion largely comprised of women and children. True Christianity is attractive today likewise to those who are seen by others as non persons.

The heir in view is the “seed” of chapter 3, the Lord Jesus, who is now “Lord of all”. But Paul now argues as if the heir in view is everyone who was led by the law to become the seed of Abraham by faith. All that is true of the Lord is true of us personally.

4:2 *But the child is under guardians and stewards*- This continues the thought of 3:24; the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.

Until the day appointed by the father- Paul argues that the day of inheritance has now come. We were proven to be the true adult sons of our Father, God, when He sent forth the Spirit of adoption into our hearts (:6). "The day appointed" sounds very much like that of the Lord's second coming; but the point is that for those who have received the Lord Jesus now, He has 'come' into their hearts, and our experience of Him now is a foretaste of what we shall eternally experience in the Kingdom age. The implication of the argument is that in some sense, we are "heirs", inheritors, in that we are those who have now received the inheritance. This does not preclude a future, literal receipt of the land inheritance; but we have received the spiritual blessings promised Abraham, which Acts 3:26 interprets as the turning away of our hearts from sin.

4:3 *So we also! When we were children, we were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world*- Paul paints a rather onerous picture of childhood. It perhaps reflected his own experience, but all the same as noted on :1, children were seen as non-persons in first century Mediterranean society.

Paul says that the Galatians formerly lived as enslaved to the “elements of the cosmos” (Gal. 4:3), also a phrase used in the Jewish apostate writings; “what by nature are not gods” (*tois phusei mê ousin theois*; Gal. 4:8,9). They are “weak and powerless elements” (*ta asthenê kai ptocha stoicheia*; Gal. 4:9). The system of Satan, sinful Angels, demons etc. which the Jews believed in, Paul is showing to now be non-existent and at the best powerless. The real background problem, Paul is saying, is not a personal Satan and a network of demons; rather is it the influence of the Mosaic law and Judaism. See on Col. 2:17.

4:4 *But when the fullness of the time came*- As if God carefully set a time period for the operation of the Mosaic law, just as He brought it into operation at a specific point 430 years after the covenant with Abraham (3:17). This idea of a specific time period is in keeping with the analogy regarding a child being set a period of time to live under governors, until he receives the inheritance as a young adult. I discussed under Galatians 3 the whole reason why the Law was given; its intention was to highlight sin and grace, and to make men throw themselves upon God's grace in Christ when this appeared in the person of the historical Jesus. The time period was optimal for that purpose to be achieved; yet many preferred the Law and effectively rejected Jesus, or like the Galatians, accepted Him but then went to the Law. That shows how God carefully set up a potential, but people preferred not to make use of it. He prepared and put them through a course of education, if you like; but they didn't engage with it, didn't get it, and went their own ways.

God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law- The purpose for this was "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (:5). Paul has just explained in chapter 3 that by baptism into Christ, we are counted as Him. All that is true of Him becomes true of us; He was Abraham's seed, so are we. Paul is explaining how the heirs came to receive the inheritance. We became the full sons of God because God's Son was born and was human. As our representative, we can identify with Him by baptism (3:27-29) and thus become Him, as it were. Again note that the implication of the argument is that in some sense, we are "heirs", inheritors, in that we are those who have now received the inheritance. This does not preclude a future, literal receipt of the land inheritance; but we have received the spiritual blessings promised Abraham, which Acts 3:26 interprets as the turning away of our hearts from sin.

4:5 *That He might redeem those that were under the law*- To return "under the law" therefore makes the Lord's work vain (2:21). The Lord's death was primarily to save Israel, those under the law. This was the focus of His work; it was their general rejection of it which made the more universal aspect of His death more public, as it were.

That we might receive the adoption of sons- See on :4. Because He was human, of our nature, our representative, we can thereby be adopted as the sons of God- if we identify with Him. The proof this wonderful plan has been achieved is by the Spirit of adoption being sent forth into our hearts, whereby we are enabled to cry to God as 'Abba', 'daddy', just as God's only begotten Son did. The role of the Spirit is therefore crucial and cannot just be ignored or downplayed or manhandled to refer only to miraculous gifts in the first century. That is clearly not the reference here at all, for the Spirit is sent into our *hearts*.

4:6- see on Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Jude 20.

And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father- Note this was said to the apostate Galatians. The work of God's Spirit was still active within them, and they were still to be treated as His beloved sons. Clearly at the point of commitment to Christ in baptism, the Spirit is sent into the heart of the believer; a psychological strengthening, enabling us to feel towards God as the Lord Jesus did, addressing Him as the Lord did: Abba, Father. This strange method of addressing God was characteristic of Jesus, and must've been very noticeable and provoked much wonder and comment. Thus we are being told that His characteristic personal style of relationship with the Father is now ours; and this is very much the idea of His discourse about the Comforter. See on 3:2.

4:7- see on Mt. 25:34.

So you are no longer a slave but a son- Paul is slightly stretching the bounds of the analogy here. He began by saying that we are heirs, but an heir who is a child is no better than a slave (:1). Now Paul is saying that under the Law of Moses, people were slaves. They had not received the inheritance promised by the Abrahamic covenant, even though it had been promised to them.

An advantage of reading versions that use “ye” and “thou” is that one can discern at a glance when ‘you’ plural and ‘you’ singular is being used. Gal. 3:26-29 speaks in the plural: “*Ye* are all the children of God by faith in Christ... and if *ye* be Christ’s [by baptism into Him], then are *ye* Abraham’s seed and heirs”. The very same ideas are then repeated a few verses later, but with the singular ‘you’: “And because *ye* are sons... wherefore *thou* art no more a servant but a son; and if a son [not ‘sons’], then an [singular] heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:6,7); and just to press the point home, he reverts to speaking of “you” [plural] in the subsequent verses. It’s as if Paul is talking generally, in the plural, of us all as a baptized community, heirs together of the promises, all in covenant relationship with God; but then he as it were swirls in upon us each individually; these promises really apply to us each one personally. And the outcome of this must be a deep seated joy and gratitude for God’s grace. The focus of Scripture and the Lord Jesus is upon individuals, not upon the building of a faceless and person-less social structure. Notice how often Paul talks of “you” or “ye”, and then focuses down to “thee” or “thou”- from the you plural to the you singular. Take Gal. 4:6,7: “Your [plural] hearts… thou [singular] art…”; or “Ye [plural] are all sons of God… thou art… a son” (Gal. 3:26; 4:7 RV). It all comes down to us personally…

And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ- We become legitimate heirs because the Lord Jesus was the "heir of all" (:1; Heb. 1:2), "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). Rom. 4:13,14 use the same language; it was the promise to Abraham which promised an inheritance. The Law of Moses didn't promise any inheritance. Another similarity with Romans is the idea of being an heir of God; He as our Father didn't die and thus pass us the inheritance; rather God decided to give us the inheritance after a period of preparing us, as we entered adulthood: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him". Here in Galatians, the same point is made- the receipt of the Spirit proves that we are God's children. Because we are identified with Christ's death, then we are joint-heirs with Him. Or as Galatians here puts it, we are heirs of God on account of Christ.

4:8 *However, at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to those that by nature are not gods*- This sounds as if Gentiles are being addressed. It's hard to decide to whom Paul is writing Galatians- whether to Gentile or Jewish Christians. Acts portrays Paul as going to cities in Galatia and preaching to Jews within the synagogue system. On that basis, we would assume that he is writing to Jewish Christians who are returning to the Law. This is why he speaks of how they have "turn[ed] back *again* to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be *once more"* (:9). Likewise 5:1 "do not get entangled *again* in a yoke of bondage". The pronouns in 2:15 seem to connect Paul the Jew with a Jewish readership in Galatia: "*We* being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles... *we...*". On the other hand, the language here sounds as if the audience were once Gentiles; and in 5:2 he speaks as if they were being circumcised in order to be acceptable with God (although the Greek could mean that they were thinking that their circumcision made them acceptable). However 6:12,13 definitely speaks of false teachers encouraging the Galatians to be circumcised: "who would force you to be circumcised... they desire to have you circumcised". Perhaps some were Jews, some Gentiles. Yet the argument seems to be that those under the Law, without faith in Christ, were not actually "knowing God" and were in bondage to false gods. This is far from the only place where Paul develops the paradox that Judaism is in fact a form of pagan idolatry (see on 3:1 and 4:25). At very least, Paul would be saying that the Gentiles amongst them, who had previously worshipped idols, were in the same position as Jews under the Law without Christ. However the kind of complex argument in 4:21 ff., using Biblical history as "law" and arguing in a strictly rabbinic style, makes us wonder whether the Galatian audience were in fact Jewish; for surely the power and nuances of the argument would be lost on any not highly familiar with the Jewish scriptures and style of Rabbinic reasoning; the references to desiring their circumcision in chapter 5 would then refer to desiring them to be circumcised in order to be saved.

Paul challenges the Galatians: “You who were enslaved to those who were not really gods... How can you turn back again to those weak and beggarly spirits (*stoicheia*), whose slaves you want to be once more?” (Gal. 4:8,9). Here he parallels demonic spirits with ‘gods who are not really gods’. But note how Paul argues [under Divine inspiration] – “*even if* there are” such demons / idols... *for us* there is to be only one God whom we fear and worship. This in fact is a continuation of the Psalmists’ attitude. Time and again the gods / idols of the pagan nations are addressed *as if they exist*, but are ordered to bow down in shame before Yahweh of Israel (Ps.

29:1,2,10; 97:7). Whether they exist or not becomes irrelevant before the fact that they are powerless before the one true God – and therefore it is He whom we should fear, trusting that He alone engages with our lives for our eternal good in the end. "Yahweh is a great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3) shows the Divine style – rather than overly stressing that the gods / idols / demons don't exist, the one true God isn't so primitive. Neither were the authors and singers of Psalm 95. The greatness of His Kingship is what's focused upon – not the demerits and non-existence of other gods. To do so would be altogether too primitive for the one true God. And likewise with the Lord's miracles – God's gracious power to save was demonstrated, *this* was where the focus was; and its very magnitude shows the relative non-existence of 'demons'.

4:9- see on Gal. 1:1.

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God- This is not Paul as it were correcting himself. "Rather" would be better rendered 'moreso'. God's knowledge of us is what results in our responding by seeking to know Him. Likewise Paul writes in Phil. 3:12 of grabbing hold of the Lord who had grabbed hold of him. It's not that God plays hard to get, and whoever figures out His word correctly will find Him, hidden behind a mass of theology and interpretation which we must get right. God is in search of man. He knows / recognizes us, and we in turn know Him. Understanding this puts paid to all intellectual pride in having 'found' God by our own searching of the scriptures. The initiative was with Him. Paul considers that coming to believe in imputed righteousness, salvation by faith alone rather than by works of the Law, was and is "to know God". Justification by works and legalism is an attitude that does not know God. For God is His grace and salvation by that grace.

How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless- Literally, 'poverty stricken, poor'. Paul only elsewhere uses the word in Galatians for the Jewish poor (2:10).

Elementary principles of the world- The Greek for "elements" is always used concerning the elements of the Mosaic Law.

Whose slaves you want to be- There is a tendency in human nature to actually desire servitude. We see it most clearly in the tendency to addiction which there is in us all. But that is just a very public, open manifestation of what is latent within us each. The call to radical freedom in Christ is such that when people really see it, they shy away from it. The Galatians are a parade example for all time.

Once more- See on :8.

4:10 *You observe*- The Greek word used is not the most natural nor obvious one to use if Paul meant 'You are now keeping the Jewish feasts'. The word is elsewhere only translated 'watching' or 'looking towards', as if they were considering keeping the feasts. Paul himself kept some Jewish feasts, so we must read him as meaning that they were considering keeping them as a means to salvation.

Days and months and seasons and years- "Sabbatical years, occurring every seventh year. Not years of Jubilee, which had ceased to be celebrated after the time of Solomon".

4:11 *I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain*- The implication is that any labour is in vain if it does not result in a person entering God's Kingdom. And Paul knew that attempting to enter the Kingdom by obedience was doomed to failure. But see on 4:17 *They zealously seek you.* We too are surrounded by believers who are not completely certain of their salvation, because they have not fully accepted total

salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Our labour too must be to persuade them of that simple, all demanding message of the true Gospel- and keep them believing it.

Paul feared he may have "laboured in vain" for some of them, but he writes of his expectations in a totally positive way: "Christ hath redeemed us… that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit [i.e. salvation]" (Gal. 3:13,14). "I am afraid of you (i.e. what your position will result in for both you and me at the judgment?), lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:11).

4:12 *Brothers I urge you to become as I am, for I also have become as you*- "As I am" may mean 'One who once believed in the necessary to keep the Jewish laws, but who ditched it'; and "become as you" may mean 'Become effectively a Gentile, saved by faith in the Abrahamic covenant'. This assumes he is writing to a Gentile audience- see on :8. Paul aimed to become as his audience: "to those without law, I became as without law" (1 Cor. 9:21). God in Christ became as us, indeed even in OT times He limited Himself in some ways, to be as we are. And we reflect that spirit by seeking to become as others are, that we might win them to Christ. This means that preaching is infinitely more than holding out a set of doctrinal truths and waiting for some curious passer-by to grasp them from us.

The way Paul *begs* us to follow him (e.g. "become as I am") indicates the degree of confidence he had in acceptance by his Lord, his certainty that his way to the Kingdom was valid (Surely he had been told this by some Divine revelation?). See on Phil. 1:10 and Gal. 4:29 *Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*.

Paul plays powerfully upon the idea of the two selves when he appeals to the Galatians "be as I am; for I am as you are" (Gal. 4:12). At first hearing, this seems nonsensical- how can Paul beseech the Galatians to be like him, if he was already like them? Fact is, their behaviour was unlike him; yet he saw their spiritual selves as being like him. And he asks them to be that spiritual self which he perceived them to have. We likewise need to perceive our difficult brethren as having a spiritual self, which they need to live up to.

You did me no wrong- The aorist means 'To date you did me no wrong- don't do so now [by returning to the Law]'.

4:13 *You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first*- William Barclay comments: "Paul never saw a boat riding at anchor or moored at a quay but he wanted to board her and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond. He never saw a range of hills in the distance but he wanted to cross them and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond". When Paul was in Pamphylia, he decided to go on to Galatia, where on account of infirmity of the flesh he preached to the Galatians (Gal. 4:13). The suggestion has been made that the low-lying Pamphylia was a source of malaria, which may have been Paul's "thorn in the flesh", and he therefore sought the uplands of Galatia. And yet he could easily have returned to Antioch. But instead, he went on, up into the highlands, to spread the Gospel yet further. The way there led up precipitous roads to the plateau; the roads were cut by mountain streams, prone to flash floods which often carried travellers to their death. And these roads were the haunt of bandits, who would murder a man just for a copper coin. No wonder Mark went back. But as William Barclay observes, "the wonder is not so much that Mark went back as that Paul went on". Although a sick man, he was driven by that desire to spread the Gospel further. Surely this is why his Lord was so pleased to open the hearts of the Galatians to the Gospel. The way the Holy Spirit

controlled Paul's missionary itineraries is an example of how mission work is almost purposefully made difficult at times. Thus Paul was forbidden to go north into Bithynia, and from going Southwest into coastal Asia Minor- and there were good roads leading to those places from where he was, and it would've seemed they were the logical places to go and expand the work of the Gospel. But instead Paul was told to go diagonally, cross country, through the rough roads and passes of central Asia Minor, to Troas- from where he was told to go to Macedonia. And on the way through that wild mountainous area, it seems Paul became sick. And we follow similar paths in our witness, if it is truly God directed.

4:14 *And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus*- Perhaps it was a test in that like many today, people prefer their preacher to be dashing, handsome, healthy and successful. Not a sick man, through whom the very picture of the crucified Christ was placarded before their eyes (see on 3:1). It was by Paul's manifestation of the crucified Christ through his sickness that they were persuaded of Christ; and specifically, of salvation by faith rather than works. For Paul's sickness likely left him without the possibility of performing works for salvation.

4:15- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

Where then is that satisfaction you felt?- Not a good translation. The word is translated "blessedness" elsewhere, and always in the context of the blessing promised to Abraham being that of imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:6,9). They no longer felt that blessedness because they were seeking their justification by acts of obedience rather than faith alone. If we truly believe in the blessing promised to Abraham, and have received it, we too will speak of that blessedness as the Galatian converts did. Note that the blessings promised to Abraham had been received by them, the fulfilment of them is not solely and only in the future; see on 4:1.

For I testify, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me- It was before the eyes of the Galatians that they saw in Paul, Jesus Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). But the only other reference to the eyes of the Galatians is in Gal. 4:15- where we read that they had been so transfixed by Paul's preaching that they had been ready to pluck out their eyes. And where's the only other reference to plucking out eyes? It's in the Lord's teaching, where He says that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out [Mt. 5:29- same Greek words used]. The connection is surely this: Paul's personal reflection of the crucified Jesus was so powerful, so compellingly real and credible, that it motivated his hearers to rise up to the spirit of the very hardest demands of the moral teaching of that same Jesus. Insofar as we genuinely live out the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, our preaching of His radical moral demands will likewise be heeded. The crucified Christ that Paul placarded before their eyes was “the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 4:14-16); and the integrity and reality of that truth was confirmed by the congruence between the example of Paul, and the reality of the crucified Jesus whom he manifested to them. In Paul's body language, in his character, in his response to problems and frustrations great and small, in the way he coped with physical weakness, his audience somehow saw the crucified Christ. In the same letter, Paul reminds the Galatians how they had initially seen him preaching to them in a weak bodily state, and had seen Christ in him then (Gal. 4:13,14). He says in Gal. 3:1 that they saw Christ crucified in him. Perhaps the way Paul handled a sickness or bodily weakness which he then had, somehow reflected to his audience the spirit of Christ crucified.

4:16 *So then have I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?*- Society and human existence was all about what others thought of you; appearances were all important, loss of face before your community was a fate worse than death, and the honour of your family or community was crucial. You had to be polite, say what was right in the ears of your hearers rather than what was true, never shame those in your 'group' by telling inconvenient truths, say what the others want to hear. Against this background, and it's a background not so strange for any of us today in essence, the commands to be truthful, even if it meant becoming the enemy of some because you told the truth (Gal. 4:16), take on a new challenge.

Gal. 3:1 remonstrates with the Galatians as to how they could not obey the truth when the crucified Christ had been so clearly displayed to them; clearly Paul saw obedience to the truth as obedience to the implications of the cross. There is a powerful parallel in Gal. 4:16: I am your enemy because I tell you the truth... you are enemies of the cross of Christ. Thus the parallel is made between the cross and the truth. We are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:19); but our sanctification is through cleansing in the Lord's blood. The same word is used of our sanctification through that blood (Heb. 9:13; 10:29; 13:12). Perhaps this is why Dan. 8:11,12 seems to describe the altar as "the truth". The cross of Jesus is the ultimate truth. There we see humanity for what we really are; there we see the real effect of sin. Yet above all, there we see the glorious reality of the fact that a Man with our nature overcame sin, and through His sacrifice we really can be forgiven the untruth of all our sin; and thus have a real, concrete, definite hope of the life eternal.

4:17 *They zealously seek you for no good purpose. On the other hand, they desire to exclude you- so you might go running after them*- The GNB may have it about right in paraphrasing: "Those other people show a deep interest in you, but their intentions are not good. All they want is to separate you from me, so that you will have the same interest in them as they have in you". Thus zeal is no sign of acceptability with God. Paul talks of how he is 'zealous over' [s.w.] his converts (2 Cor. 11:2). But the Judaizers were likewise 'zealous over' the same converts. They were involved in a political tug of war, and the Judaizers won, despite all Paul's work for them. I have often been involved in this kind of thing, and seen others involved in it, and my conclusion is that we need to do our part and not get involved in feeling personally wronged or fought against. I wonder if Paul was not completely mature in his attitude to the conflict; he was so personally invested in it that he felt that his work had been "in vain" if his converts went to Judaism (see on :11). My impression however after these kinds of experiences is that finally, nothing is in vain, no service of the Lord can be looked back upon as purely wasted time. Yet Paul speaks like this because he was overly personally invested in the conflict.

4:18 *But it is good to be zealous in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you*- Paul recognized that their enthusiasm was greater when he was with them. And he says this is no bad thing- but it must continue. Such inspiration by human personalities is therefore not to be totally despised; the problem is that such zeal tends not to continue once those personalities are off the scene. See on :20 *I so wish*.

4:19 *My little children, of whom I am again in the pains of childbirth*- See on :17. I do wonder whether this kind of figure suggests Paul was taking it all rather too personally; for the converts were not born out of him personally, but from the Lord.

But then it is also true that the work of converting others is ultimately personal and involves intense personal engagement.

Until Christ be formed in you- The Galatians had not *per se* left Christianity; they had adopted a version of Christianity which trusted in works for salvation. Paul understands this as meaning that Christ is no longer within them. This is the scary thing, as we survey our surrounding Christian scene in which so few seem solidly persuaded that if the Lord returns today, they will surely be saved because of their faith in His grace. It is having "Christ in you" which is "the hope of glory", the guarantee that we shall eternally live with Him (Col. 1:27). Here in Galatians Paul has expressed that truth in terms of the Spirit of Christ being placed within the believer as a guarantee of salvation (4:6), what Eph. 1:13,14 calls sealing with the promised Holy Spirit as " a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption". But the Galatians no longer had this, because they sought salvation not by the Spirit but by obedience to the letter.

4:20 *I so wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am in doubt about you*- The idea is that Paul felt that if he were present with them, then he would be able to change his upbraiding tone towards them because he would successfully persuade them to remain with grace rather than Judaism (see GNB). As noted on :18, Paul knew that his presence with them affected them positively. But if physical presence is required, then there is no depth of conviction. So many examples from church life flood to mind; of those who lived highly committed lives until influential figures passed off the scene, and then the commitment ended. It is only personal connection with the Lord Jesus which will provide lasting motivation right up until our last mortal breath.

4:21 *Tell me, you that want to be under the law, do you not hear the law?*- This kind of complex argument which follows, using Biblical history as "law", makes us wonder whether the Galatian audience were in fact Jewish, for surely the power and nuances of the argument would be lost on any not highly familiar with the Jewish scriptures; the references to desiring their circumcision in chapter 5 would then refer to desiring them to be circumcised in order to be saved.

4:22 *For it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman*- The allegory, like all such methods of presenting, is presenting history selectively; although it is axiomatic that history of itself is selective. Abraham had far more than two sons; he had others by Keturah and other handmaids, indeed it could be argued that he had them before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael. But the two sons are chosen here for the purposes of the allegory. Paul has spoken in :17 of the fact the Galatians were subject to false teachers. Possibly these visitors had argued that Gentiles were like Hagar, and were of lesser spiritual status than the Jewish followers of Jesus, whom they had suggested were represented by Sarah. This would explain Paul's choice of Hagar and Sarah for his otherwise rather 'out of left field' argument.

4:23 *However the son by the handmaid was born after the flesh, but the son by the freewoman was born through the promise*- The usual NT contrast is between flesh and spirit. Here it is between flesh and promise, because the promise in view is that of the Spirit.

4:24 *Such things contain an allegory. For these women are two covenants. One from mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar*- The two sons are presented as being a slave and a freeborn son. This connects with the previous argument in 4:7; that we are no longer slaves under the Law, but sons. The tension between bond and free has been introduced in 3:28; in Christ there is no longer bond

and free. And that is because we are "in Christ" and thus are all the free born children, the Son of God as He was. The argument in 3:27-29 is not so much that it simply doesn't matter of what gender, ethnicity or social status we are. Those things don't matter because we are Christ; all of us are Him. Who He was and is becomes who we are. He is the freeborn Son of God; and so we are too. Therefore there is no difference between bond and free because we are all free, the freeborn sons of God.

4:25 *Now this Hagar represents mount Sinai in Arabia, she corresponds to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children*- It can be argued that Paul's extended allegory in Gal. 4:24-31 about "Jerusalem which now is" has some reference to the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem who had made the deal with him about making the Gentile converts keep at least some of the Jewish laws. The heavenly Jerusalem which is "free" would then be a reference to the freedom Paul felt for his Gentile converts; and the persecution of those born after the spirit would then be a sideways reference to the trouble he was experiencing from the Jewish-Christian attacks upon him. Paul observes earlier that "I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). His speaking humanly was perhaps because he was tongue in cheek alluding to the human covenant of Acts 15, to which he believed the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem had "added" by still demanding that Christian converts lived in a Jewish manner.

Paul's argument is that Judaism was to be associated with Hagar and Ishmael; whereas every Jew was insistent that they were from the line of Isaac. Again, Paul is arguing that Judaism is in fact paganism (see on 3:1 and 4:8).

4:26 *But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother*- The Jews believed that "as the navel is found at the centre of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the centre of the world... Jerusalem is the centre of the land of Israel, the temple is at centre of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the centre of the temple, the ark is at the centre of the Holy of Holies... which spot is the foundation of the world... the holy city... is also the mother city". This was all consciously countermanded in Hebrews, where each of these features of the temple is shown to have been surpassed in Christ; and it is the *Heavenly* Jerusalem which is now "the mother of us all" (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26). And of course Gal. 4 drives home the point that it is the "Jerusalem which is above" which is the true Jerusalem, whereas the earthly Jerusalem and temple are in fact now to be associated with bondage and Abraham's illegitimate seed. This language of Hebrews and Galatians was just as tough on the Romans, who considered *Italia* as the "mother of all lands", and Rome to be the mother city. Paul's language was geared to provoke his readers to decide strongly one way or the other.

4:27 *For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who did not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who were not in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than those of the one who has a husband*- Abraham’s relationship with Hagar doesn’t really sound like marriage. And yet she is called “the one who has a husband", as if God recognized the relationship even though it was less than ideal.

4:28 *Brothers: We, as Isaac was, are children of promise*- Note the warmth of the language. These "brothers" had chosen Judaism, and Paul has just told them that Christ must be formed in them again seeing they are devoid of the Spirit, not experiencing the promised "blessedness", and had effectively precluded themselves from salvation by seeking to achieve it by works. He felt his work for them had been

in vain. And yet Paul now speaks of them as if they are saved, and his full brothers. Likewise he says that the Lord still ministers the Spirit to them and ministers amongst them (3:5). It could be argued that Paul's protestations about the Galatians were exaggerated and reflective of how he had become far too personally invested in them. Or it could be that as with the Corinthians, he accepts them as his brethren in Christ by status, assuming their salvation because it was not for him to condemn them; whilst at the same time openly facing their failures and addressing them.

4:29 *But as then, he that was born after the flesh*- Identifying Ishmael with the Judaizers and those who sought to obey the Mosaic Law was highly provocative. Their attempts at super righteousness were in fact effectively paganic. See on 3:1 and 4:8.

Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now- Birth after the Spirit would refer to the Lord Jesus and all in Him. The language of persecuting naturally suggests what Paul himself had done to Him and those born after the Spirit. Hence he wishes the Galatians to make the same huge change which he had made (:12). Birth after the Spirit may well allude to Jn. 3:3-5. It is the Spirit which is used in our figurative conception. This is the vehicle through which God shows His grace, in beginning spiritual life in one but not another.

4:30 *However, what does the scripture say*- Sarah's screaming indignation can be well imagined. Consider which words were probably stressed most by her: "Cast out *this bondwoman* and her son: for the son of this bondwoman *shall not be heir* (just hear her voice!) with *my* son, even with *Isaac*" (Gen. 21:10). This is in harmony with her previous bitterness and aggression to Hagar and Abraham. Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was *not* the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: "He *is* thy seed" (Gen. 21:13). *And yet Sarah's* words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and he saw her faith. And he worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's mercy to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily. See on Heb. 11:11.

Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman- Hinting at the need to eject the Judaist false teachers from within the church? Paul warns that the Galatian Jews had suffered so much but in vain, seeing they were returning to the Law (Gal. 3:4). It is no accident that Gal. 4:25 draws the contrast between the two Jerusalems- perhaps a reference to the Jerusalem ecclesia, who had returned to the bondage of the law, and the spiritual Jerusalem. And now Paul goes so far as to say that the Legalists must be cast out of the true ecclesia (Gal. 4:30). Circumcision shielded from persecution in Galatia (Gal. 6:12) in that it was the Jews and their "false brethren" who infiltrated the ecclesias (Gal. 2:4), and who were responsible for the deaths of many of the first century apostles and prophets. This suggests that the circumcision party within the ecclesias was linked with the Roman and Jewish authorities, and therefore 'satan' is a term used for them all. It got beyond dirty politics in the church.

Paul here quotes the bitchy, unspiritual words of Sarah in Gen. 21:10 with approval and as “scripture”. God surely did not approve of her hot tempered nastiness; but He worked through that as we should see to work through others’ sin and weakness, and try to incorporate it into a far greater narrative.

4:31 *Therefore brothers, we are not children of the handmaid but of the freewoman*- But Paul has been arguing that the Galatians were in fact "children of the handmaid". He is therefore asking them to be in practice what they were by status, having been baptized into Christ.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1- see on Gal. 5:11.

For freedom did Christ set us free- Romans 6 compares baptism to a change of masters. The point has been made that this is a reference to manumission, whereby a 'redeemer' gave a 'ransom' to a god, which meant that a slave was freed from his master and became a free man, although he was counted as a slave to the god to whom the redeemer had paid the ransom. Indeed, *lutron*, one of the words translated "ransom" with regard to the blood of Christ, has this specific meaning. Deissmann comments: "When anybody heard the Greek word *lutron*, "ransom", in the first century, it was natural for him to think of the purchase money for manumitting slaves". This means that when we come to understand the atonement, we understand that the price has been paid to free us from slavery into the service of God. We are in the position of a slave who suddenly discovers some gracious benefactor has made the longed for payment of ransom. And so he goes free, but is willingly and eagerly in slavery to the god to whom his redeemer had paid the price. In our case this is none other than the One, Almighty God of Israel. And the ransom is the precious blood of Christ, which thereby compels our willing slavery to the new Master. There are other references to manumission in Gal. 5:1,13 RV: "For freedom did Christ set us free… ye have been called unto freedom" and in the references to our being bought with a price, i.e. the blood of Jesus (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). And this is the horror of 2 Pet. 2:1- "denying even the Master that bought them [out]". To turn against their gracious redeemer was the ultimate sick act for a slave freed through manumission. And this is the horror of turning away from the Lord. The death of Christ for us is thereby a warning to us of the end of sin and therefore the need to change.

The world, Paul told the Romans, seeks to push us into its mould (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips). And this is increasingly true, as people crowded together catch the same bus each day to arrive at roughly the same time, reading the same newspapers, watching the same soap operas… automatic lives. Yet the real self created in the believer is ultimately *free*. For freedom did Christ set us free. The new person, the essential you and me, is characterized by sudden, creative welling up to the Father’s glory. This doesn’t mean that we have no habits- regular prayer, Bible study, meeting together etc. are all part of the new person. This is why the elderly, the infirm, the chronically shy, experience the flowering of the person, the sense of new life even in the face of the outward man perishing daily; because their inward man, their real self, is being so strongly infused with power (2 Cor. 4:16). This explains why the graph of spiritual growth in any person is not a smooth upward curve; it is a very jagged line. Our true person asserts itself in those moments of totally free choice to serve our Lord. But we

so easily allow our lives to slip back into the automatisms which define our internet personas.

The spirit of life in Christ sets us free from sin (Rom. 8:2); but Gal. 5:1 simply says that “Christ” has set us free [the same Greek phrase] from sin. The Man Christ Jesus is His “spirit of life”; the man and His way of life were in perfect congruence. They always were; for in Him the word was made flesh. There was ‘truth’ in His very person, in that the principles of the God of Truth were perfectly and totally lived out in His person and being. Back in 1964, Emil Brunner wrote a book, whose title speaks for itself: *Truth As Encounter.* Truth is essentially a person- the Lord Jesus. Truth is an experience, a way of life, a total assurance of forgiveness and salvation, a validation of the new man created within us, in a way so deep, and so strongly felt, that all else appears as falsehood compared to that surpassing ‘truth’.

Therefore, stand fast, and do not get entangled again in a yoke of bondage- "Again" would suggest to me that the audience was largely Jewish; but see the discussion at 4:8. The allusion is to the "yoke" of life in Christ; Paul seems to be saying that we cannot wear two yokes. We cannot be saved by faith alone, and also by legal obedience.

Galatians 1-4 presented the opposition of law vs. spirit: "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected in the flesh?... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law... that we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3,13,14). But now in this concluding argument in Galatians 5 and 6, this conflict is framed in its most essential terms- flesh vs. spirit, sowing to the flesh or the Spirit, the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit. And Paul has only one audience in view here in Galatians- those who were turning away from Spirit-filled Christianity to the legalism of Judaism *exactly because they wanted to live in the flesh*. And this is so true to observed reality; that legalism goes along with libertine behaviour. It is just a psychological classic- that the feeling we are being obedient to this or that ritual then frees us up to think that we can do precisely what our flesh desires in other areas. We see this in the letter to Titus, where we realize that libertine Christian folks living in Crete were attracted to hard core Judaism. But Paul therefore reframes the whole issue in its most essential terms; we are to sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh. And the Spirit led life is not the life of legalistic obedience to a few Jewish rituals. It is a life of total commitment to the way of the Spirit, and all we sow now shall bear eternal fruit. We are therefore moulding the nature of our eternal existence by how we sow now.

5:2 *Behold, I Paul say to you: If you receive circumcision*- There is strong reason to think that Paul was writing to a Jewish readership; see on 4:8. So we may need to read in an ellipsis here: 'If you receive the idea that circumcision is required for salvation'. He certainly was not saying that 'circumcision' were not profited by Christ; he means that some attitude to circumcision would lead to not being profited by Christ. But it is equally credible that even Gentile converts to the free salvation in Christ would be tempted to accept Judaism and a mass of regulations. Because this puts salvation under question, and means that the response required of us is so much less. Whereas if we are saved by grace through faith, regardless of our obedience or disobedience ratio, then this is so wonderful that it requires our total response. Every part of our thinking and living becomes subservient to this driving passion of gratitude and joy.

Christ will profit you nothing- The argument of Galatians is also found in Romans, here at Rom. 2:25: "For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer ['keeper'] of the [whole] law". Here in Gal. 5:3, Paul likewise goes on to reason that relying on circumcision [obedience to one Mosaic law] requires obedience to the

entire law. This is the danger of focusing on obedience to just one law; if we think obedience on one point is so critical for salvation, then we require ourselves to in fact keep the entire legal package. And that is the case to this day; salvation is offered either to those who keep the entire law of Moses, or to those who fall in faith upon Christ, believing we are in Him and saved by identification with Him alone. And yet it is a common tendency amongst believers to focus upon one particular act of obedience to commandment and turn this into a shibboleth issue. Be it women wearing head coverings or divorce and remarriage, the same mentality can be evidenced as regarding circumcision in the first century.

5:3 *Yes, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law*- God uses language differently to how we do because He can read motives. Paul and many other Jewish Christians were circumcised, but Paul is reasoning in the letter to the Galatians that the true Jewish believer was not under an obligation to keep the Law: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (Gal. 5:6). Therefore "every man that is circumcised" in Galatians 5:3 must mean 'every man who trusts in circumcision or wants to undergo it'. Some modern paraphrases support this, but the point is that what God actually said was that "every man that is circumcised… is a debtor to do the whole law" (see Greek text). Those words are just not true if taken out of context; we need to appreciate that God is speaking from the perspective of knowing men's motives. Paul doesn't mean that every circumcised man is a debtor to keep all the Law. He means that every man who is circumcised *in order to be saved* is a debtor to keep all the law.

5:4- see on Gal. 6:14.

You are severed from Christ if you would be justified by the law! You are fallen away from grace- Some texts read "Christ is become of no effect". Whichever reading is correct, the implications of attempting salvation by obedience are pretty severe. Christ's death was to no purpose, He died in vain; or, in allusion to the Lord's parable of the vine in Jn. 15, we are severed from Christ because we have severed ourselves. This would come about by no longer believing that being "in Him" was important for salvation.

5:5 *For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness*- The contrast is between the way of the Spirit by faith, and keeping the law- in order to attain "the hope of righteousness", a term allusive to a term used in Rabbinic Judaism for the reward of the obedient. Paul has explained that the Spirit is sent forth into the hearts of those who simply and totally believe the promise to Abraham of blessing and salvation (3:2; 4:6); indeed, the gift of the Spirit is itself one aspect of the blessing promised, it is the foretaste and guarantee of the future inheritance of the earth which has been promised (Eph. 1:14). "We ourselves" may be a reference to Paul and those with him. For the Galatians had stopped trusting in that gift of the Spirit, they had left off faith in God's grace and replaced it with attempts to attain "the hope" by their own works. This is why the Galatians were now not behaving well; their attempt to achieve salvation by works actually made them sin more. Hence Paul now goes on to talk about practical issues and the need to overcome sin by life in the Spirit rather than steel willed obedience. This more practical section of the letter is not at all divorced from the earlier argument about the crucial need to trust in the word of promise and be transformed by the Spirit- rather than seeking justification by works of obedience.

5:6 *For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love*- Paul has argued in 3:27-29 that for those "in Christ" by baptism, gender, social status etc. mean nothing- because they have taken on His identity. The choice is between being completely obedient to the Mosaic Law- or faith in Christ. That faith operates through love. Love is the primary fruit of the Spirit (:22). If we go the path of faith in Christ alone [and there is no other option, because we have all failed to be totally obedient to the law]- then the Spirit operates in our hearts (3:2; 4:6). And the overall work of the Spirit is the fruit of love, in all its dimensions (:22). And so a path is set up: Faith- Receipt of the Spirit- Love. In this sense, faith operates through love.

Reading the Greek another way, “Faith is wrought by love” (Gal. 5:6 RVmg.) in that the fruits of the Spirit reinforce each other in an upward spiral. Faith leads to humility, and vice versa. Realizing we of ourselves are insufficient results in humility, which in turn develops faith. Hence Prov. 20:6 comments that a man of faith will not "proclaim his own goodness".

5:7 *You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*- This suggests that obeying the Truth is not just in baptism; it is an ongoing motivation to keep running the race of practical life in Christ. See on 1 Pet. 1:22. "The truth" is used here for faith in the simplest, most fundamental truth- that the promised Kingdom of God really will be ours if we believe in Christ. All schemes of salvation by works are a form of not obeying the Truth.

5:8 *This persuasion came not from him that calls you*- The idea of having been called both by and to *grace* is quite a big theme with Paul (Gal. 1:6,15; 5:13). They had not been called to this legalism.

5:9 *A little leaven leavens the whole lump*- The problem in Galatia had been caused by a very small group ("the one who is troubling you", :10) or an apparently insignificant doctrine. But it was destroying the while community; although this was because the idea of salvation by works was so attractive. The Lord had spoken of the teaching of the Pharisees as "leaven" (Mk. 8:15). In the more immediate context, Paul may mean that once you demand legal obedience to one law, in this case circumcision, then this leads to a need for obedience to the entire Law. The idea being that small beginning has huge consequences.

5:10 *I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine*- Paul is both despairing and confident about them within a chapter or so. We get the impression that he had over invested in them personally and was taking it all too personally. Hence he speaks here of them taking "no other view than mine", which sounds rather as if he has personalized the whole thing in a wrong way.

We can however read Paul's confidence as an imputing of righteousness to the Galatians, and recognizing their status in Christ. Recognizing others as being “in Christ” imparts an altogether higher quality to our relationships. The cynicism and negativity which we naturally bring to many inter-personal encounters is taken away by a deep recognition that our brethren are indeed in the Lord. Having noted that the Galatians did not any longer “believe the truth”, Paul can say that he has “confidence to you-ward in the Lord” (Gal. 5:10 RV). Because they were “in the Lord”, he could hope against all human indications, that they would indeed rise up to an imitation of the Lord in whom Paul believed them to be. And so we have to ask ourselves, whether

we indeed have that “confidence” about others, because we know them to be “in the Lord”? Or do we judge them after the flesh…?

And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is- This would imply that the whole Judaistic campaign in Galatia was led by one person, the little / small leaven which was influencing the whole lump. "Whoever he is" connects with the spirit of 2:6: "But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me". We could assume that the individual was of some respect within the churches of Galatia.

5:11- see on 1 Cor. 1:23; 9:17.

But I brothers, if I still preach circumcision- The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him. Thus the Galatians whispered that Paul still preached circumcision (Gal. 5:11), probably basing that nasty rumour on the fact he had circumcised Timothy. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

Why am I still persecuted?- Paul's persecution of Christians was done to him. This was not just Divine poetic justice for the sake of it; it was practically to enable him to understand those brethren whom he had killed and tortured, in order to prepare him for eternal fellowship with them in God's Kingdom.

Then has the stumbling-block of the cross been done away- The cross is described as a *skandalon*, an offence (Gal. 5:11). Either we stumble (are offended) on it, or we stumble and are offended in the sense of spiritually falling away. Either we share the Lord’s cross, shedding our blood with His “outside the gate” of this world; or we will share the condemnation of those whose blood is to be shed in destruction outside the city (Rev. 14:20). It’s Golgotha now, or later. The cross makes men stumble; either falling on that stone and being broken into humility, or the uncommitted stumbling at the huge demand which the cross implies. Paul had all this in mind when he wrote of the lust / affections of the flesh (Gal. 5:24), using a word elsewhere translated "sufferings" in the context of Christ's cross. The sufferings, the lust, the cross of the flesh... or the cross of the Lord Jesus.

5:12 *I would that they that unsettle you*- A mild translation; the same word is used of how Paul had turned the Jewish world upside down by his preaching (Acts 17:6). We catch a sense here of how destabilizing all these arguments were; people had had their lives and world turned upside down by the Gospel, and were not having their new world turned upside down again by false teachers.

Would even go beyond circumcision and emasculate themselves- This contains a play on words which may seem quite inappropriate to us; so much so that many a Bible translator and expositor has had problems with it. The idea is that Paul wishes that the circumcision party would go further and fully emasculate themselves. This just isn’t the way men would use language if they wrote the Bible uninspired by God. See on Lk. 17:37.

5:13- see on Jn. 8:32.

For you, brothers, were called for freedom- This goes back to the allegory of the two sons. We are children of the free woman. But whilst all men pay lip service to a love of freedom, very few really want it once presented with it. To believe we really are saved and shall be saved by grace when the Lord returns... and that great salvation is independent of our sins and obedience... this is the ultimate freedom, and we shall be granted that freedom in a more material sense when our natures are changed and we enter God's Kingdom at the Lord's return. The way the Galatians turned away

from freedom is so instructive as to the real nature of human thought and essential preference.

Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh- No Greek word represents "use"; the idea is that the freedom to law which we are called to is not an opportunity for fleshly behaviour, but rather that freedom paradoxically ends up in service to others, because the work of the Spirit produces love as its summary fruit (5:22).

But through love serve one another- The Spirit produces love (:22), and that love is itself a motivating and activating power. Hence the GNB: "Let love make you serve one another". Gal. 6:2 will develop this idea of being servants of each other. For we are there told to carry one another's burden. And to carry a burden for someone implied you were a slave to that person. And this is a continuation of the theme of Gal. 5:13, 'become slaves to one another in love' ["by love serve one another"]. The idea of willingly entering into slavery was totally countercultural; because slavery was to be avoided at all costs. But this is the paradox- that the freedom of which Paul has written so much is in fact a freedom to enter into slavery, the slavery to others which is elicited by "love" and the fruits of the Spirit encompassed within "love". And the contrast is with personally carrying the burden of legalism, the sense of never being good enough in carrying the burden of feeling the need to be constantly obedient to a legal code. The freedom associated with the Spirit is not therefore a freedom to do as we wish.

5:14 *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself*- Mt. 5:17 = Gal. 5:14. Christ fulfilled the Law by His supreme love of His neighbour (us) as Himself, by dying on the cross. That was where and how the Law was fulfilled. Paul is arguing that if we are in Christ, then all that is true of Him is true of us. So there is no need to try to keep the Mosaic Law. The Lord Jesus Himself doesn't keep it- because He fulfilled it. Paul's argument has been that those who believe in salvation by grace are given the Spirit, which has the supreme fruit of love (:22), which in practice makes us serve one another (:13). And by doing so, we fulfil the essence of the Law.

To love one's neighbour as oneself is to fulfil the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10); and yet the Lord's death was the supreme fulfilment of it (Mt. 5:18; Col. 2:14). Here was the definition of love for one's neighbour. Not a passing politeness and occasional seasonal gift, whilst secretly and essentially living the life of self-love and self-care; but the love and the death of the cross, for His neighbours as for Himself. In Him, in His time of dying, we see the definition of love, the fulfilment of the justice and unassuming kindness and thought for others which was taught in the Mosaic Law. And we through bearing one another's burdens, through bearing with their moral and intellectual and spiritual failures, must likewise fulfil the law, in a voluntary laying down of our lives for each other (Gal. 6:2). And in this, as with the Lord, will be our personal salvation.

The Old Covenant's command to love one's neighbour as oneself was in the context of life in Israel. One's "neighbour" referred to others belonging to the Covenant people; not to those in the 'world' of the surrounding nations. New Testament quotation of this command totally supports this view; under the New Covenant, we must love those *within the ecclesia* as we love ourselves (Gal. 5:14). 1 Cor. 6:1 (R.V.) speaks of brethren within the ecclesia as "neighbours". Again, this is not in itself proof that we should not give to (e.g.). famine relief. But it surely indicates that we are misguided in thinking that such action is fulfilling this command.

However, there is copious evidence within the Law that Israel were to be considerate and concerned for the Gentile world around them. But there is no Biblical evidence that Israel preached a social Gospel to them.

5:15 *But if you bite and devour one another*- Since the Galatians left trusting in Christ for salvation and turned to their own works, they began biting and devouring each other. And so it is in legalistic, works based communities. Arguments arise about technicalities and the exact nature of obedience or disobedience; and because salvation is seen to depend upon these issues, the divisions are indeed bitter and passionate.

Take care that you are not consumed by one another- The unbelieving world will finally destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13). If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren, and the world killing itself. Israel were condemned to destruction by brother being dashed against brother (Jer. 13:14). Indeed, biting and devouring each other is a quotation from Is. 9:19,20 LXX (although not apparent in the AV), where Israel in their judgment for unfaithfulness would bite and devour each others' bodies in the siege. Paul is saying that if we bite and devour each other with our words (and we are all guilty of this at times), we are acting as the condemned. If we do this, we may well be consumed of each other- and this *may* have a terribly literal fulfilment, in that as the world destroys every man his neighbour in the confusion of the last day, so the rejected may do the same, living out the bigotry and passive anger they felt towards each other in their ecclesial life. This all needs some meditation. For there are very few of us not caught up in some division, personality clash, biting or devouring.

5:16 *But I say, walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*- Having quit trusting in grace for salvation, the Galatians found that their flesh lusted against the spirit to the extent that they just couldn't do the things they knew they should and which obedience they now so desperately desired- because they were not led of the spirit, they were still under law (Gal. 5:18). They didn't have a spiritual way of life, instead they were just trying to keep certain specific commandments, and they found they just couldn't live a victorious spiritual life.

How to not sin is perhaps one of our most fundamental questions. The answer the legalists gave was: 'By obedience'. But that throws the question only a stage further back. How? Paul has said that if we really believe we will be saved, then we will be; and the promised inheritance is by grace and not obedience to a set of laws. Those who believe this will give their whole lives in joy and response to that great salvation; they have no set of laws to follow, but the Spirit of Christ will be put into their hearts which leads them to "love", which outworks in lives of service to others. Thus they will lead lives 'walking by the Spirit', living life in that sphere of being and thinking; this is the way to not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Those who try to battle each temptation in their own strength will find themselves torn by the conflicting desires and passions which destroy so many religious people and make them nothing less than neurotic. Joy and peace as promised by the Lord will just not be realized by them. The Galatians are really a parade example; they switched over to trying to defeat each lust and passion as it arose, without the help of the Spirit and without the assurance of being secured in Christ by grace. And they started to fail, miserably. The misery of their position is well described in :17.

5:17 *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other. You may not do the things you would like to!*- See on

:16. I read this not so much as a global truth, true of all men; but more as a description of the Galatians' miserable, neurotic position. Hence talks here about "you" rather than "we"; whereas elsewhere in this letter he at times uses "we" in associating himself with a situation. They were unable to overcome the flesh because they were doing so in their own strength and had neglected the operation of the Spirit, which was given commensurate to a person's total surrender to and identification with Christ. The leading of the Spirit means that we are not under law- it's not a question of struggling with white knuckles against temptation; but rather of following the Spirit's leading. See on :24 *With the passions and the lusts*-

5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law*- If we are not justified by obedience but by faith, then we have no law. Sin *per se* is not now something to be avoided or dodged by a steel will. But this doesn't mean we are free to act as we wish; the whole wonder of being certain that we are going to be in the Kingdom, and are at this moment acceptable with the Father and Son... this demands our all. We cannot be passive to such faith and hope. We note here and in Romans 8 that we are "led by the Spirit". This is not the same as trying to force ourselves to be spiritually minded. Rather is the appeal to allow ourselves to be led, to be taken somewhere. It is a call to surrender. And the leading of the Spirit is to freedom, which is the freedom to love one another as if slaves to love (:13). "Live by the Spirit" means to live in this life of love- and this way of living will mean that we will not therefore fulfil the works of the flesh. The negative is not simply taken away, but is subsumed beneath the positive. Likewise the Spirit brings forth fruit, whereas legalism performs "works". The "fruit" of the Spirit is contrasted to the "works" of the flesh. And the works of the law are in fact the works of the flesh- if performed in the hope of being saved by them.

The Greek word behind "led" doesn't so much mean that the Spirit goes ahead and we follow. The word is usually translated 'to be brought'. The Spirit brings us through to salvation- if we allow it. The word is used so often in Acts of Paul being 'brought' to various places; his ministry was truly one led by the Spirit. There are many connections between Galatians and Romans. Paul uses the word of how the grace of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), and of how those led by the Spirit are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). This is the identical context to the argument here in Galatians. We who are God's sons in that we have identified with His begotten Son are given the Spirit in our hearts (Gal. 4:5). The gift of God's Spirit makes us part of the family, we think and act as do the Father and Son. The Lord Jesus was of our nature exactly so that He could bring / lead [s.w.] many sons unto glory (Heb. 2:10). The Lord's humanity was necessary so that we might be able to identify with Him. He as God's Son enables us to also be "sons".

The same contrast between the Spirit and the Law/flesh is seen in Rom. 8:2–3: “The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law (of Moses / sin) could not do...”. The Law indirectly encouraged the “works of the flesh” listed in Gal. 5:19–21, shown in practice by the Jews becoming more morally degenerate than even the Canaanite nations, and calling forth Paul’s expose of how renegade Israel were in Romans 1.

5:19 *Now the works of the flesh*- The Galatian fixation with works actually led them to do the works of the flesh. The greatest barrier against grace is our own psychology of works; our belief that even what is good about us, in our character and in our deeds, is a result of our own unaided effort. Not for nothing does Paul contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:19,23). As William Barclay

noted: “A work is something which a man produces for himself; a fruit is something which is produced by a power which he does not possess. Man cannot make a fruit”. It’s because of this that works are so glorified in society; it’s why the elderly and weak are somehow despised because they’re not ‘productive’ of ‘works’. Grace therefore cuts right across the way our rationalistic society, whether Marxist or capitalist, worships productivity. Our tendency to value, indeed to worship, human works leads to great frustration with ourselves. Only by realizing the extent of grace can we become free from this. So many struggle with accepting unfulfilment- coping with loss, with the fact we didn’t make as good a job of something as we wanted, be it raising our kids or the website we work on or the book we write or the room we decorated… And as death approaches, this sense becomes stronger and more urgent. Young people tend to think that it’s only a matter of time before they sort it out and achieve. But that time never comes. It’s only by surrendering to grace, abandoning the trust in and glorying in our own works, that we can come to accept the uncompleted and unfulfilled in our lives, and to smile at those things and know that of course, I can never ‘do’ or achieve enough.

Are manifest, which are these- fornication, uncleanness, sensuality- The works of the flesh are already manifest- although they will be manifested again at the day of judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). The children of God and of the devil in the ecclesia are already manifest, in a sense (1 Jn. 3:10). See on Gal. 6:4. However it could be that Paul is saying that these works of the flesh were manifest, were now visible, amongst the Galatians since they had focused upon legal obedience rather than total faith in Christ's salvation. In chapter 3, he had argued that the Law entered in order to emphasize sin and drive sinners to a desire for participation in the promises to Abraham and the need for identification with the seed to whom those promises were made.

5:20 *Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties*- Gal. 5:20,21 lists anger and divisiveness along with adultery and witchcraft- as all being sins which will exclude from the Kingdom. Indeed, the list in Gal. 5:19,20 seems to be in progressive order, as if one sin leads to another, and the final folly is division between brethren. See on 1 Cor. 11:18. The focus upon works raises issues of obedience, disobedience and thereby the need for exact definition of Divine requirements. This all results in division between believers, unlike a following of the way of the Spirit.

5:21 *Envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I forewarn you now, even as I did previously forewarn you*- This would imply that Paul's earlier teaching of the Galatians included sober warnings about the list of moral issues contained here. This was up front in his basic preaching of the Gospel.

That they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God- The question was how to inherit the Kingdom, and Paul has been reasoning that the Law offered no inheritance; but the promises to Abraham did. And yet those who live in sin shall not inherit the Kingdom. The implication seemed to be that the Law and trusting in it actually leads to behaviour which will exclude from the Kingdom. And this fits with Paul's earlier argument in Galatians 3, that the Law was given in order to magnify sin and lead sincere people to abandon it for faith in Christ as the seed of Abraham. The focus is upon those "who practise such things". Perfectionism is not in view. Those in the Spirit still do such things, but do not "practise" them.

5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love*- It can be argued that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and the subsequent eight characteristics are the outworking of love. The Spirit is

that given to believers upon acceptance of Christ (4:5). See the comments on 5:6 regarding how faith in Christ alone, rather than legal obedience, therefore works out through love. The role of the Spirit in Christian life is utterly fundamental, and it is a feature of legalistic groups that they place little emphasis on the gift of the Spirit. Typically the position amounts to: 'The miraculous gifts of the Spirit are not for today, therefore the Spirit plays no role, and we must get on and be obedient to law'. These positions go hand in hand- but according to Paul, they are close to a false Gospel; although it is true that the external miraculous manifestations of the Spirit are not seen in our age.

Joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness- The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

The description of love in 1 Cor. 13 are similar to the outline of the fruits of the Spirit here. These are all portraits of the man Christ Jesus. The clearest witness to Him "therefore consists in human life in which his image is reproduced". The connection with the total character of the Lord Jesus is because the Spirit we have been given is His Spirit (4:5), the power to become like Him.

5:23 *Meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law*- We are not under any law now (:18), telling us what to do; nor is there any law telling us what not to do. We are to wholeheartedly respond to the assurance of salvation. The way of living in and breathing in the Spirit is wholly positive. Such a life naturally takes up all our psychological energy so that there is no space left for temptation to have much power. This without doubt is how the Lord 'managed' to be sinless.

5:24 *And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh*- Who in their own strength could say they have done this? Only those who have identified with Christ in baptism, so that with Paul they can say "I have been crucified with Christ" (2:20). The same language is used about our identity with Christ in baptism in Romans 6. This is only true by status; and we are to really believe the status that we have "in Christ".

With the passions and the lusts of it- In the same way as Jesus crucified the Law (Col. 2:14) by His death on the cross, so the early church should crucify the Law and the passions it generated by its specific denial of so many fleshly desires: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections (AV mg. "passions") and lusts". This seems to connect with Rom. 7:5: "When we were in the flesh the motions (same Greek word, 'affections' as in Gal. 5:24) of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members". "When we were in the flesh" seems to refer to 'While we were under the Law'. For Paul implies he is no longer 'in the flesh', which he was if 'the flesh' only refers to human nature. The end of the law means that passions and lusts are ended with it- if we have identified with Him who ended the law. This would be further encouragement to read the description of the passionate struggle between fleshly lusts and righteousness in :17 as speaking of how things were with the Galatians, rather than how things have to be for all believers.

5:25 *If we live by the Spirit*- The gift of the Spirit is not an overpowering force which forces us to obedience. We must allow it to work; clearly the Galatians had turned away from it, towards justification by their own strength.

Let us also walk in step with the Spirit- An allusion to Ezekiel's vision of the wheels of the cherubim on earth being in step with the Angel-cherubim above them. Our spirit bears witness with God's Spirit- we know that our way of life is in harmony with Him, our spirit is His, and thereby we know that we are His children and united with the eternal life and now eternal spirit of His Son (Rom. 8:16). The way of life we live in Christ is an eternal life, an eternal spirit; in this sense we are living the eternal life, the life we will eternally live. This is how crucially important it is to be living the truth as a way of life. Go through your life and see how you can construct this ambience within it.

5:26 *Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another*- It would seem that since seeking to be obedient to the Law as a basis for salvation, the Galatians were experiencing much inter-personal conflict- of the type which is commonly seen in legalistic Christian communities. See on :19 *Manifest*. Legal obedience provokes all manner of questions of interpretation and comparison with others; and it also engenders pride and vainglory. The way of the Spirit, of salvation by faith in grace, produces humility; and the proof of which way is right is seen in the characters produced in those who believe the two schools of thought. Jealousy, irritation, provocation etc. are the ideas carried by the various Greek words used here- and such are the fruits of communal legalism.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Brothers, even if a man is caught in any sin*- The Greek literally refers to a fall; and the fall in view is the falling from faith in grace of 5:4.

You who are spiritual- Paul has been lamenting how the Galatians generally have left the way of the Spirit, granted to believers who have fallen upon Christ as Abraham's seed in faith alone. Paul seems to be advising the minority who remained faithful to that calling as to how they should deal with the many who were "at fault" in having rejected grace for legalism.

Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself- "Restore" is elsewhere translated "perfect". God is at work to perfect or literally 'mend' His people (s.w. Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10). But He does so through our efforts. Our attempts to restore others therefore have His full co-working behind us. Note that like the parable of the lost sheep, the assumption is made that we will be successful in the restoration. We are to approach all such attempts, difficult and awkward as they are, with the full hope that there will be a positive outcome.

Lest you also be tempted- Recognizing, in this context, that the temptation to legalism is every man's struggle. It's easy to forget this when dealing with legalistic brethren.

6:2 *Carry one another's burdens*- I have suggested on :1 that the particular fault or fall which is in view is the return to Jewish legalism. The demands of such legalism are called "burdens" in Mt. 23:4; Lk. 11:46 and particularly in this context Acts 15:28 "no greater burden". Those who were spiritual, led of the Spirit, were not themselves burdened; but they were to enter into the feelings of those who had burdened themselves with unnecessary burdens. This was the spirit of Paul when he wrote that to those under the law, he made himself as if under the law: "To them that are under the law, I became as one under the law (though I am not under the law), that I might gain those that are under the law" (1 Cor. 9:20). We wonder whether in fact Paul has in view Christians who had returned "under the law", for he has used that phrase

about the Galatians in 5:18. It's too easy to shrug at the mental torments some get themselves into, thinking 'Well that's their problem'. It is, but we are to walk those burdened miles with them in order to restore them.

To carry another's burden implied you were a slave to that person. And this is a continuation of the theme of Gal. 5:13, 'become slaves to one another in love' ["by love serve one another"]. The idea of willingly entering into slavery was totally countercultural. But this is the paradox- that the freedom of which Paul has written so much is in fact a freedom to enter into slavery, the slavery to others which is elicited by "love" and the fruits of the Spirit encompassed within "love". And the contrast is with personally carrying the burden of legalism, the sense of never being good enough in carrying the burden of feeling the need to be constantly obedient to a legal code. The freedom associated with the Spirit is not therefore a freedom to do as we wish.

And so fulfil the law of Christ- If we understand 'the law of Christ' in the same sense as 'the law of Moses' then we have missed the crucial message that is in Christ; we have merely exchanged one legal code for another. His is a spirit of grace which specifically, legally demands nothing and yet by the same token demands our all. And so in all our living and thinking, we must constantly be asking 'What would Jesus do? Is this the way of God's Spirit? Is this how the law of love teaches me to act? '. To live the life of the Spirit, to construct in daily living an ambience of spiritual life, is therefore a binding law. Living according to the spirit / mind / example of Jesus will mean that we naturally find the answers to some of the practical dilemmas which may arise in our lives.

6:3 *For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself*- Paul has just warned at the end of chapter 5 about the vainglory which comes from legalistic obedience. The basis of salvation is that we realize that we are "nothing", and on that basis come to the Lord for justification by grace through faith alone, knowing we have no obedience to show. Even if we have obeyed some points, such as circumcision, if we have not always obeyed the entire law, then we are nothing. Paul applied the term to himself when arguing that although he has "nothing" yet he "possesses all things" (2 Cor. 6:10) - a reference to the promises to Abraham and his seed, and the language he uses in Gal. 4:1 about our inheritance- the heir who has nothing in hand shall possess all things if he associates with the one true Heir, the Lord Jesus.

6:4 *But let each man test his own work*- In the context of arguing about works, Paul is inviting those who trust in works to put those works through the tests he has just spoken out in his argument about works. Whilst it may be hard to believe, this says that we can prove / test / judge our own works, and thus have rejoicing in ourselves. Although self-examination is fraught with problems, and even our conscience can be deceptive at times (1 Cor. 4:4), there is a sense in which we can judge / discern ourselves now. We can judge brethren and find them blameless (1 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6,7)- all the language of the future judgment (1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22). We cannot personally condemn them, but we can judge their behaviour against the judgments of God as revealed in the word. Some know the judgments of God against certain sins, and yet still do them, in the blindness of human nature (Rom. 1:32). Israel chose to be oblivious of what they well knew; there was no (awareness of) God's judgment in their way of life (Is. 59:8; Jer. 5:4) and therefore they lacked that innate sense of judgment to come which they ought to have had, as surely as the stork knows the coming time for her migration (Jer. 8:7). Judas knew in advance of judgment day that he was condemned (Mt. 27:3).

And then shall he have his boasting in regard to himself alone, and not of his neighbour- Perhaps this is sarcasm. Given his argument about the inadequacy of works, Paul may be saying that of course nobody can boast in their works. For at the end of chapter 5 he has criticized the vainglory of legalists in their few good works. The "boasting" later on in this chapter (6:13) was of the Judaist brethren. And Paul teaches against all such boasting: "But far be it for me to boast" (:14).

But the words are also capable of being read as a statement about how self-examination brings us face to face with our essential loneliness in a healthy way: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:2-4). It is possible to have rejoicing in ourselves alone when we know we have a clear conscience before the Father. But this can only come through being genuinely in touch with oneself; the person who is subsumed within an organization, who is totally co-dependent rather than an individual freely standing before the Father… such a person can never reach this level of self-knowledge. The N.I.V. says: "Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else". We are treading a terrible tightrope here, between the deadly sin of pride on the one side, and the sin of devaluing our own God-formed personality on the other. Only a person in touch with him or herself can have the rejoicing or pride in one's clear conscience [cleansed, of course, by grace in Christ] of which Paul speaks here. Paul seems to have in mind the words of Job when he speaks of how he will in the very end behold God with his own eyes, "and not another" (Job 19:27).

Not only are we to perceive the value of others, but of ourselves too. Gal. 5:26; 6:4 RV make the point that we shouldn't be desirous of *vain*glory, but of "his glorying in regard of himself alone". Secured in Christ, justified in Him, we can even glory in who we are in His eyes. We can be so sure of His acceptance of us that there is such a thing as "the glorying of our hope" (Heb. 3:6)- all ours to explore and experience.

6:5 *For each man shall carry his own burden*- I have argued on :2 that the burdens in view are those of keeping the Jewish Law. Even if we try to walk with others on their burdened, legalistic road- we may not succeed. And finally they will have to carry their own burdens.

By our words we will be justified or condemned. The false prophets were judged according to their words: "Every man's word shall be his burden" at the day of Babylonian judgment (Jer. 23:36). Gal. 6:5 alludes here in saying that at the judgment, every man shall bear his own burden- i.e., that of his own words. And those words, in the context, would have been statements and demands concerning obedience to law. These positions will be cited back to me at the day of judgment.

6:6 *One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches*- It could be that Paul now addresses some practical issues in Galatia. However, he has urged them not to abandon him and to return to him personally, and to resist the influence of others who were trying to replace his influence. I have suggested throughout that perhaps he was taking it all rather too personally. It could be that this teaching is another example. He was the one who had taught them the word, as he had often reminded them throughout the letter. Perhaps he is hinting that they ought to be sending him material support, and indeed, they had a duty to do that. The "good things" would appear from :10 to be the 'good' of generosity to those in need, whether in the world or within the family of faith. By doing so, they would *de facto* be declaring their loyalty to him rather than some other unnamed individual who was seeking to have them as his disciples and to poison them against Paul (5:10).

If the "good things" refer to the things taught by the teacher, then we learn that even though some may be shepherds, they are still sheep; and they are leading others after the Lord Jesus, “the chief shepherd”, not after themselves. And they should remember that Gal. 6:6 requires “him that is taught in the word” to share back his "good things", his knowledge in Christ, with his teacher. This is possibly the meaning behind the enigmatic Eph. 3:10- the converts of the church declare the wisdom of God to the ‘principalities and powers in the heavenlies’, phrases elsewhere used about the eldership of the church. The shepherd is to learn from his sheep- a concept totally out of step with the idea of leadership in 1st and 21st centuries alike.

6:7 *Be not deceived*- The natural connection is with the warning in :3 to the self-righteous, self-congratulatory Judaists not to deceive themselves- by thinking that a few acts of legal obedience such as circumcision were the way to salvation. Paul here uses the same word the Lord often uses in warning that in the last days, the believers must be careful not to be deceived; as if Paul saw the collapse in Christ-centered faith as a sign of His return. John uses the same word about the deceivers who were seducing his converts to return to Judaism (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7). The "deceivers" are described as being "especially of the circumcision" (Tit. 1:10). This warning not to be deceived is similar to the message of :1- that those with the Spirit should seek to restore those who had turned to Judaism, but considering themselves lest they also be tempted (see notes there).

God is not mocked- To assume our obedience to commandment can save us is to mock God, connecting us with the Jews who mocked the Lord Jesus on the cross, at the very time He ended the Law and confirmed the new covenant of gracious salvation.

For whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap- Knowing the terror of the Lord at the judgment, knowing that Christ will come, Paul sought to use this to persuade men, such as the believers at Corinth, to quit their sloppy attitude to God's Truth. Properly apprehending the reality of judgment to come makes us see the eye of the tiger, grasp the real issues of spiritual life, see the real essence of cross carrying Christianity. We will *believe* that whatever we sow, that we will reap; and we will therefore live accordingly. "*That*" shall he also reap is emphasized by the Greek. Those who trusted in works would reap what they had sowed- their few paltry works. Nothing more would be added; the Lord's all necessary righteousness would not be imputed to them, for they thought they didn't need it, like the man who entered the wedding without a provided garment.

6:8 *For he that sows to his own flesh*- We have noted throughout Galatians that Paul considers those now trusting in their own works to be effectively paganic, Ishmael's children rather than Isaac's; and children of the flesh (Gal. 4:29). Sowing to the flesh was by seeking justification through their own works. And they would reap the result of that at judgment day. 'Sowing to the flesh' is alluding to Eliphaz's description of Job in Job 4:8. Eliphaz interprets Job's downfall as an example of "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:8). The conscious connection between these passages shows that Job was seen as a type of the Jewish, self-righteous, often Judaist-influenced, members of the ecclesia. However, the same passage also has connections with Job 13:9, where Job accuses the friends of mocking God- Paul has just spoken of how the Judaizers were mocking God (:7). Gal. 6 is saying that those who show themselves to be outwardly wise (:3), "making a fair show in the flesh (constraining) you to be circumcised" (:12), are mocking God. Thus

the sweet-talking Judaizers infiltrating the believers in Galatia correspond to both Job and the friends. Job learnt the lesson which all Judaists have to learn.

Shall of the flesh reap corruption- At the day of judgment, the faithful shall have their corruption swallowed up into incorruption (1 Cor. 15:42,50). But the rejected will not be changed- they will remain in "corruption", because they reaped exactly what they sowed. Which was their own works and their own effort to attain salvation. Significantly, Col. 2:22 uses the same word about how the Jewish commandments are to corrupt [AV "perish"]. This is where legal obedience ends up.

But he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life- As noted on :1, those who trusted in grace by faith and not works were filled with the Spirit. Trusting in the operation of the Spirit and not our own works is therefore 'sowing to the Spirit'. But the majority of New Testament references to "he that sows" are to the Lord Jesus as He features in the sower parable- nearly 40 such references! And it is He who will 'reap' at judgment day (Mt. 25:24,26), sending forth His reapers who are the Angels. The idea of reaping of the Spirit is a continuation of the connection with 1 Cor. 15:42-44, which speaks of the resurrection as corruption receiving incorruption, and the flesh being turned into Spirit. So the reference is to the Lord's work at the resurrection and judgment. Paul is cleverly changing the focus of the well known saying that a man reaps what he sows. Indeed, if a man sows to the flesh by trusting in his own works, he will reap corruption. But the Lord Jesus sows to the Spirit, and those who respond to the Spirit He gives will be reaped by Him unto eternal life. Thus the true believer in Christ will not be doing works thinking that a reward will be received for them at judgment day. Rather are we to allow and follow the work of the Spirit, the sowing of the sower, the Lord Jesus; and He shall reap us into life eternal.

There has been much debate as to whom Paul was writing in Galatians, and what he was really attacking. On one hand, it could be argued that he was writing to oppose the tendency to leave true Christianity for the legalism of Judaism. And yet there is ample evidence he was also arguing against libertinism, a living of a fleshly life whilst continuing to claim to be Christian. Galatians 1-4 presented the opposition of law vs. spirit: "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected in the flesh?... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law... that we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3,13,14). But now in this concluding argument in Galatians 5 and 6, this conflict is framed in its most essential terms- flesh vs. spirit, sowing to the flesh or the Spirit, the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit. And Paul has only one audience in view here in Galatians- those who were turning away from Spirit-filled Christianity to the legalism of Judaism *exactly because they wanted to live in the flesh*. And this is so true to observed reality; that legalism goes along with libertine behaviour. It is just a psychological classic- that the feeling we are being obedient to this or that ritual then frees us up to think that we can do precisely what our flesh desires in other areas. We see this in the letter to Titus, where we realize that libertine Christian folks living in Crete were attracted to hard core Judaism. But Paul therefore reframes the whole issue in its most essential terms; we are to sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh. And the Spirit led life is not the life of legalistic obedience to a few Jewish rituals. It is a life of total commitment to the way of the Spirit, and all we sow now shall bear eternal fruit. We are therefore moulding the nature of our eternal existence by how we sow now. Although finally we at our graveplanks are "sown in weakneses" [physically and morally] to be raised in glory (1 Cor. 15), we have also sown to the Spirit during our lives. We are not there yet, we have only sown seeds, we do not have perfect fruit until the Kingdom, we shall then be in maturity what we

have only begun to be now. But we have sown to the Spirit, we have shown what we would like to become, and God will give the increase in our resurrection.

6:9 *And let us not be weary in doing well*- Paul is balancing his position by emphasizing that he is not at all teaching that we should not do works. Those works, however, are motivated by a response to the great and saving grace we have been shown. The Galatians had grown weary of the great response to grace; and had preferred therefore to seek justification by works, for that actually demands less "doing well".

For in due season- At the day of judgment. We have noted the allusions to 1 Cor. 15, which presents that as the time of reaping and incorruption. See on :10 *As we have opportunity*.

We shall reap, if we do not give up- We as well as the Lord Jesus shall reap (see on :8 *But he that sows to the Spirit*). The problem was that the Galatians were indeed 'giving up'. They were giving up their understanding of salvation by faith without works, and instead going for salvation by works. But their well doing, their good works, were in fact decreasing! They were giving up sowing to the Spirit! This is such a powerful point. Those who are truly grateful for salvation by grace alone will respond far more enthusiastically than those who think their good deeds can secure their salvation. The same Greek word for "give up" is used in Heb. 12:3 about the Hebrew believers who were also returning to the Law likewise being tempted to 'give up' or "faint".

6:10 *So then, as we have opportunity*- This is the same word *kairos* that has just been used in :9 regarding the "due season" or time when we shall reap what we sowed. And that day is the future day of judgment. But each "opportunity" or "time" is in fact judgment day for us. For in essence, judgment is now.

Let us work that which is good toward all men- Paul is not saying 'Don't work! You don't need to, under grace!'. Rather he is urging belief in the wonder of salvation without works of obedience, knowing that belief in this will result in a life and heart being totally gripped for Christ. No way can we be passive to it. And we will indeed work what is good for all men. The "good" is to be connected with the "good things" of :6; see note there.

And especially toward those that are in the family of the faith- The believers generally belonged to house churches, which were part of the *patria* of God (Eph. 3:15). They belonged to another household, a household which they perceived by faith- the household of faith. No wonder Celsus complained that Christianity led its followers into rebellion against the heads of households. Doubtless he was exaggerating, but the idea of having another head of house, another *patria* , was indeed obnoxious to a slave owning society. This is why the language of slavery permeates so much of the New Testament letters; for according to Christianity's critics, it was largely a slave, female religion to start with. And of course, the unity between slave women and free women in the house churches was amazing; it cut across all accepted social boundaries of separation. The *Martyrdom Of Perpetua And Felicitas* tells the story of how a Christian mistress (Perpetua) and a slave girl (Felicitas) are thrown together into the nets to be devoured by wild animals, standing together as they faced death. This was the kind of unity which converted the world. There was to be now the "household of faith", with people from all the 'other' groups now to be accepted as 'brother' and 'sister', which meant denying the natural ties to your family in the way that surrounding society expected- for to them, loyalty had to

be to family above all else. Denying this and putting our bonding with Christ and *His* family first was indeed equivalent to self-crucifixion (Mk. 8:34).

6:11- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand- Apparently a reference to Paul's poor eyesight, and the fact he had written the entire letter himself rather than through a scribe, as he wrote some other letters. He mentions this because he has reminded them of how they wanted to pluck out their eyes and given them to him (4:15). He has reminded them of that in the hope that such an appeal to personal history together might provoke their loyalty to him once again, and they would accept his rebuke and return to faith in Christ. I have noted several times in these notes that Paul's approach to the Galatians seems to me rather too high pressure, as if he had overly invested in them personally to such an extent that he was willing to apply all manner of pressure to bring them back to his fold of influence. Maybe I'm being too hard on Paul, but the obvious observation is surely that they ought to be following Jesus and the word of God rather than Paul personally. Yet he is certainly here making a personal tug at heartstrings over issues which concern life and death, and deeply personal decisions about what we shall base our faith upon- law or grace. And these issues can only finally be decided between a person and their God, rather than as a function of their human relationship to a preacher.

We could here translate "See in what large letters I am now writing in my own handwriting". It could be that :11-18 is effectively Paul's autograph or signature, and these verses are his summary of the letter. His essential point is that indeed, he wishes to stress his boast in the cross of his Lord, through whom the world is crucified to him (:14), and this is the 'canon' for all thought and action now (see on :16). Perhaps the reference is not at all to poor eyesight meaning he was writing in large letters. Rather, he may as it were have taken the quill from the hand of the secretary and wanted to 'write large' the essence of his letter, the essence of Christianity.

6:12- see on Gal. 4:30.

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised- I suggested on 4:8 that this might mean 'To trust in circumcision'; for there are several references to the Galatians *returning* to Judaism, as if the audience was largely comprised of Jewish Christians. Paul began his letter by using this same Greek word translated "forced" in complaining that Peter had forced Gentile converts to live as the Jews; and noting that when Titus had visited the Jerusalem ecclesia, he had not been forced to be circumcised (2:3,14).

And only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ- This suggests that those applying the pressure were already within the Christian movement, who were feeling keenly the abhorrence of "the cross of Christ" which was felt by both Jews and Gentiles.

6:13 *For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves fully keep the law*- This recalls Paul's argument in chapter 5 that circumcision is only one of the whole package of Laws; without completely obeying the entire Law, those under the Law would be condemned.

But they desire to have you circumcised so they can boast about you- This suggests that the 'boasting' about works in :4 is being said sarcastically. Salvation by works of obedience breeds pride and boasting; and such mindsets and communities typically place much boasting on how many others they have converted to their position. That was the situation in the Galatian churches.

6:14 *But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*- Paul's encouragement of some to boast in their works in :4 is therefore surely sarcasm. The connection with :4 suggests that Paul felt he had no works to boast about; rather he would only boast in what Christ has done for Him. This is similar to the spirit of :8; where the man who sows his works and reaps them is contrasted not with the man who sows spiritual works and reaps them- but with the Jesus who sows and reaps. It's not about us- it's all about Him. We must be aware that Paul consciously makes connections within his own writings, which is understandable seeing he was writing under Divine inspiration. The connection here is definitely to 2 Cor. 11:30, where he says he will only boast in his own weaknesses- and there I suggest that he refers to his moral weaknesses. He sees in all his weaknesses a connection with the Lord on the cross, who was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4 "Who was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you"). Paul's moral weakness he sees as connecting him with the physical weakness of the Lord on the cross. The Lord on the cross therefore bids sinners come to Him, rather than scaring away by the exhibition of His righteousness.

Through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world- Another reference to his co-crucifixion with Christ in baptism (2:20). We are therefore crucified to the world because that is what Christ was. "The world" in the context of :13 could refer to the need humans feel to be acting well in the eyes of the world; the pride of life which is part of "all that is in the world". Paul says he was not interested in how he looked to the world, and whether his belief in the cross of Christ made him look obnoxious and led to persecution (:12). Because he was hanging there with Christ, identified with Him, and crucified thereby in the eyes of the world as Christ had been. And thereby likewise the world, the desire to be seen as smart and acceptable by our world, had been crucified to Paul.

The Lord's death was *so that* He might deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4); because of the Lord's crucifixion, Paul saw himself as crucified unto the world, and the world unto him (Gal. 6:14). The Lord Jesus looked out across the no man's land between the stake and the crowd; He faced the world which crucified Him. We simply *cannot* side with them. To not separate from them is to make the cross in vain for us; for He died to deliver us out of this present world. The pull of the world is insidious; and only sober reflection upon the cross will finally deliver us from it. It's a terrifying thought, that we can make the power of the cross invalid. It really is so, for Paul warned that preaching the Gospel with wisdom of words would make "the cross of Christ... of none effect" (1 Cor. 1:17). The effect of the cross, the power of it to save, is limited in its extent by our manner of preaching of it. And we can make "Christ", i.e. His cross, of "none effect" by trusting to our works rather than accepting the gracious salvation which He achieved (Gal. 5:4).

The life of self-crucifixion, daily carrying a stake of wood to the place where we will be nailed to it and left to die a tortuous death…day by day living in the intensity of a criminal's 'last walk' to his death; how radical and how demanding this really is can easily be lost upon us. And it can be overlooked how totally unacceptable was the idea of dying on a cross in the context of the first century. In Roman thought, the cross was something shocking; the very word 'cross' was repugnant to them. It was something only for slaves. Consider the following writings from the period.

- Cicero wrote: "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the

person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but… the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man… your honours [i.e. Roman citizenship] protect a man from… the *terror of the cross*".
- Seneca the Elder in the *Controversiae* records where a master's daughter marries a slave, and she is described as having become related to *cruciarii*, 'the crucified'. Thus 'the crucified' was used by metonymy for slaves. The father of the girl is taunted: "If you want to find your son-in-law's relatives, go to the cross". It is hard for us to appreciate how slaves were seen as less than human in that society. There was a stigma and revulsion attached to the cross.
- Juvenal in his *6th Satire* records how a wife ordered her husband: "Crucify this slave". "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband, "no delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake". She replies: "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man?".
The sense of shame attached to the cross was also there in Jewish perception of it. Whoever was hung on a tree was seen as having been cursed by God (Dt. 21:23). Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho,* records Trypho (who was a Jew) objecting to Christianity: "We are aware that the Christ must suffer… but that he had to be *crucified*, that he had to die a death of such shame and dishonour- a death cursed by the Law- prove this to us, for we are totally unable to receive it". Justin Martyr in his *Apology* further records: "They say that our madness consists in the fact that we place a *crucified* man in second place after the eternal God". The Romans also mocked the idea of following a crucified man. One caricature shows a crucified person with an ass's head. The ass was a symbol of servitude [note how the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass]. The caption sarcastically says: "Alexamenos worships God".

Yet with this background, "the preaching of the cross" won many converts in the first century. "The Jews require a sign and the Greeks [Gentiles, e.g. Romans] seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:22,23). Paul exalts that Christ "became obedient to death- even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8 NIV). Those brethren and sisters must have endured countless taunts, and many times must have reflected about changing their message. But the historical reality of the crucifixion, the eternal and weighty importance of the doctrine of the atonement, as we might express it today… this was of itself an imperative to preach it. We cannot change our message because it is apparently unattractive. The NT suggests that the cross was not just something shocking and terrible, but a victory, a triumph over sin and death which should be gloried in and thereby preached to the world in joy and hope (Gal. 6:14). We may look at the world around us and decide that really, there is no way at all our message will convert anyone. We are preaching something so radically different from their world-view. But the preaching of a crucified King and Saviour in the first century was just as radical- and that world was turned upside down by that message! People *are* potentially willing to respond, even though in the stream of faces waiting for transport or passing along a busy street, we might not think so. It will be our simple and unashamed witness which will be used by the Father to convert them; we needn't worry about making our message acceptable to them. There was nothing acceptable in the message of the cross in the first century- it was bizarre, repulsive and obnoxious. But the fact men and women gave their lives to take it throughout the known world shows the power of conviction which it has. And that same power is in the Gospel

which we possess. If we believe it rather than merely know it, we will do the same with it.

6:15 *For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is being a new creation*- This seems to parallel 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love". Paul's argument so far has been: Faith rather than works results in an identification with the Lord Jesus as the seed of Abraham; for to him were the promises of salvation made, and not through the Law. That faith and identification with Christ is confirmed by the Spirit being sent forth into our hearts (4:5), which results in love as the fruit of the Spirit (5:22). In that way, faith works through love. The parallel to that is that "what counts is being a new creation"; in other words, being created as Christ, being created as a Son of God as Jesus was, with His spirit whereby we also cry out "Abba, Father" just as He did. So the new creation in view is that we are created to be as Christ. Hence if any man is *in Christ* he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The language of "new creation" need not call up ideas of planets and a new cosmos. The new person created is Christ. Hence "the rule" of the new creation (:16) is another way of saying "the law of Christ". The Lord Jesus is "the image of every [new] creation" (Col. 1:15); we are made / created like Him, by the agency of the Spirit. He is thus "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). Hence the Gospel was preached to "every creation" (Col. 1:23), i.e. every convert. No "creation" is not open to the scrutiny of God's Word in Christ (Heb. 4:13). Clearly, "creation" was a title for believers in the early church, so common was this idea.

6:16 *And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them*- See on :15. The fact we are new creations, that we are Christ, should be the *rule* by which we live. The Greek is literally 'the canon'. The canonical standard of thought and living for us is that we are a new creation, brought about by the Lord's crucifixion. Perhaps that is the reference of the 'canon'- the reality of :14, to "boast [of nothing] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world". The word 'canon' clearly alludes to the Law of Moses, which was abrogated by the Lord's death on the cross. We now have a new canon to live by- the implications of His cross. This is saying the same as the Lord giving us a "new commandment, to love one another as I have loved you" in His death on the cross. We are to walk or conform to this canon; the same word used in Gal. 5:16,26 for walking / conforming to the Spirit. For His cross is the essential presentation of the way of the Spirit.

The reality that we are new beings means that we have to learn how to live all over again. The same word is used in Phil. 3:16: "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing"; and Paul's great theme in Philippians is that we should take on the mind of Christ. The "same thing" we should "mind" is the mind of Christ. The rule of Christian life therefore is to be Christ, to have His mind. Christ-mindedness is therefore the rule of life in Him. To have His Spirit, which is freely given to those who believe (4:5) is therefore utterly central and critical to the Christian life.

And upon the Israel of God- Paul clearly saw natural Israel as not "of God".

6:17 *From now on, let no one cause me further trouble*- The reason for this is that Paul is connected with the sufferings of Christ. Those who trouble him are doing so to the crucified Christ and will suffer accordingly.

For I bear- This connects with the theme developed earlier in the chapter; the same word is used about bearing the burdens of legalistic obedience (:2,5- see notes there). The same word is also significantly used in Acts 15:10 about being unable to bear the burdens of the Law. Paul's parting shot is therefore that he does not bear the

burden of needing to be obedient to the Law, a heavy yoke which nobody was able to bear. Instead He bears the cross of Jesus and is co-crucified with Him. And this is the whole contrast; bearing the burdens of needing to perform and be obedient to laws- or bearing the cross of Jesus through identification with Him.

Branded on my body the marks of Jesus- All through his life and witness, Paul was aware of how he had rebelled against his Lord. He wrote that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He seems to be alluding to the practice of branding runaway slaves who had been caught with the letter F in their forehead, for *fugitivus*. His whole thinking was dominated by this awareness that like Jonah he had sought to run, and yet had by grace been received into his Master's service. Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the 'broken body' of the Lord we remember] the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus. He was so clearly a slave belonging to the Lord Jesus that it was as if one could see the marks of the nails in his body. Hence all the connections Paul makes in his letters between the suffering servant / slave prophecies, and his own experience. Paul has come over throughout his letter as self-assured, confident he is in the right and others are in the wrong, clearly and persuasively arguing for faith in Christ's cross as the only way to salvation. But he closes in a very appropriate way; by again asserting that indeed his life is totally tied up in the living and dying of his Lord, but within that same statement, admitting that he had and did in a way seek to avoid it.

6:18 *Brothers, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*- Paul has argued throughout that those who throw themselves upon the Lord's grace will be given His spirit. His Spirit, His mind and thinking and feeling, thus becomes ours. And he concludes by wishing this to ever be, that we might have a spirit continually awed by our Lord's grace.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understood the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

To the saints that are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus- "At Ephesus" is omitted by some manuscripts, supporting the idea that this is more of a circular letter. But we can also detect specific references to the situation at Ephesus. So it may be that the letter was indeed written specifically to Ephesus, but also used as a circular letter of a more general nature- hence the additional address to "the faithful in Christ Jesus". That term may however be some technical term which referred to the eldership; in which case we can note that the letter was firstly addressed to the whole church, and only secondarily to the leadership.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- How could Paul wish grace to them, seeing it is an abstract concept and not a feeling or experience like "peace"? So often *charis* refers to the gift of the Spirit, which is given at baptism and yet is poured out repeatedly throughout the life of a believer. The rest of the letter has so much to say about this that we could conclude that he is wishing them to be filled with the gift of the Spirit; for *charis* means both 'gift' and 'grace'.

1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*- He wishes us to be like Him, to have *His* Spirit. In this sense, through having the spirit of Jesus, He comes and lives in the hearts of those who accept Him (Rom. 8:1-26; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20). There is a resultant joy in the heart of the convert after baptism, as a result of the Lord's work (1 Thess. 1:6). To this end, He blesses us with all the varied blessings of His Spirit (Eph. 1:3 Gk.). Paul opens 1 Corinthians with similar statements, but goes on to say that the Corinthians were not "spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1); the blessing of the Spirit must be made use of. We are by status in Heaven with the Lord Jesus, in the heavenlies- but we must live according to that status, thinking of Heavenly things and not earthly preoccupations.

1:4 *In that He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love*- "In that..." connects our having been chosen from the beginning with the blessing of the Spirit (:2). And in fact we were chosen not just from the beginning but from *before* that. At some point in infinity in the 'past', we were known and chosen. This is even more awesome. Romans 8 makes the same connection; our being foreknown and called was by grace, the gift of the Spirit. The very idea of our calling, predestination and choosing is the parade example of grace; for no works could be done by us which affect those things. And yet Romans 8 goes on to reason that the Spirit has been given to transform us into what we are counted as by status in Christ; His righteousness has been imputed to us, but we are to be transformed by the Spirit into that righteousness in reality. "Without blemish" is of course the language of the unblemished Passover lamb, the Lord Jesus. We were chosen so that the work of the Spirit might transform us into His personality and character, which is counted to us by imputed righteousness.

Pre-eminently, our love of the brotherhood will be the basis upon which we find acceptance, and in this lies the reason why the life of love is a living out of an acceptance before the Lord now. If we live in love, we are right now holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). "Before Him" is the language of judgment day (Mt. 25:32; Lk. 21:36; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5); and being holy and blameless before Him is exactly how we will be at the judgment seat (Jude 24). Yet right now, he who lives in love, a love unpretended and unfeigned, lives in the blamelessness and holiness of his Lord, whose righteousness is imputed to him. Paul so loved his Thessalonian brethren that he joyed "for your sakes before our God" (1

Thess. 3:9). "Before our God" is very much the language of judgment day; and he had earlier reflected: "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye *are* [right now] our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19,20). They were in this life his joy, as he lived out his life "before our God" and they would be again in the day of judgment.

Not only are paragraph and chapter breaks sometimes misleading, verse breaks can be too. Inserting punctuation into translation of Hebrew and Greek texts is very difficult. Thus Eph. 1:4,5 in the AV reads: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us". Shift the colon and another emphasis is apparent: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him: in love having predestinated us". When stuck with a 'difficult' verse (and they all are in some ways!), don't be afraid to try re-jigging the punctuation a bit. The love and grace of God is shown so clearly in the way we were "foreordained" or predestinated to be His children, when others were not. This was and is all of grace, for no works had been done by us to warrant this calling. The initiative was His.

1:5 *Having foreordained us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will-* The idea of adoption is also used in Romans 8, and is in the context of the gift of the Spirit. By being "in Christ", we have His righteousness imputed to us; but the Spirit works within us to make us in reality how and what we are counted as by status. Hence Rom. 8:15 speaks of the Spirit of Christ as "the spirit of adoption". Those who receive the adoption of sons therefore have the Spirit of God's Son sent forth into their hearts, by which they relate to God as Jesus did: "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:5,6). And here in Eph. 1 the context is the same; for 1:3 has spoken of the blessings of the Spirit received by believers, and the whole process of adoption results in the praise of His grace, His *charis* or "gift"- that of the Spirit (:6). All this was according to His "will", which might seem axiomatic until we allow Romans 8 to fill out the idea. Our choosing to be given the Spirit was His choice, His will- and not our own. This therefore is the parade example of His grace.

An understanding of predestination helps us towards true humility and appreciation of grace; see on :4. This is the very context in which Paul introduces the idea in Romans; he wished his readers to appreciate grace by reflecting upon how predestination involves something far over and above anything we could 'do' or 'be' in our own rights. Paul speaks here of predestination as a sign of God's grace- and thus we are "predestinated... to the praise of the glory of His grace". Predestination brings with it an appreciation of grace, and real praise for it. Predestination by grace doesn't motivate to lethargy and fatalism- if it's properly understood. When the Lord speaks of how we have been chosen, above and beyond any effort on our part, He goes on to teach that exactly because of this, we have a responsibility to produce fruit, to pray, to love one another

(Jn. 15:16,17). Despite predestination, there are countless thousands of freewill decisions for us to make each day. Try to bear that in mind some mornings as you wake up. Whatever situation we're in, life takes on an excitement and meaning and challenge. The simple fact of predestination, of having been chosen by grace, should radically inspire us in every one of those freewill decisions. The true Biblical idea of predestination mustn't be confused with non-Biblical ones. The Romans, Greeks, Egyptians etc. all believed that they had been elected by the gods, predestined to be the special race that alone had true connection with the divine... but they assumed this predestination was because of their natural superiority. Biblical predestination is radically different- that the weak are chosen and the strong rejected, not because they are smart, beautiful, hard working, successful, lucky... but exactly because they are weak and just who they are. This is the grace of true predestination. And it's so wonderful that nobody can be passive to it. On this very basis, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their differences because their names were written in the book of life (Phil. 4:2,3). That book was written from the foundation of the world, and the fact our names are written in it is a reference to the concept of predestination. This reality means that in practice we simply shouldn't be at loggerheads with others who share in that same grace of predestination!

1:6- see on Lk. 1:28.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved- As noted on :5, our calling was by God's will, not ours. The grace or gift of the Spirit is available to transform us into the image of the Christ in whom we are by faith and baptism. We are counted as Him, with His righteousness imputed to us. Our predestination to this state is again His grace. The issues of 'And what about all the others who weren't called?' remain with us, but we are invited to focus instead on praising Him for His grace toward us. We thankfully receive the lifebelt thrown to us, rather than wondering why others weren't thrown one. We are "made accepted", or literally, 'graced', by being in Christ [NEV "bestowed on us"]. All who wish to enter into Him are clothed with Him, and so the operation of grace through the Spirit is enabled.

1:7- see on Acts 20:28.

In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace- Salvation and all the wonderful processes which are a part of it are enabled by being "in Christ". This is a status we have to decide to enter, of our own freewill. Clearly baptism is "into Christ", and that surely is why the act of baptism by immersion of an adult is as it is- to provide an opportunity for us to wilfully demonstrate we of ourselves wish to consciously become in Him. We have "redemption" right now in that we have forgiveness of sins (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30 say

likewise); but "redemption" comes to its final term in "the redemption of the body" at the last day (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14), "the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). This means that our experience of forgiveness of sins today is the foretaste and guarantee of the final redemption to be given at the last day. If we wonder about our eternal salvation, we need to ask ourselves whether we have known forgiveness now. We should be able to taste that forgiveness; Peter did, and on that basis insisted that he was a personal witness that the Lord Jesus was really in Heaven mediating forgiveness to us. These wondrous things are indeed according to the riches of His grace. To hear all this but turn away from it is indeed to despise the riches of His grace (Rom. 2:4). Paul therefore will pray the Ephesians will perceive these riches of grace (Eph. 1:18). Those riches can be tasted right now; but at the last day, He will lavish the riches of grace upon us in the redemption of our bodies into eternal life (Eph. 2:7). The present experience of the riches of grace is in the receipt of the gift of the Spirit in our minds (Eph. 3:8). To deny these riches is really to despise those riches, no matter how politely worded is our theology in doing so. These riches are described in Col. 1:27; 2:2 as being of Christ in us, the trust we have of our future glorification; and the riches of the full assurance of understanding- that by grace, we really will live eternally in His Kingdom. The experience of the Spirit, of forgiveness, of Christ in us, is the earnest of the possession (:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5), the full assurance of salvation (Col. 2:2).

1:8 *Which He lavished on us in all wisdom and prudence*- The Spirit gifts of wisdom and prudence are lavished upon us in that we have had the Gospel revealed to us (:9). There may be a reference to the miraculous gift of wisdom in the 1st century, but for us in our age we have wisdom lavished upon us in knowing the Christ who is the full wisdom of God.

God has been extravagant with His grace. And in dealing with those whom we consider to be hard, spiteful and unreasonable towards us in the brotherhood, we have the ideal opportunity to reflect such grace. It hurt God, to an extent we cannot fathom, to lavish that grace upon us in the death of the cross. And of course it must hurt us to show it to others. In the same way as we seem unable to focus our attention for very long on the ultimate issues of life, so we find it difficult to believe the extent of God's grace. He is extravagant with His grace- God “lavishes” grace upon us. The covenant God made with Abraham was similar in style to covenants made between men at that time; and yet there was a glaring difference. Abraham was not required to do anything or take upon himself any obligations. Circumcision [cp. baptism] was to remember that this covenant of grace had been made. It isn’t part of the covenant [thus we are under this same new, Abrahamic covenant, but don’t require circumcision]. Perhaps this was why Yahweh but not Abraham passed between the pieces, whereas usually both parties would do so. The promises to Abraham are pure, pure grace, a lavishing of grace.

1:9 *Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in him*- The Gospel is 'made known to us'; the emphasis is upon His action. It is not our Bible reading which revealed it to us, but rather His initiative in revealing it to us. This was part of His will; and we noted on :5 that the repeated references to God's will are another way of saying that we were called to the Gospel not by our works nor initiative, but by His will, His predestination. That revelation of the Gospel to us was planned "in Christ" in God's plan which was before time and continues to beyond time (:10). The moment or process through which we were called had therefore been waiting for infinite time to come about, and shall have eternal consequence, beyond time. Our preaching of the Gospel therefore has eternal moment for each person who hears the call from us; words fail to express the significance of that work. The alleviation of human suffering is never to be ignored nor devalued, but the preaching of the Gospel is of far greater moment when viewed in this perspective.

1:10- see on Col. 1:20.

In a plan which runs to the fullness of the times: To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth- God's purpose with each of us existed *before* [and not just *from*] the foundation of the world (:4), and His purpose with us runs to the fullness of the *kairos*, time itself. This is the impression of absolute infinity, within the limitation of words to describe it. Our eternity, to infinity and beyond, is "in Christ"; the AV adds at the end of this sentence "even in Him". We become "in Christ" by faith and baptism into Him now; and we shall eternally exist in Him. The whole atmosphere of our lives must therefore be of Him; for in this sense we can live now the life which shall be eternally. "All things", quite literally, both persons and spiritual ideas, all of God's spirituality, believers and Angels, shall all be summed up in that one unique man, Christ- and shall eternally be so.

1:11- see on Mt. 25:34.

In whom also we were made His heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who does all things after the counsel of His will- We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other. In infinite time and space, we are what He has as His very own, what He longs for and has planned for over infinite time. This helps us better understand the significance He places on our extension of His purpose to others by evangelism; and the deep anger He has at causing any to stumble out of that grand purpose He has for them. We are to constantly ask ourselves: 'Will this in any way cause anyone to stumble from this marvellous grace personally planned for them?'. This grand purpose is not simply according to God's will, which would be axiomatic, but "after *the counsel of* His will". That "counsel" is a reference to the Gospel and His word to man. Paul addressed the Ephesian elders with a reference to how he had entirely declared to them "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). This suggests that Ephesians

may have been a follow up letter to those elders, and then it was adapted for more general usage to all the faithful (:1). This kind of thing would be typical of responsible missionary work; I have several times written letters to back up such face to face meetings in missionary contexts, and then reused the material in a more general form. Paul seems to have done the same, under Divine inspiration.

1:12 *So that we who had first hoped in Christ should be for the praise of His glory*- The next verse "In whom you also believed / hoped" could suggest that the "we" here refers to Paul and his missionary team. But "first hoped", *proelpizo*, carries the sense of "to hope in advance of other confirmation" (Strong). Having written and implied so much about God's predestination of us, and the outworking of His will in choosing us, Paul may be balancing that by saying that we have to also show initiative. Faith is in a sense a leap in the dark. No amount of clever apologetic arguments can ever take that away from what it means to believe / hope in Christ. Most of the apologetic arguments in any case refer to God, the Bible, the creation record etc.- and not to faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is spoken of here as hope, *elpizo*, a solid expectation and assurance- that He shall save us eternally. And no apologetic arguments can give you that. This is a leap which must be taken. But the idea of "to hope in advance of other confirmation" begs the question: 'What confirmation, then, comes after we have taken this leap of faith and hoped in Christ?'. The next verse answers this- "In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise". Human belief / hope in Christ is indeed confirmed from God's side. The promised Holy Spirit confirms and seals that faith.

Thus we “have obtained an inheritance” through being “in Christ”. This is just another way of expressing the great truth of Gal. 3:27-29- that through baptism into Christ, we receive the promise of the inheritance promised to Abraham. But Paul continues in Eph. 1:12: “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in [Gk. ‘into’- through baptism] Christ”. The fact we are in Christ by baptism and thus have the Abrahamic promises leads to praise of God’s grace. Yet we will only achieve this if we firmly grasp the real, pointed relevance of the promises to us; that we who are baptized are each one truly and absolutely in Christ, and the promises apply to *me* personally.

1:13 *In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*- This sealing is the confirmation of our trust / solid hope that we really will be saved in Christ; see on :12. Our trust / belief / hope in "the word of the truth" doesn't refer to our having figured out a true set of theological propositions called "the truth". Our solid faith and hope in Christ is related to "the truth"- we consider the word of the Gospel as "the truth", we take it as truth. And the greatest personal truth for each believer is that we have heard "the gospel of salvation", we really shall be eternally saved. And we are "sealed", confirmed in our

faith, by the gift of the Spirit (see on :12). The "promise" of the Spirit surely refers to the promise of the Comforter within us in Jn. 14-16, and this in turn is alluded to in Gal. 3:14, which speaks of our receipt of "the promise of the Spirit through faith". Thus the gift of the Spirit at baptism is a promise to all who shall believe at all times, and not just in the first century (Acts 2:39).

At our baptism we became "in Christ". Through that act we obeyed all the Lord's invitations to believe "in Him", or as the Greek means, to believe *into* Him. We believed *into* Him after we heard the Gospel, by baptism. We are now connected with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; we are treated by God as if we are His Son, and therefore the Spirit of His Son is given to us, to make us in reality as we are by status.

1:14 *Which is a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession, for the praise of His glory*- This "guarantee" is the "earnest" spoken of in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5- the gift of the Spirit in our hearts. As explained on :12, we take the step of faith in hoping in Christ, in believing that really this word of salvation is ultimate truth for us (:13; we "first hoped", *proelpizo*, "to hope in advance of other confirmation" (:12). And that confirmation that we shall really be saved, as we first believed we shall be, is in the gift of the Spirit. The New Testament promises "all joy and peace through believing" the good news of salvation in God's Kingdom; and this of itself implies that we have some confirmation of that future salvation. For otherwise we can hardly rejoice and feel peaceful in such a hope. And that confirmation is in the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is the sign God owns us; He possesses us by and with the Spirit, and this thereby guarantees that we shall be finally redeemed by Him as His very own at the last day. But we must let that Spirit work and function; for the Corinthians were given the same Spirit, but were "not spiritual" and fell away (1 Cor. 3:1).

1:15 *For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you and the love which you show toward all the saints*- Paul felt warmly towards all others who had really believed in Jesus as their Saviour and were rejoicing in sure hope of salvation because of the confirmation they had received from the Spirit (see on :12-14). This is indeed the 'basis of our fellowship' rather than some intellectual commonality on some theological issues. That faith and hope elicits love; hence faith, hope and love indeed go together in Paul's thinking. We take the step of faith in response to God's grace in calling us; we have a sure hope in salvation, confirmed by the gift of the Spirit; and the wonder and joy of it all has to be shown forth quite naturally in love. We are given fellow believers as a particular outlet for that love; hence the reference to "the love... toward all the saints".

Paul heard of the spiritual development of the Ephesians (1:15-19), therefore he prayed that God would grant them more knowledge and understanding (:16,17). The dynamic in this Divine confirmation of their freewill effort was God's Spirit power. Paul repeats the

prayer in Eph. 3:14-21: "...be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that... (ye) may be able to comprehend... to know... to be filled with all the fullness of God". It is thus by God's Spirit acting on our "inner man" that this greater comprehension of our glorious calling is achieved. He tells them later to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23), alluding to the Ezekiel passages which speak not only of Israel making themselves a new heart / spirit / mind, but of *God* giving this to them (Ez. 18:11; 36:26), in confirmation of their efforts. There are examples galore of God acting on the minds of men to give them a certain attitude which they would not otherwise have had (consider how He gave Saul another heart, or gave Israel favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they lent to them, Ex. 12:36).

1:16 *Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*- If all the wonderful things of :11-15 are true, then we can only constantly give thanks that those we have preached to shall really be eternally saved. Only if the wonder of that slips, will we find ourselves demotivated in our prayer life.

One practical caveat needs to be mentioned in the context of praying for others. It is all too easy to slip into the habit (and slipping into bad prayer habits surely dogs every prayerful man) of reeling off a list of names each night, something like "Dear Father, be with David, and please be with the children, and with Sister Smith, and with Karen, and with...". There's nothing in itself wrong with this. But over time, it can become a kind of incantation, with us fearful that this evening we let one of those names slip. Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father. This is a high standard to keep up. It is through this constant prayer that we are in God's tabernacle presence and in sacrificial relationship with Him.

Compare the following passages:
“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Is. 62:6,7)
with
“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph. 1:15-17).

The ideas of praying without ceasing and making mention occur in both passages.

Surely Paul had the Isaiah passage in mind. It seems that he saw the ecclesia as the spiritual Zion. In the same way as Zion's watchmen were exhorted to pray for her without ceasing until the Kingdom is established there, so Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of his brethren. The implication is surely that once a certain level of spirituality had been achieved, then the Lord will return to establish His Kingdom. When the harvest is ripe, then the sickle is put in. Jn. 17:23 speaks of how the church will "be perfected into one" (RV), as if this process is ongoing and comes to a finality at the Lord's return. This is an urgent imperative to unity amongst us- and yet as these [apparently] "last days" wear on, we become increasingly *dis*united. This ought to be a true worry to us.

1:17- see on Jn. 6:27.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; so that you may have- Paul has explained in :12-15 that the believers are given the Spirit in confirmation of the hope they had in Christ for eternal salvation. But Paul wants them to perceive that Spirit, and to really feel and experience the guarantee of final salvation which it offers. The Corinthians likewise were given the gift of the Spirit on conversion, but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). They failed to let the Spirit transform them. So Paul prays that his converts would be given an appreciation of the solid hope of salvation which they had. "The Father of glory" refers to how God's glory will be revealed at the final salvation of His people (Mt. 16:27); and Paul therefore asks the Father of glory to open the eyes of the believers to the glory which awaits them (:18). The giving of the Spirit is incremental; for they had been given the Spirit (:13), but Paul prays that the Spirit will be given them to open their eyes further to the wonder of their future salvation. The prayers of third parties, therefore, can potentially influence the spirituality of those they pray for. We are not left to just work out our own salvation; the prayers of others can play a part in it. And seeing that is the case, we are to constantly be in prayer for each other.

1:18 *The eyes of your mind enlightened, that you may appreciate what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*- See on :17. The Ephesians already had the Spirit, the guarantee of their future salvation; but Paul wanted them to perceive the utter wonder of it all. The Spirit therefore works on the human mind, opening our perceptions and appreciation. To limit it to miraculous manifestations in the first century is to seriously miss out on a major Biblical theme. And again we note that our prayer for others can potentially influence their perceptions and mental attitudes. The enlightening is by the gift of the Spirit (:17); proof enough that the promised Spirit gift is essentially an internal, mental operation rather than external miraculous gifts. "Enlightenment" is associated with being partakers in the Holy Spirit and tasting the Heavenly gift [i.e. the Spirit] in Heb. 6:4. And Heb. 10:32 speaks as if this "enlightenment" was a standard part of the Christian path ("... after you were enlightened..."). The same word for "enlightened" is found in Jn. 1:9- the Lord Jesus is

the light of our world and enlightens every man who comes into that world. Once we take the step in faith of entering His world, then the gift of the Spirit enlightens us. He is therefore not passively sitting in Heaven awaiting the time of His return; He is busy enlightening believers, and He does this through the operation of His Spirit.

Our eyes have been enlightened, now we see (Eph. 1:18; 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). And yet in other ways we are blind spiritually. We see through a glass "darkly" (Gk. 'enigmatically'; 1 Cor. 13:12). The things of the Spirit are largely enigmas to us. Therefore Paul prays that his Ephesians would have "the eyes of their understanding" progressively enlightened, even though they had already been turned from darkness to light (Eph. 1:17,18). The disciples had been turned from darkness to light, but the Lord rebuked them for their blindness in not expecting His resurrection.

1:19 *And what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might*- The same Spirit power which resurrected the Lord Jesus (:20) is at work internally within us. Rom. 8:11 says the same about the Spirit gift that is now within us: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you". Paul knows that they have heard the theory of the Spirit gift and that they have received it, but he wants them to perceive how hugely powerful is this gift. I find myself praying this same prayer, both for myself and for my brethren.

"His power *toward* us" uses *eis*, which can as well be rendered "in" or "within". The huge power, *hyper* and *mega* [NEV "exceeding greatness"], is working within us, which is exactly where we need empowerment. It is the energy [*energeia*, "working"] of His mighty force [*ischus*, "might"]. These are all powerful words. The energy of this force within us is only limited by our acceptance of it and actual desire to change.

1:20- see on Eph. 3:9,10.

Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and had him sit at His right hand in heaven- See on :19. The same force internally at work in transforming us was at work in the resurrection of the Lord (Rom. 8:11). The Lord's resurrection thus becomes a pattern for the breaking forth of new spiritual life within us. In spiritual terms, we too are raised from the dead and exalted to heavenly places in Christ. Verse 3 has used the same phrase, in stating that we are now in "heavenly places" through the work and blessing of the Spirit. And 2:6 will repeat this.

The Jews strongly believed that Satan had authority over the old / current age. Their writings speak of the rulers, powers, authorities, dominions etc. of this present age as all being within the supposed system of Satan and his various demons / Angels in

Heaven. In Eph. 1:20–22 Paul says that Christ is now “above every ruler (*archê*), authority (*exousia*), power (*dunamis*) and dominion (*kuriotês*) and any name that can be named not only in this age but the age to come… All things have been put in subjection under his feet”. Paul’s teaching that no spiritual being can oppose the exalted Christ. He’s using the very terms used in the Jewish writings for the rulers, powers etc. of Satan’s supposed system. So when in 2 Cor. 4:4 Paul speaks of Satan as “the god of this age”, he’s not necessarily claiming that this is now the case – rather is he merely quoting from the well known Jewish belief about this.

1:21 *Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come*- Just as the Lord Jesus is far above all human governments and dominions, so the persecuted believers in Ephesus should remember that whilst not 'above the law', they were spiritually in a sphere far above all the authorities who were persecuting them. "Far above" translates yet another superlative; *huperano* is literally 'above the upper things'. And Ephesians 1 is full of such *hyper* and *mega* words, mixed with powerful adjectives; all seeking to demonstrate the huge force available to us and operative within us. The terms for rule, authority, power, dominion and names could allude to the Judaist tendency to elevate the worship of Angels, and to consider some "names to be named" as greater even than Messiah. Recall how the Lord had to demonstrate that David considered Messiah to be his "lord" (Lk. 20:44), because the Jews considered the "son of David" to be less than David, and certainly inferior to Moses. This would explain why the name of the risen Lord Jesus is to be understood as greater than any name in the world which is to come, i.e. the Kingdom age.

1:22 *And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to us to be head over all things in the church*- The Lord's exaltation means that we are to be subject to Him. The Lord Jesus as the head of the body is going to as it were fill His body with His Spirit and direction. For the context here is of the transforming gift of the Spirit to those who are "in" the body of Christ.

The body of Christ, the ecclesia, is one form of the personal self-revelation of the person of the Lord Jesus. We don’t only and solely receive His self-revelation through accepting dogma or doctrine. It comes to us also through the way He mediates His personality to us, His self-revelation, through His Spirit in His body. His fullness is to be found in the church, His body- He fills “all [believers / members of the church] in all” (Eph. 1:22,23). I take this to mean that the fullness of His personal character, person, spirit, truth… is to be found in His body on earth, i.e. the community of believers. Each of them manifest a different aspect of Him. This is the Biblical “unity of the spirit”- whereby the body of Jesus reveals Him consistently, as a unity, thus binding together all

who share that same one spirit of Christ. This is the way to unity- not enforcing intellectual assent to dogmatic propositions.

All things were put under the Lord's feet because of His exaltation (Eph. 1:22); but now we see not yet all things put under Him (Heb. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). The "all things" matches with Col. 1:18 speaking of the Lord being placed over the church. We are the "all things". The great commission has the same thought sequence- because of the Lord's exaltation, therefore we must go and tell all men and bring them into subjection to the exalted Christ. In prospect His body is "all in all" (Eph. 1:23), but the "all in all" phase will only be realized in practice at the end of the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:28). It is for us to grasp the height of His exaltation and the fact that it means that potentially, all men, all of existence, is under Him. And then we respond to this by going out and seeking to bring all men under Him.

1:23 *Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all*- See on :22. The 'filling' of the Lord's body is by His Spirit; the gift of His Spirit "in the inner man" is what enables Him to fill His body with all God's fullness (Eph. 3:16,19). We note the connection between the Spirit gift and being filled in Eph. 4:10; 5:18.

There is a clear connection between this idea of the fullness of God, and Ex. 34:6, where God proclaims His Name to be "Yahweh, a God *full* of compassion", grace and His other characteristics (see R.V.). So by bearing God's Name, we have His fullness counted to us; and the filling of the Spirit makes us in practice what we are by status. As Christ had the fullness of God dwelling in Him in a bodily form (Col. 2:9), so the church, as the body of Christ, "*is* (Christ's) body, the fullness of him (God) that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). So you see the intensity of our unity; we *are* the very body of Christ, He exists in and through us (although of course He still has a separate personality). Likewise, the *fullness* of God is in Christ and thereby in us. We are not just one part of God's interest, our salvation is not just one of His many hobbies, as it were. He only has one beloved Son; He was human and born on this earth for *our* salvation. The fullness of God, even though we scarcely begin to comprehend it, dwelt fully in Christ, and is counted to us. We really should have a sense of wonder, real wonder, at the greatness of our calling. See on Eph. 3:19.

The church is "His body, the fullness of Him (God) that fills all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory... full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34)... and of His fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:14,16). The word "fills" in Eph. 1:23 is the same as 'complete' in Col. 2:9,10: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are *complete* ["filled"] in Him". Christ is filled with God's fullness of the righteous attributes of glory, and in Christ we are also filled by the Spirit of Christ.

Seeing that we are the body of Christ it follows that the ecclesia *in toto* manifests the fulness of Christ's and therefore God's glory, through each of us manifesting a slightly different aspect of God's glorious character to perfection. Thus Peter reasons that the quicker the ecclesia spiritually develops, manifesting those attributes, the earlier Christ can return (2 Pet. 3:11-15). See on Phil. 1:11.

The body of Christ is His "fullness" through which He fills us all. I take this to mean that each member of the body of Christ manifests something unique about Jesus, so that between us, we show all of Christ to the world- e.g. one may reveal His patience, another His zeal, etc. By limiting our definition of the body of Christ, we limit our perception and experience of Him; and thus we limit the extent we are filled with His fullness, if we refuse to accept that which every member of the body supplies to us, in order that we might grow up in Him (Eph. 4:16). God will be "all in all" through the full expression of His Name. But Eph. 1:23 says that right now, all the fullness of God fills "all in all" in the church; in other words we should now be experiencing something of that total unity which will then be physically manifest throughout all creation.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *You once were dead in the trespasses and sins*- We were spiritually dead and have now been resurrected, in spiritual terms, made alive in Christ (:5). This is indeed an allusion to baptism, but the connection is to the preceding argument in 1:19,20- that the same Spirit which raised the Lord Jesus is mightily at work within us, internally transforming us into His image (as taught in Rom. 8:11). There is an allusion here to the LXX of Is. 57:4, and we shall find allusions to that part of Isaiah throughout this section : :1= 57:4; :12 "no hope"= 56:10; :2 =57:5; :14=57:19; :5 =57:10 (RV) ;:19 = 56:1; :6 = 57:15; :21 = 56:7; :12 = 56:7; :19 =56:6 (RV) ;:22 = 57:15. The Isaiah references are to the possibility of revival at the time of the restoration from Babylon, and also at the time of Hezekiah. The returned exiles could have entered the new covenant and received the working of the Spirit to transform them into God's new people, according to Jer. 31 and Ezekiel 34-37. But they refused. And so the new covenant community, those baptized into Jesus and partaking in the new covenant, therefore have the same promises of Spirit-led restoration and transformation. Judah dead in sins without hope could indeed have been revived by the Spirit; but they preferred to remain in spiritually dead Babylon. And so the promises were fulfilled but with a somewhat altered focus- in that they were transferred to those who were baptized into the Lord Jesus in New Testament / covenant times.

2:2 *In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, according to the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience*- The transformation of the believer from dead in sins to alive in Christ is by his Spirit. But this Spirit is antithetical to the spirit of the world, whereby sin and selfishness are the spirit which shapes all thought and action.

"The prince of the power of the air" is one of the references in Ephesians which specifically refers to problems in the Ephesus area. This clearly alludes to the mythological concepts of Zoroaster – the kind of thing which Paul's readers once

believed. Paul says that they once lived under "the prince of the power of the air". In the same verse, Paul defines this as "the spirit (attitude of mind) that… works" in the natural man. Previously they had believed in the pagan concept of a heavenly spirit–prince; now Paul makes the point that actually the power which they were formally subject to was that of their own evil mind. Thus the pagan idea is alluded to and spoken of, without specifically rebuking it, whilst showing the truth concerning sin.

But Paul re-casts the "prince of the air" as essentially referring to the life of the flesh, and thereby makes his specific allusion to a local problem in Asia relevant to all believers (see on :1). "Walking" (i.e. living) according to the prince of the power of the air, is defined in :3 as living according to the lust of our fleshly mind. The "lusts of our flesh" come from within us (Mk. 7:21–23; James 1:14) not from anything outside of us. "The prince" is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience". The spirit frequently refers to an attitude of mind (e.g. Dt. 2:30; Prov. 25:28; Is. 54:6; 61:3; Ez. 18:31; Mk.14:38; Lk. 2:40; 2 Cor. 2:13; 12:18; Eph. 4:23). This is confirmed by :3 – such peoples' lives are controlled by "fulfilling the lusts of our flesh (which come from our heart – James 1:14), fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind". Fleshly people do not allow their lives to be controlled by a physical "prince" outside of them, but by following their fleshly desires which are internal to their minds. A physical being cannot exist as a "spirit" in the sense of an intangible essence. A spirit does not have flesh and bones, i.e. a physical body (Lk. 24:39); therefore because "the prince" is a "spirit", this must be a figurative expression, rather than referring to a physical being. The "spirit" or attitude of mind is a figurative prince, as sin is a figurative paymaster (Rom. 6:23). This passage (and :11) speaks of their former Gentile lives. 1 Pet. 4:3 speaks of life before conversion as: "In the time past we wrought the will of the Gentiles… we walked in *lusts*". Their own flesh was their "prince". Thus walking according to the prince of the air is parallel with walking in the flesh (:11). The more common antithesis to walking in spirit is walking after the *flesh* – here termed "the course of this world". George Lamsa, a native speaker of Aramaic, understands "the prince of the power of the air" to be the dynamic equivalent of the Arabic / Aramaic *resh shultana*, which he claims would've been understood as meaning simply 'the head of the government', with no intended reference to the literal air (George Lamsa, *New Testament Light* (San Francisco: Harper & Row) p. 24). So the allusion could be to how they had lived under Roman or Jewish spiritual domination, which they were now liberated from in Christ.

Athanasius argued that the death of Jesus cleansed the air where the demons / fallen angels now live, and therefore physically opened up a way for [supposed] immortal souls to find a way into Heaven (See Nathan K. Ng, *The Spirituality of Athanasius* (Bern: Lang, 2000)). Not only was all this unBiblical, it reflects a literalism which reduces God to a being hopelessly bound by physicality. In short, this kind of thinking arose from a basic lack of faith in God as the Almighty, who doesn't need to build bridges over problems which men have created for Him in their own minds. It should be noted that the idea of saying "Bless you!" when someone sneezes derives from Athanasius' idea that demons can become so small that they enter a person from the literal air. This is what happens if we insist that the Devil was thrown out of heaven and some of his angels are still in the literal air – it's literalism gone wrong.

Verse 1 defines the "you" as the believers who had formerly been dead in sins. Verses 2 and 3 then express the reason for this in four parallel ways:
(a) "...you walked according to the course of this world"

(b) "...according to the prince of the power of the air"
(c) "...the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience"
(d) "...were by nature the children of wrath".

The "whole world lays in wickedness (1 Jn. 5:19). "The children of disobedience" show this by their lives "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (vv. 1,3). Thus "the prince of the power of the air" is re-cast as our evil, fleshly mind, i.e. the real Devil. There are many links between Ephesians and Colossians. One of the clearest is between these verses and Colossians 3:3–7. Colossians 3:3 speaks of us having died to sin as Ephesians 2:1 does. Verses 5–7 amplify what are "the lusts of the flesh" which "the children of disobedience" fulfil: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which you also walked some time, when you walked in them". These things of v. 5 are "the works of the flesh" mentioned in Galatians 5:19. These things come from within us, not from anything outside (Mk. 7:21–23). Therefore the prince of the power of the air, which causes these things, is again redefined as our evil desires.

2:3 *Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by our natural condition destined to be children of God's wrath, even as the others*- See on :2. The contrast drawn in this section is between how believers were before baptism, and the status they are now in. The "we" here are different to "the others", the world generally. Our status as being the children of wrath has now been changed, as we no longer live in the lusts of our flesh. So it would be wrong to think that "children of wrath" refers to some natural condition we are born into by nature and can only get out of by ceasing to be human. "Children of..." is a Hebraism that doesn't refer to natural birth as children. The children of peace or of a town mean the people associated with that thing or place. So "children of wrath" doesn't mean we are born into a situation where God is as it were mad with us. The wrath of God is not upon every fetus conceived or baby born. His wrath refers to His condemnation of sin actually committed in thought or deed. But we are not now related to that, since we are now in Christ with His status and righteousness counted to us. We are not sinners by nature; for all we posit about human nature we state about the Lord Jesus, who was of our nature, and was all the same holy and undefiled before God in His life.

We don't sense enough, perhaps, that this world is not just passively disinterested in God. All outside of Christ are active enemies towards Him, subjects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3,15). This isn't how we tend to see the world around us. But to the first century believer, it was clearly so. The greatness of the gulf that divides was clearly felt. Our world is (overall) more tolerant than it has ever been; but let's not forget that the ruling powers are 'satan', an embodiment of the flesh. All around is subtly articulated enmity against true spirituality and the cause of Christ. The more we see that, the more we will realise how close we are to each other who are the other side of the great divide, "in Christ" along with us. What differences of emphasis and personality there may be between us we will more naturally overlook. The world is therefore seen by God as actively sinful. For the man who does not accept salvation in Christ, "the wrath of God *abideth* on him" (Jn. 3:36)- it isn't lifted. We are therefore subject to the wrath of God until baptism (Eph. 2:3). It doesn't seem or feel like this. And yet God experiences this sense of anger with sin, albeit unexpressed to human eyes. But it need not "abide" on us, we need not remain by nature the children of wrath- for we can come into Christ. The theme of God's wrath is not to be overlooked

nor subconsciously dismissed. And we are to follow the amazing logic in these verses- that it is God who saves us from God's wrath. God saves us from God; and so we have a window into His internal conflict between the pole of His necessary hatred of sin, and yet on the other pole, His amazing love and desire to save sinners. His love is "in Christ" as Paul makes clear- and nothing shall separate we who believe from that love of God for us which is in Christ. It was worked out in that "God so [in this way] loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" that we should not perish but live for ever (Jn. 3:16). God's love is not, therefore, a vague general fuzzy feeling towards the world. It is focused in His saving purpose in His Son's death. If we spurn that, we remain under His wrath. Job several times basically asks God to not be so intense, to give him a break, to not have these extremes of wrath at one end and amazing grace at the other. But this is how He is, and our relationship with Him is likewise to be passionate and intense.

'Salvation' implies saving from something; we are saved from sin, from death, and from the wrath of God. For the wrath of God is real, and ends in total death for sinners. It could not be further from the truth that the Old Testament reveals an angry God in contrast to the New Testament. Consider the teaching of the New Testament alone: "flee from the wrath to come... he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness... [you] treasure up unto yourself wrath on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God... being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him... avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto God's wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord... For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience... to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (Mt. 3:7; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 5:9; 12:19; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10). Revelation speaks repeatedly of the outpouring of God's wrath at the last day (Rev. 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15 "They said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?... Your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged... The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation... cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God... the seven last plagues... in them is filled up the wrath of God... seven golden vials full of the wrath of God... pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth... the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath... the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God".

2:4 *But God, being rich in mercy, for the sake of His great love with which He loved us*- God's great love is exhibited in the manner in which He intervened in our lives whilst we were still sinners (:5). He didn't notice our righteousness and respond accordingly. His love was and is the way He takes the initiative to intervene and call. And this is the love we are to emulate in all areas of life; from radical forgiveness of the impenitent to grace in family squabbles to taking the initiative to present the call of God's grace to those in the world who were not even looking for it. The same word for "riches" is used in Rom. 2:4 of how God's rich mercy is shown in Him leading us to repentance; taking the initiative to call the impenitent and unrighteous. But that wealth of mercy can be "despised" if we refuse to respond. Romans goes on to speak of the "riches" of grace manifest in God's sovereign calling of us, when not all have been called (Rom. 9:23; 11:12,33). God's intervention in our lives is His grace and the

richness of His mercy; that He simply wants *me* to be saved. All the endless questions about "And what about all the others?" remain as they do, with various possible responses; but they are not to take us away from the riches of His mercy in calling us. In this sense, love is taking the initiative, intervention by grace and not in response to goodness. And we are to reflect it. "We are saved from wrath through Him", Paul elsewhere writes; and more specifically, through the cross. This was "His great love with which He loved us". God loved the world in this way, "so loved", in that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16). The love of God is "in Christ".

2:5 *Even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved!)*- See on :4. We were made alive when we were dead. A dead person can do nothing. In this God's grace is revealed in connection with our salvation. The reference is to baptism, but 'making alive' is also speaking of the way in which God's Spirit is the vehicle for His grace in provoking new spiritual life and enlivening us spiritually. It is the Lord Jesus through His Spirit who makes us alive (Jn. 5:21; 6:63). We must choose to be baptized, we are not merely manipulated, but on the other hand, it is also His Spirit which made us alive. Hence Rom. 6 says that we were buried with Him in baptism. A dead man cannot bury himself. The force of the figure of burial is that this was done to us. It is the Spirit of Jesus in us right now which makes us alive and shall be the same principle by which are mortal bodies are changed to immortal at the last day (Rom. 8:11). The Lord Jesus is a Spirit which makes alive (1 Cor. 15:53), right now, and not only at the last day. It is the Spirit which 'makes us alive' (2 Cor. 3:6 s.w.). As made clear in Romans 8, so here- the enlivening work of the Spirit is what gives us life spiritually, and is the parade example of God's grace. But the Spirit doesn't just zap an unbeliever and make them believe regardless. We who were dead in sins were "quickened together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5 AV). If we believe in Christ Jesus' resurrection, we will therefore repent, confess our sins and know His forgiveness. Thus believing in His raising and making confession of sin are bracketed together in Rom. 10:9,10, as both being essential in gaining salvation.

2:6 *And raised us up with him; and in Christ Jesus, has made us sit with him in the heavens*- Again the initiative and power is with Him. We were raised up, just as we were buried with Him in baptism (see on :5). Burial and resurrection require these things to be done to us. Baptism is therefore a submission to His process. The two stages of resurrection are laboured; we were made alive with Him (:5), and raised up with Him. And just as He is in Heaven as a result of the ascension, so are we, in spiritual terms. All that is true of Him becomes true of us if we are "in Christ Jesus". The term "Christ [Messiah] Jesus" may be a reminder that the Jewish Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth- another hint that as in every church founded by Paul, there was Jewish opposition to his work, and so he addresses Gentiles in terms appropriate to Judaism.

Our difficulty in believing ‘we will be there’ is perhaps related to our difficulty in believing that in prospect, we ‘are there’ right now, through being “in Christ”. This most basic truth, that we are “in Christ” through baptism, carries with it very challenging implications. We are well familiar with Paul’s reasoning in Romans 6, that through being immersed in water at baptism, we share in the Lord’s death and resurrection. As He rose from the dead, so we rise from the waters of baptism. But what happened to Him next? He ascended to Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God in glory. And each of those stages is true of us right now. We are now in ‘the heavenlies’; and not only so, but we *sit together* there with Christ. And He

now sits upon His throne of glory. Even now we in a sense sit with Him in His Heavenly throne, even though in another sense this is a future thing we await (Lk. 22:30; Rev. 3:21). No wonder Paul goes on to make a profound comment: “That in the ages to come [the aions of future eternity], He might show [Gk.- to indicate by words or act] the exceeding riches of his grace [which was shown through] his kindness toward us through Christ”. Throughout the ages of eternity, God will demonstrate how pure and wonderful His grace was to us in the few brief years of this life- in that, He will demonstrate, He counted us *right now in our mortality* as having resurrected, ascended to Heaven, and reigning / sitting with Christ in glory. The wonder of what we are experiencing now, the height of our present position, is something that will be marvelled at throughout eternity as an expression of God’s grace and kindness. And we will be the eternally living witnesses to it. And we can start that witness right now.

So often does Paul speak of life "in Christ". We become "in Christ" by entering into the body of Christ by baptism; yet the "body of Christ" refers to the body of believers. A fair case can be made for interpreting Paul's phrase "in Christ" as very often having some reference to life in the community of believers. "In Christ" appears to be often a shorthand way of saying "in the body of Christ". It's because we are of "the same body" that we are sharers in all that is "in Christ" - whatever is true of Him becomes true of us. If He is the seed of Abraham, then so we are we, etc. (Eph. 3:6; Gal. 3:27-29). Salvation was "given *us* in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:9) as a community, just as Israel were saved as a body, "the body of Moses", when they were baptized at the Red Sea. This is why we usually read about "you" plural as being "in Christ", rather than of an individual alone being "in Christ". *We* were created "in Christ" (Eph. 2:10); "*all you* that are in Christ" (1 Pet. 5:14); *you* are now *all* made near "in Christ" (Eph. 2:13); *we* are in heavenly places "*together...* in Christ" (Eph. 2:6); *all* God's children are gathered *together in one* "in Christ" (Eph. 1:10; Gal. 3:28). God's whole purpose is "in Christ" (Eph. 3:11); His plan to save us was through our joining a community, the body of Christ, headed up in the person of Jesus. It can't really be so, therefore, that a believer can live "in Christ" with no association with the rest of the body of Christ. This is how important fellowship is

2:7 *His intention was that throughout the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*- This is mind-blowing. We will spend eternity being "shown" the riches of His grace and kindness which we have right now received in Christ. We begin that journey of eternal appreciation right now. The tragedy is that this is His "intention" because so many fail to want to understand it. We note "intention"; for God will never force. His passionate desire is to lavish His grace upon us eternally; but many ignore or resist His love. The "will" of God should be read more as His "intention", rather than a determinate force which shall make itself come true one way or another in the life of a person. That is the way of Islam, but it is not the God revealed in Christ.

Just as God must’ve ‘thought out’ His wonderful plan of lavishing grace upon us [for ‘the word’ existed first and then ‘became flesh’], we too will need to take time to think out our plans for showing grace to others. Eph. 2:5-8 speaks of God working with us now, so that He can lavish His grace upon us for eternity. This is what He is all about. And it’s what we should be all about; taking a Divine joy in forgiving, being generous, caring, showing grace. God simply loves lavishing grace; there is no response to human goodness as deserving it. And so our showing of grace should be likewise. Being kind and gracious for the sake of it, rather than as some calculated response to behaviour.

2:8 *For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift from God*- This is grace indeed. In the same way as repentance is given as a gift of the Spirit (Acts 3:25,26), so is faith. As noted on :5, we were made alive whilst we were dead, when we could do nothing. Faith in this grace is also a gift. It was God's psychological intervention in our lives and thinking which gave it to us, a setting up of situation and circumstance which resulted in our believing.

But this is not to say that human response is totally not required. If we believe and grasp the wonder of it all, we cannot be passive. Time and again, faith and works are bracketed together. Abraham was justified by faith, Paul argues in Romans; and by works, says James. Even within Genesis, his faith was counted for righteousness in Gen. 15:6; but Gen. 22:15-18 stress that because he had "done this thing" and been obedient, thereby was he justified. The Centurion meekly said to the Lord: “I am not worthy... neither thought I myself worthy"; but his *faith*, not his humility [as *we* might have expected] was commended by the Lord. That faith brought forth humility; just as John's letters see faith and love as parallel. The woman who washed the Lord's feet was likewise commended for her 'faith', although her actions were surely acts of devotion. But the Lord's analysis cut through to the essence that lay behind them: faith. There is a beauty to all this, in that salvation is by faith that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). And therefore Hab. 2:4 says that living by faith is the antithesis of being proud. The life of faith, trusting thereby in grace, is a life of humility. All the fruits of the Spirit thereby come together. In this sense, salvation is not by works. But if we can comprehend something of the purity of that grace, of God's willingness to save us regardless of our works; then we will *believe* it. And if we believe it, we will live a life of active and humble *working* for the Lord, not that we might be saved, but in thankful faith and gratitude for the magnitude of our experience of a grace, the height and depth of which, unfathomed, no man knows. We will "live", i.e. work through life, by faith (Hab. 2:4). If we truly accept God’s ways, then we will walk in them; to not walk in them is to reject them (Ez. 5:6). This ultimately is the importance of doctrine.

2:9 *It is not of works, that no one should boast*- As noted on :8, faith cannot be passive; it will issue in works. Salvation is not "of works" but works are not irrelevant. But those works are not the basis of our salvation. And Paul emphasizes this. For both Judaism and paganism considered works as the basis for salvation. The good news of salvation without works is unique to true Christianity. The connections with Romans continue here, in that boasting was associated with Jewish boasting in legalistic obedience (Rom. 2:17,23). Our boasting instead is in our sure hope of salvation by grace through the cross of the Lord Jesus. Seeing Paul would boast in nothing but the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14), we are to read his other references to glorying only in the Lord [Jesus] as meaning specifically glorying in His victorious death for me (1 Cor. 1:31; Phil. 3:3). We boast not in our works, but in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), a word which refers to both moral and physical weakness. And so we also boast in nothing but the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14), and thereby we boast in sure Hope of the glory of God, boasting "in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (s.w. Rom. 5:2,11). This idea of glorying / boasting is thus a common theme with Paul. This is the life of glory and victory- in Him, and not of ourselves, boasting that our lack of achievement, our weakness, our failure, has been met in Him who was crucified in weakness, so that we may be "weak in Him".

2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them*- Having said that salvation is not by works, we are told that the worker is God, the potter as it were working on us the clay. Baptism into Christ is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), which means that through the Spirit, He will be working on us with hopes and expectations of our response to His grace in specific ways. Man is never better than when working at what is clearly his calling and empowered by God in doing so. He is the worker, but we are to walk in good works- again the idea is of surrender to Him. Those good works are something we "walk in". Not a few flashes of devotion but a way of life, working for Him. We need to pray that God will reveal to us what are those specific works which He has prepared for us to do- and make them the thrust of our lives. For it's unlikely that His intention and hope was that we should get qualified, climb the career ladder, improve our homes, go up the ladder of cars, holiday homes and expensive gadgets... and die in a comfortable nursing home leaving what was left over to our kids or someone else as a kind of short cut towards that same sad life we thought we did so well in. The only other time the Greek word for "workmanship" occurs is in the enigmatic Rom. 1:20- and I have noted so far many connections with the early chapters of Romans. There we learn that God's invisible principles are made known to the Gentile world by "the things that are made". Those "things" are "His workmanship"- us. Entry into Christ, therefore, is a beginning and not an end. Nor is it merely an assent to the correctness of a set of theological truths. Rather is it an opening of ourselves to His workmanship upon us, and working for Him.

"Beforehand prepared" suggests we were prepared for the performing of our good works from a specific beginning point. And that surely was at 'the beginning'. Our entire genetic history, the nature of our early childhood experiences and surrounding family, was prepared so that we would be born with the wiring required to do the works intended. To turn away from those works, through disinterest, laziness, willful lack of perception, self absorption... is to waste so much. We on our side must be prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21); "be eagerly ready [s.w. prepared] unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1). We are to abound in good works (s.w.) because of God's abounding grace to us (2 Cor. 9:8). The good works are therefore a way of life and not some occasional good charitable deeds. We will be 'established' in this life of good works (2 Thess. 2:17); we are to "follow every good work" (1 Tim. 5:10), a strange phrase until we understand that the good works were prepared for us ahead of time, and we are to follow after them. We are to be on the look out, prepared, for those good works.

We were "beforehand prepared to glory" (Rom. 2:10, the only other usage of the Greek word). We were intended for salvation, the Kingdom and our place at the Messianic wedding banquet were "prepared" (a related word; Mt. 22:4; 25:34). But not all shall be saved, because they have wasted God's intention and not responded to it. We note the word "intention" in :7. By sitting at the Lord's table now we show our willingness to go along with His intention that we shall sit there eternally. We note the usage of the same word, repeatedly, about how the last supper [breaking of bread] was "prepared" ("Where will you have us *prepare* for you the Passover to eat?... he will show you a large upper room *prepared* and ready; there *prepare* it for us. And the disciples went into the city and found as he had said to them. And they *prepared* the Passover", Mk. 14:12,15,16). The first breaking of bread was prepared for them ahead of time [just as our good works were "beforehand prepared"], although they had to prepare it. This all speaks of how our place at the final Messianic banquet is prepared

for us, but we must accept the invitation; and we show that by sitting at the banquet now.

2:11 *Wherefore remember, that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by those called Circumcision (which is in the flesh and made with hands)*- The reference to circumcision as being "made with hands" connects with the preceding statement that we are not saved by works [what is done with hands] but we are instead the work of God (:10). Instead of circumcision of the flesh, done with human hands, we have God working upon our most intimate and personal inner being by His transforming Spirit. The connection is again to Romans: "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:29). In this sense "we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

This sounds as if the audience of "Ephesians" was Gentile. There were also Jews in the church at Ephesus. But there are good reasons to think that this letter was not specifically written to the church at Ephesus. It lacks any visible connection with the events there. I tend to agree with the take of William Barclay: "We believe that Ephesians was not in fact written to any one church, but was a circular letter to all Paul's Asian churches. Let us look again at Col.4:16. He writes: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church at Laodicea; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea." Paul does not say that the Colossians must read the epistle to Laodicea; they must read the epistle from Laodicea. It is as if Paul said: "There is a letter circulating; at the present moment it has reached Laodicea; when it is sent on to you from Laodicea be sure to read it." That sounds very like as if there was a letter circulating among the Asian churches... and we believe that letter was Ephesians". This would explain the lack of personal greetings in the letter. There is some evidence that the letter was originally called the epistle to the Laodiceans. This would mean that Eph. 1:1 "to the saints that are at Ephesus" simply refers to the circular letter being sent to them at this point. The strong similarities with Colossians suggest that that letter was reworked by Paul, under inspiration, into this circular general letter which we have as 'Ephesians'.

2:12 *You were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and living without God in the world*- This is clear evidence that not all religious roads lead to the true God. Apart from Christ, we have no hope and are without [relationship with] God. Separation or [Gk.] distance from Christ is parallel with alienation from the community of "Israel", the people of God. Paul will go on to demonstrate that therefore connection with Christ is connection with the community of believers. The covenants of promise are clearly understood by Paul as being the basis of the Christian Gospel. For the promises to Abraham are presented by him in Romans as being the foundation of the new covenant or testament. The "hope" in Christ is therefore the hope of Israel, salvation in the Messiah Jesus. How hard it would be for Roman citizens, or those who aspired to it, to realize that the highest honour was to be part of “the commonwealth of Israel”, that pokey, undeveloped, despised corner of the great Roman empire. And the call of Christ to middle class modern citizens is just as radical.

2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ*- The allusion is to Is. 57:19 LXX: "Peace upon peace [Biblical "peace" often refers to forgiveness and peace with God] to them that are far off, and to

them that are nigh: and the Lord has said, I will heal them". Judaism spoke of Gentile converts as coming near when they became proselytes. The idea of being made near continues the thought of :12, that we were once separate, at a distance, from both the Lord Jesus and from the community of God's people. Being made near therefore speaks not only of connection with the Lord Jesus, but also with the community of "Israel", God's people, who are in Him.

2:14 *For he himself is our peace*- "Peace" continues the allusion to Is. 57:19 (see on :13). The Lord Jesus was our peace in the sense He is the source of our peace, our peace offering. The enmity ["hostility"] is the 'alienation' from the community of Israel spoken of in :12, physically manifest in the stone dividing wall between the court of the Gentiles and the temple proper. The first century unity between Jew and Gentile must have been especially impressive. Philo records of Jamnia: “There lived a mixed population, the majority of them Jews but the rest a number of foreigners who had nested there as vermin from neighbouring territories”. And there are many other such references to the bitter hatred between them. This “enmity” (AV) between them was taken away for those who were in Christ (Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). It must have made a startling and arresting witness. And yet sadly, it didn’t continue; the old tensions and feelings rent apart that unity. The issues facing the body of Christ today are not simply Jew : Gentile tensions; there are enmities and oppositions between groups and persons which are only resoluble by common membership in the body of Christ.

The offerer put his hand on the head of the animal, thereby associating himself with it. In a sense, the animal therefore represented the offerer. But it had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 3:1), and to produce a "sweet savour" when burnt (Lev. 3:16). But how are we to offer ourselves as an unblemished sacrifice? We are surely each aware of our desperate sinfulness. The answer is in the fact that the language of the peace offering sacrifice is applied to Jesus. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), our peace offering by metonymy (in the same way as Christ was made “sin" for us, i.e. a sin offering). He is the unblemished animal (1 Pet. 1:19), and if we are in Christ, we too will be counted as being without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27). We ought to know whether we are in Christ. If we are, we will be seen by God as just as pure as He is. See on Eph. 5:2. We thereby become mediators of peace to all manner of divided groups and persons.

Who has made us one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility- Our peace with God is manifest in peace between us and others, at least on our side. The dividing wall refers to the various walls in the temple. William Barclay summarizes: "The Temple consisted of a series of courts, each one a little higher than the one that went before, with the Temple itself in the inmost of the courts. First there was the Court of the Gentiles; then the Court of the Women; then the Court of the Israelites; then the Court of the Priests; and finally the Holy Place itself". The division between Jew and Gentile, between men and women, priests and non-priests [for now we are all priests] has been taken down. Because the wall between God and man, His holiness and our unholiness, has been taken down in Christ. But by saying "in Christ", I mean specifically through sustained meditation upon what the cross achieved. For it is He as the sacrificed peace offering which creates this peace; :13 is specific that we are made near, no longer divided, by the Lord's blood. It was in His flesh, His crucified body, that the enmity was taken away (:15). His flesh made peace (:15)- the offering of His flesh was the peace offering. We note as often in Paul's writings that the ideas of the Lord's body and blood occur in close proximity; possibly because his

writings were based upon sermons first preached at breaking of bread meetings. This is why it is nothing less than tragic that the bread and wine which commemorates that victory has become the cause of division rather than unity.

2:15- see on Lk. 11:22; Heb. 2:14.

Having abolished in the flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of the two one new man, making peace- The source of alienation between Jew and Gentile was the Law, but the thought here goes far beyond that. It was human sin, transgression of God's commandments, which created alienation between God and man. This too has been removed, with the result that connection with the Father and Son is likewise connection between all others who are in Christ, i.e. the community of God's people, "Israel". But that unity has to be felt and expressed by us in practice. Hence Paul uses the fact that we are all "in Christ" as the basis of His appeal for true unity amongst the believers- with all the patience, forbearing etc. which this involves. By baptism into Christ, we are baptized into the same body of Christ as many others (Rom. 12:5). Therefore we "sit together... in Christ" (Eph. 2:6; 1:10). He has made in Himself one new man, so making peace between all those in Him (Eph. 2:15). This is why division between those in Christ is ultimately an impossibility. Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:10).

The body of Christ *is* Christ; the members of that body between them reflect every aspect of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:15,16). We may each be given a different aspect to reflect, and groups of believers in different historical periods may have been focused on different aspects, but the end result is that at the second coming, the body of believers will have reflected Christ fully. We were redeemed in one body by the cross; and *therefore*, Paul reasons, we are "*fellow*citizens with [*all*] the saints, and of [*all*] the household of God... in whom *all* the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded *together* for an habitation of God" (Eph. 2:16-22). Christ died for all of us in the one body, and therefore we who benefit from this are built up *together* into a temple in which God will eternally dwell. To refuse fellowship to other stones of the temple is surely a denial that they are part of that one body which was redeemed by the cross. He died to make us all one, to abolish all that humanly might keep us apart, "for to make in himself one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:13-15). To uphold division and disharmony within the "one new man" is well nigh a blasphemy against the body and blood of the Lord. From the Lord's pierced side came His bride, after the pattern of Eve from Adam, through the blood (memorial meeting?) and water (baptism?). The creation of the one body was a direct result of His death. The Greek word for "fellowship", *koinonia*, is used outside the New Testament to refer to peoples' joint sharing of a common property. We are "in fellowship" with each other by reason of our relation to a greater whole in which we have a part. And that 'property', the greater whole, is the person and work of the Lord Jesus- for our fellowship is "in Him". This background of the word shows that it's inappropriate to claim to have 'withdrawn fellowship' from anyone who is in Christ. They are joint sharers in Christ just as much as we are- so we cannot tell them that they don't share *koinonia* with us. To say that is to judge either them or ourselves to be not sharing in Christ- and according to the Lord's plain teaching, any such judgment will lead to our condemnation. It is the Lord's body, His work, and He invites who He wishes to have *koinonia* in Him. It's not for us to claim that *we* have withdrawn fellowship from anyone who has *koinonia* in Him.

2:16 *And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby having slain the enmity*- The enmity between God and man has been dealt with in Christ, and this means that likewise the natural enmity between persons has likewise been ended for all those in Christ. Reconciliation with our separated brethren therefore can be achieved; because potentially the enmity is slain, we are already reconciled in one body by the cross. It's for us to live this out in practice. We can move away from the tribal, jungle mentality that 'my enemy's friend is my enemy'- if we see and believe how God loves them too as His dear children. The Lord Jesus reconciled all true believers unto God "in one body by the cross". All who are reconciled by the Lord's sacrifice are therefore in the one body, and therefore we have a duty to fellowship with others in the one body. If we refuse to do this, we in some way attempt to nullify the aim of the cross. He died in the way that He did in order that the love which He had showed might be manifested between us (Jn. 17:26). To break apart the body is to undo the work of the cross.

2:17 *And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near*- He could remind the Ephesians that Christ personally "came and preached peace to you" after His resurrection, when it was in fact Paul who did this, motivated as he was by the resurrection of Christ. Paul, like us, was therefore the manifestation of the Lord Jesus when he preached Him. As the Lord is the light of the world, so we are the light of the world. All that is true of Him becomes true of those "in Christ" and we are to act accordingly. Those considered by Judaism 'far' [Gentiles] and 'near' [Jews] all needed the good news of peace preached to them. The idea of the Lord Jesus coming and preaching to people is found also in 1 Pet. 3:19 (see note there). The language of going, coming or moving is often used in relation to the preaching of a person – e.g. Mt. 9:13: "*but go* and learn what that means". The Lord didn't intend that they literally went away somewhere. Likewise Dan. 12:4 and Hab. 2:2 bid those who understand God's word to "run" – not literally, but in response to the word preached. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so– but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time.

2:18 *For through him we have our joint access in one Spirit to the Father*- The extent of our peace with God is that we have access to the Father in the Spirit. There is only one Spirit- not one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. 1 Pet. 3:18 has a connected idea; and we noted on :17 that 1 Pet. 3:19 is connected also to this passage: "Christ once suffered for sins... that He might bring us [s.w. "have access"] to God [on account of having been] put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit". We too have been made alive with Him by the Spirit (see on :5). "To the Father" , *pros* the Father, is a phrase used about the status and place of the ascended Lord Jesus now (Jn. 13:1,3; 14:12,28; 16:10,16,28; 17:11; 20:17; 1 Jn. 2:1). Those references in John are largely in the context of the Comforter, the gift of the Spirit, enabling us to be *pros* the Father as the Lord Jesus now is. Or as Ephesians 2 has put it, we died, rose and ascended to Heaven with the Lord Jesus if we are in Him. This access to God is for both Jew and Gentile. We are both brought to the same place, in the Father's presence

in Heaven, by the work of the Spirit which we received because we are in Christ. This of itself should unite us in our earthly relationships. Paul goes on to say that he prays *pros* the Father (Eph. 3:14).

2:19 *So then you are no longer strangers and pilgrims, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God-* We who were "strangers" have been accepted; and this in practice should motivate us to accept "strangers" (Mt. 25:35,38 s.w.). The Lord's crucifixion led to "strangers" being able to be buried within Jerusalem (Mt. 27:7 s.w.). In a sense we are "strangers and pilgrims" to the surrounding world (Heb. 11:13). But not to God. In first century society, there was a strong sense of identity based upon geographical origin. To sacrifice this for the sake of an abstract association with the citizenship of God's people, "Israel" (:12), was no small thing. And it is no less radical for us- to exchange our sense of identity and social security for association with the still immature community of "Israel". Paul again urges them to see their connection with God as a connection also with His family.

The Romans allowed the existence of the autonomous *politaea*, the city-state, so long as within its religion it featured the worship of the Emperor. And yet the NT writers speak of the ecclesia as a city which is independent, defiantly devoted to the worship of the one and only true God (Eph. 2:19; 3:20; Heb. 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21). The writers must have nervously penned those inspired words, knowing the problems it would create. The Spirit of God could have chosen not to so directly challenge this world; and yet there is a chasmic difference between the community of God and the surrounding world, which the New Testament unashamedly triumphs in. The whole basis of this radical separation is the fact that Christ died for us. He died to unite us who believe in what the NT terms "*the* unity", without seeking to further define it (Jn. 11:52; 17:23; Eph. 1:10; 2:14; 4:3). We were reconciled to each other as well as to God "in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). His death unites us in that standing before His cross, all our pettiness disappears, and we are impressed again with the reality that if He so laid down His life for us, so we must lay down our lives for the brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). It really and truly is a case of one for all, and all for one.

2:20 *Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone-* The reference is surely to the New Testament prophets whose inspired utterances formed the New Testament documents, which were the foundation of the new temple of God's people. The Heavenly Jerusalem of the closing visions of Revelation likewise features the apostles as the foundation stones. What was then all so abstract will be turned to visual reality when the Lord returns, and reveals how things really are from God's viewpoint. We are "being built", rather like we are the workmanship of God (:10). The metaphor requires us to allow ourselves to be shaped and put into place within God's wider plan for saving a community. His building is done through other builders (1 Cor. 3:10,12) and through our response to the word of grace which builds us up (Acts 20:32 s.w.). In that sense we build ourselves up (Jude 20) through allowing His building of us.

2:21 *In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord-* The equivalent in Colossians is the statement that we are "grounded and built up in Him" (Col. 2:7). The whole process of preparation, which is what building is largely about, involves being used in cooperation with the other materials in the building. So much of His work with us therefore involves our association and dovetailing with others; and this is exactly the aspect of His work which leads so many to give up. This is exactly why the frictions which are part of church life are all so necessary. To opt out by pushing off into splendid isolation, whilst professing to

maintain our faith in Christ, is to miss the purpose of His work with us; and risks us being left out of the final total building. This is not to say we should not quit abusive churches and church situations, but the essence of "being fitted together" must not be ignored. This same word is only used again in 4:16, where in a different metaphor, we are the body parts which cannot exist separately to each other, but are all fitted together by God's operation in order to function. Solomon built the temple of stone already prepared (1 Kings 6:7); Christ is the builder of the spiritual temple, in which the stones should fit together without strife (Eph. 2:21 alludes to 1 Kings 6:7).

2:22 *In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*- The repeated "in whom" (:21) again suggests that "in Christ" is a terms which often has reference to our collective experience with others who are in His body. As noted on :21, the metaphor emphasizes how we are built "together". The Spirit of God dwells in the assembled temple, and not just in isolated individuals who want nothing to do with the building as a whole. The churches to whom Paul was writing were extremely immature; yet he never once advocates separating from them. Nor does the Lord in His letters to the churches. And it is the perceived immaturity of others in the church which is the main reason why believers push off into isolation. Such impatience and quitting of the building site, as it were, should not be glorified as 'standing up for the Truth'. It is nothing of the sort- just being cranky and selfish, and failing to perceive God's work through the Spirit. God is now dwelling within us, individually and collectively, by the Spirit; but this is in anticipation of how He shall do so eternally. To be without the Spirit now means we shall not be eternally inhabited by it.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles*- The "cause" is that in the preceding verse, 2:22. There, Paul has taught that God is working through His Spirit so that He may indwell His people through the Spirit. When he finishes his parenthesis, he continues praying "For this cause..." that the Spirit will dwell in them richly (:14-19). He wishes to comfort them that his imprisonment was not wasted- it was for "the cause" of the revealed mystery- that Jews and Gentiles are going to be saved, and life for ever. This "mystery" had been hidden [which is what 'mystery' means, not something incomprehensible]. It was now, in the new testament and by the Gospel preachers, revealed. Not "as" it had been revealed in the Old Testament. It was revealed there- there are many statements about the final acceptance of Gentiles and indeed there is an Old Testament doctrine of eternal life. But the simple truths that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved, shall live eternally, shall have all sin forgiven... these are the truths stated in the New Testament, far clearer than they were revealed in the Old. Paul's talk of a revealed mystery matches John's language of "truth". The simple truth is that we shall be forgiven and live eternally, through the work of the Lord Jesus. And so Paul doesn't want his converts to think that his imprisonment for preaching these things is somehow in vain.

Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings. Here we have a huge bracketed section, as it were: "For this cause I, Paul [*the prisoner of Jesus Christ*...]"; and then there is a parenthesis of 13 verses, until then he resumes: *For this cause* I bow my knees" (Eph. 3:1,14). There are other examples in his letters:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare [*his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say*] at this time his righteousness" (Rom. 3:25,26). "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour... nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

"The prisoner" suggests Paul wrote to them from prison in Rome. He feels that his imprisonment was for the sake of the Gentiles receiving the Gospel. And so it was; for it was Jewish fury and jealousy over this issue which led them to get him imprisoned. But we recall that he was sent to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews. So much could

3:2- See on Eph. 4:7.

If indeed you have heard- This doesn't mean that they had not heard of the fact that Paul by God's grace was sharing with the Gentiles the news of salvation. He means rather 'If you have really appreciated', and he will go on in :16-19 to pray that they will be helped by the Spirit towards such an appreciation. 1 Pet. 2:3 has a similar idea: "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious". There was no doubt that they had heard that the Lord was gracious. It was a question of appreciation.

Of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you- Paul surely alludes to how he was the especially commissioned apostle to the Gentiles, with the role of taking God's grace to them. "Dispensation" means 'stewardship'. This may conjure up issues of people with spare cash or in decision making positions. But the truth is that we have all been given God's grace, and are stewards of that grace, as Peter states explicitly in 1 Pet. 4:10: "as each has received a gift, minister it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God". It is in our power to forgive, to share the grace of the Gospel with others. And this knowledge of the Gospel is our power in this world, and our responsibility.

3:3 *As I wrote before in few words: How by revelation was the mystery made known to me*- Perhaps Paul had written a brief, unpreserved letter to the Ephesians before. Or maybe the reference is to Galatians, where he explains that he received the ideas concerning grace to the Gentiles by revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself, and not from men.

God’s ways are described as a secret, a mystery; the Hebrew word used in this connection means ‘A confidential plan revealed to intimate friends’; and yet they are revealed to the true believers (Am. 3:7-8; Jer. 23: 18,22 AV mg.; Ps. 25:14; Eph. 3:3-6). Therefore the congregation of true believers is called “the secret assembly of the saints”(Ps. 89:7 Heb.).

3:4 *Whereby, as you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ*- This is not boasting as to how much Paul understands; rather he wants them to perceive his understanding and share it as their own. He will go on to pray, as he has done earlier, that their eyes will be opened by the Spirit to perceive the mystery of Christ (1:18; 3:18). His prayers for their enlightenment would therefore mesh with their own reading or hearing of his words to them. The gift of the Spirit to perceive therefore opened their eyes to the real import of the written words; just as the Ethiopian commented that he could not understand the word he was reading without extra help.

3:5 *This in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit*- The "other generations" could equally be rendered "other ages", as if Paul recognized the Jewish

division of human history into ages. The inclusion of the Gentiles is stated in the Old Testament, both directly and obliquely. But the obvious truth had not been "made known" or "revealed". Just as we noted on :4 that the Spirit would give the Ephesians understanding of the written word so that they 'got it', likewise Paul is saying that all those Old Testament references (which he himself brings to our attention in his letters) needed "the Spirit" to reveal their (now) obvious meaning. And the Lord worked through the apostles and New Testament prophets to make that revelation- through His Spirit. This is yet more evidence that man does not face off against God over an open Bible alone; the Spirit reveals the meaning at the right time.

3:6 *That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*- This is "the mystery of Christ" of :4. "The Gospel" had already been revealed to Abraham, in the form of the promises which clearly implied the acceptance of the Gentiles into His seed (Gal. 3:8). But as noted on :5, this (now) obvious truth had to be revealed by the Spirit. The words on paper required an interpretation which was given by the Spirit at the right time. The delay in revealing this truth was surely because the body of Christ was not then in existence, and His work and sacrifice had not then been completed. And seeing He had genuine freewill, there was the possibility He could have failed. In this we see the thrill of victory when he finally dies perfect and morally triumphant, and the endless wonder and significance of His resurrection.

3:7 *Of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of His power*- All preaching work is to be done as a servant, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, the servant of all. Being *made* a servant recalls Paul's language about how the Lord Jesus throughout His life and supremely in his death was "made a servant" (Phil. 2:7). Paul made himself a servant of all (1 Cor. 9:19), and yet here he says he was "made a servant" according to God's powerful working. God's game plan with us is to humble us, make us slaves- and insofar as we willingly seek to go along with that plan, He will work with us as we with Him. "His power" in that sense is perfected in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). "The working of His power" is a phrase Paul uses about God's work in each and every believer through the Spirit given to us (Eph. 1:19; 4:16), a "working" or [Gk.] 'energy' released within each of us through our baptismal association with the Lord's resurrection (Col. 2:12). Paul was not therefore a special case; we each have the same power working in us to achieve and enable the Lord's intended mission for each of us. It is only our dysfunction which doesn't allow it to operate fully.

3:8 *To me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*- Twice (also in :7) Paul marvels at the grace we have received in order to share the Gospel with others. Preaching is not therefore a mere duty, to be performed in the spirit of glum witness to a disinterested world. It is a wonderful grace given that we should have the honour of inviting others to eternity. Whenever Paul talks about preaching, he talks of humility. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he later faced his death, he wrote to Timothy here that he was "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should

therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. Paul coins a word here to emphasize his humble status in contrast to the honour of being a preacher: "less than the least" (*elachistotero*). He was a preacher despite the fact he was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); only through mercy / forgiveness had he received the commission he had (2 Cor. 4:1).

Paul felt he was less than the least" of all saints, that he would be the least in the Kingdom (Eph. 3:8). He uses a closely related word to that used by John when he spoke of how he must "decrease" (Jn. 3:30). It was as if he felt like John at his most 'decreased', in prison fearing death; and remember that Paul wrote Ephesians from prison too. But John was weak in prison; he doubted (momentarily) whether Jesus was the Messiah, "him that should come" (Lk. 7:19). Yet Paul seems to allude to this when he says that "he that shall come will come" (Heb. 10:37)- as if to say 'John, my hero, you had your weak moments too, but I've tried to learn the lesson from them'.

3:9 *And to make all men see what is the intention of this mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things*- To 'make see' is the same word used in 1:18, where Paul prays for the eyes of the believers to be "enlightened". The "all men" therefore particularly has in view those who have already believed (see on Mt. 20:27); he wishes both Jew and Gentile believers to perceive the wonder of the unity which God's program has in mind for us. He will go on in 3:18,19 to pray that the believers will be empowered by the Spirit to comprehend and know the wonder of the Gospel and its implications in personal relationships. All this prayer and concern about realizing the implications of the Gospel is proof enough that the Christian life is not simply knowing or preserving a set of doctrines. That alone will not save. We need the Spirit to open our eyes to the implications of these things. The comment that "God created all things" may be a reference to the new creation of believers (2 Cor. 5:17; AV adds "by Jesus Christ"); but it may be simply making the point that all things literally were created in order to merely provide a backdrop for God's essential intention- the "fellowship" (AV, NEV "intention") between persons in Christ. The fact the church is riven with so many inter-personal tensions is sadly a reflection of the way that we have missed the point of the Gospel, and remained on the level of technical knowledge of propositions rather than allowing the Spirit to enlighten us as to the implications in practice. These things were "hid in God" in the sense that they could only be actualized by the Lord Jesus, His work and sacrifice. But in Him and through the members of His faithful body, they are now revealed.

3:10- see on Gal. 6:6.

The intention was that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places- We note the idea of "intention" (as in :9). God will not force His way upon those who refuse Him, and even with those of us who accept His way, He bears with our dysfunctions- which mean that His ideal intentions remain not fully achieved in this life. We waste so much potential by our slowness and obtuse dysfunction in spiritual matters. The wisdom of God was seen by Paul as being His plan to save and unite all men, Jew and Gentile, within His Son (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2:7). That wisdom is given to us by the Spirit (1:17); it is ours for the asking (James 1:5). The unity of Jew and Gentile in the church is the context here, and that was to be the public exhibition of God's manifold wisdom. We can read "the rulers and authorities" as referring simply to the rulers of this world; for 'the heavens' can Biblically refer to those in authority over the masses on 'earth'. The church at Ephesus had been born within a background of conflict with the rulers of this world; and the unity between Jew and Gentile in the

church was intended to witness to them of God's manifold wisdom. The church is the body of Christ; He is manifest only through us. We are Him, in that sense. Our bodies are members of His body (1 Cor. 6:15). All that we do, in word and deed, is in the Name of the Lord Jesus- i.e. as representing Him whose Name we called upon ourselves in baptism (Col. 3:17). We are the words of His epistle to both the world and the brotherhood; He has no other face or legs or arms than us (2 Cor. 3:3). We can thereby limit Him if our disunity fails to manifest His wisdom as intended.

But Paul was a Jew writing to those influenced by Judaism. It could be that "principalities and powers" (AV) could refer to Angels, which were a major aspect of Jewish thought in the first century. In this case it would appear that the Angels learn and increase their knowledge from watching our response to the Gospel. "Principalities and powers" is a phrase apposite to the Angels and it is clearly used regarding the Angels who gave the Law in Col 2:15. In this case Eph. 3:9,10 could be read like this: "To make all (both Angels and Christians- AV "men" is not in the original) see what is the fellowship of the mystery (that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved), which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God (and therefore from the Angels too)… to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the ecclesia the manifold wisdom of God". We share the heavenlies with the Angels- and in any case, why cannot 'the heavenlies' refer to literal Heaven also in a sense? As Christ was resurrected and ascended to literal Heaven, the Heavenlies of Eph. 1:20, so we are baptized and spiritually ascend to Heaven straight afterwards (Eph. 1:20). An Angelic interpretation would avoid the difficult that the human principalities and powers to whom the mystery was made known would not accept that mystery, according to 1 Cor. 2:7,8,14: "We speak the wisdom of God (cp. Eph. 1 "the manifold wisdom of God") in a mystery (cp. "the mystery… which hath been hid" in Eph. 1)… which none of the princes of this world knew (principalities and powers!)… the natural man (i. e. the princes of this world) receives not the things of the Spirit of God (the "mystery" of :7), for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned". Because Angels control world rulers, "principalities and powers" could perhaps refer both to them and the Angels behind them.

3:11 *According to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*- I noted earlier that God's purpose with us in Christ was not simply hatched from the beginning of this present world; but from eternity, from before time- and it shall continue beyond time, for eternity. The unity in Christ, this fellowship between the redeemed which the cross enabled, had been God's original intention; how tragic, therefore, is our disunity within the church. The mystery of His will, His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself from not merely 'the beginning' but from eternity, was that "in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). Thus the unity of the redeemed is not just an incidental product of our redemption and unity in Christ; it was the essential intention and goal of God from before the beginning of the world, and was only revealed through the unity achieved by the cross (Eph. 3:9,10). This was His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). These passages in Ephesians need meditation; for it is easy to underestimate the tremendous emphasis given to how the mysterious unity of the body of believers, *together* glorifying His Name, was so *fundamentally* and *eternally* God's main purpose. And so Paul marvelled that *he* had been chosen to plainly reveal this, God's finest and most essential mystery, to all men; for it was not revealed at all in the OT, nor even (at least, not directly) by the Lord Jesus. And we may likewise

marvel that we have a living part in it. That I, the little boy with glasses from the council estate behind Grove Park railway station in an anonymous South London suburb... was known from eternity by God, to live for eternity in unity with the rest of His people... And you too. What a tragedy it is when a person steps out of that purpose, opts out because of some petty argument with others, or is thrust out of it because they didn't get this or that right or messed up or fellowshipped this one or that one, or got maxed out on earning more money to buy that dream house or car ... and what a glory, an honour, to be able to extend a place in that eternal purpose to those around us.

3:12 *In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him-* The "boldness" with which we come before the "throne of grace" right now, is the "boldness" with which we will come before that same throne at the final day of judgment (Heb. 4:16; Eph. 3:12 cp. 1 Jn. 4:17). Faith in the Lord Jesus therefore produces this boldness and confidence; faith in Him therefore means believing, trusting in Him, that He has saved us and shall do so at the last day. Faith in Him doesn't simply mean believing He once existed, for about everyone from atheist Communist to Judaist to Muslim believes that much. Nor does it refer to a mere knowledge of some propositions about Him. It is trust that really, He has and will save us eternally, and on account of Him we have a place in God's eternal purpose which was always in Him (:11). Prayer therefore will be with such confidence- not confidence that we shall absolutely receive the requests made in the terms in which we asked for them, but a confidence in God's presence as we speak with Him.

3:13 *Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory-* Paul urges them not to beat themselves up because he is in prison because of having preached to them. The amazing glory made possible by his preaching makes imprisonment as absolutely nothing compared to what his work had achieved. See on Phil. 4:1. We have here a strong encouragement to preach and share this amazing Gospel at all costs, for the cost is incomparable with what is achieved by it.

Our confidence in the Heavenly throne room explained in :12 should mean that nothing on earth makes us waver. They had heard and perhaps witnessed Paul's tribulations at Ephesus for them, and were aware he was in prison in Rome. He was a living exhibition of the sufferings which come from being "in Christ". And it naturally made the converts worry at what might be coming their way. Instead of fearing as a result of Paul's sufferings, they were to instead glory in them.

"Lose heart" is a phrase elsewhere translated "faint not" and it occurs in Lk. 18:1: "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint". There are so many allusions by Paul to this verse and the ensuing parable. This shows just how like us Paul was; he had his favourite parables, one or two that really stuck in his mind, just as we do. And he alluded to them! They were in his heart, to inspire and motivate him, just as the Lord intended. Paul picks up the idea of not fainting in 2 Thess. 3:13: "Brethren, be not weary (s.w. "not to faint") in well doing" . What well-doing did Paul have in mind? Attending the Sunday meetings? Being patient with some difficult sister in the ecclesia? The connection with Lk. 18:1 tells us what he had in mind: keep on praying intensely. It's no co-incidence that Paul started that section of 2 Thess. 3 (in v.1) with the exhortation: "Brethren, pray for us". And he concludes it with the same rubric: "Brethren, be not weary" (faint not), in your prayers. He knew from the parable that repeated prayer was powerful. And so he asks them to keep at it for him, because he needed it. Perhaps Paul had the same thing in

mind here when he wrote to the Ephesians (3:13): "In (Christ) we have boldness and access with confidence (to God, in prayer, cp. Heb. 4:16)... *wherefore* I desire that ye faint not (s.w. Lk. 18:1) at my tribulations"; is he not implying 'You know how powerful prayer is, so don't faint in it, you know what struggles I'm having, *please* keep on praying for me, like that persistent widow in the parable'. This fits in with a number of other passages in which Paul unashamedly begs his brethren to pray for him. In this we see his humility, his high regard for other brethren who were almost certainly weaker than him, and also the physical desperation of his daily life.

3:14- see on Eph. 1:15.

For this cause I bow my knees to the Father- This resumes the train of thought from "this cause" in :1. The intervening verses, as noted there, are a parenthesis. What we now read until the "Amen" in :21 is a unique transcript of Paul's prayer for them, said on his knees, and also mixing praise with worship; for to bow the knee is an idiom for praise as well as the prayer of request. Paul uses the same words in writing of how every knee shall bow to God at the day of judgment (Rom. 14:11); but he lived in prayer now as he would before the day of judgment. That was exactly the sense of his idea of being "confident" both in prayer now and the day of judgment in the future- see on :12. Our attitude in prayer to God now will be out attitude at the day of judgment.

3:15 *From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named*- This alludes to Adam naming everything in creation; and Paul here has in view the new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). "Every family" may be a reference to every church, especially appropriate given that most of the early churches were house churches, meeting as family. The phrase can equally be rendered "the whole family". Paul chooses to use the word *patria* to describe this new “family in heaven and earth” to which we belong in Christ. The word *patria* is defined by Strong as meaning “a group of families” that comprise a nation [s.w. Acts 3:25 “all kindreds of the earth”]. The various family units / house churches comprised the overall body of Christ, the nation of the new Israel. Eph. 3:15 takes on a new meaning in the light of the house-church nature of early Christianity. God is the *pater* [father- the head of the house] from whom every home [*patria*] in heaven and on earth is named”. We’re invited to see God as a family God, with us as “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19; 3:15). See on Acts 8:3; Col. 1:20. By baptism into the Name, we have His family Name named upon us. To be aware of who Yahweh is, of the characteristics outlined in Ex. 34:5-7 that comprise His Name… this must surely affect *our* behaviour, seeing we bear that Name. It is an understanding of the Name that inspires our faith in forgiveness. "Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many" (Jer. 14:7,9,21). The Name is called upon us in baptism (Jer. 14:9 = Eph. 3:15), and this is why we urge men to be baptized into the Name to wash away their sins. See on Heb. 13:15.

3:16 *That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*- This is evidence enough that the function of the Holy Spirit is within the inner man, and the gift of Spirit strengthening doesn't refer solely to the temporary miraculous gifts. And this verse is likewise evidence enough that the Spirit doesn't simply enter us through Bible reading. For Paul prays that God would give them this gift. There is a strong element of external agency here, the prayer of a third party for this working in the inner man to happen. There are many examples even in the Old Testament of God working directly upon human hearts / spirits. There is a huge wealth of spiritual strength with God- "the riches of His glory". Although we are given the Spirit at baptism, we continue to

receive it, and it appears from this prayer that it can be also given in response to the prayers of third parties. John the Baptist was "strengthened in the Spirit" (Lk. 1:80), and yet "John did no miracle" (Jn. 10:41). The reference is to internal strengthening; to palm off all references to the Holy Spirit as referring to the temporary miraculous gifts is just not the correct interpretation. We are to humble ourselves under the strengthening hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6 s.w.); His activity seeks to humble us that we might be exalted in due time. The Spirit is given at baptism, and Paul prays that that indwelling gift might give them strength. The Corinthians had received the gift, but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). We too have the same gift but need to realize the potential. These promises of internal spiritual strengthening don't mean that we shall not sin; the only other reference to "the inner man" is when Paul laments that he delights in God's law "in the inner man" (Rom. 7:22), but still sins because he is in the flesh. We should not therefore ignore the promises of the Spirit's work because we know we are sinners and shall continue sinning throughout our mortal lives.

3:17- see on Lk. 6:48.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you would be rooted and grounded in love- It is the "spirit of Christ" which dwells in us (Rom. 8:9,11). This is the promised Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, which would dwell within us to the extent that the Lord's physical absence would be compensated for by His Spirit making His presence real to us. And the simple end result of that is, in a word, "love". Such love, both the love of Christ for us and our response in lives of love, will become our root and foundation. And if we are “rooted and grounded in love”, then :18 promises that we will come to appreciate yet more “the love of Christ”. There is an upward spiral of spirituality. It is the love principle which alone can give stability to our otherwise unstable existence. People do not know really how to live, how to think, how or what to be. It is having a foundation in the love principle which constantly and consistently provides the answers to our endless questions as to how to respond to all the mental and secular issues which we meet hour by hour.

3:18 *That you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height*- As noted on :17, the gift of the Spirit enables us to perceive the love of the Father and Son. Rom. 5:5 says the same- "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us". Again we have in view a gift of the Spirit within our spirit, or as Ephesians terms it, "the inner man". The gift of understanding something of the dimensions of the Lord's love is not received by us in isolation; the heightened comprehension is "with all the saints".

"The love of Christ" often refers to the Lord's sacrifice. We cannot sit passively before the cross of the Lord. That “love of Christ" there passes our human knowledge, and yet our hearts can be opened, as Paul prayed, that we might know the length, breadth and height of it. The crucified Son of God was the full representation of God. The love of Christ was shown in His cross; and through the Spirit's enlightenment we can *know* the height, length, breadth of that love (Eph. 3:18,19). But this passage in Ephesians is building on Job 11:7-9: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea". The purpose of the connection is to show that through appreciating the love of Christ, unknowable to the unenlightened mind, we see the Almighty unto perfection, in a way which the Old Testament believers were unable to do. It was as high as Heaven, and what could they do? And yet it must be confessed that we do not in practice attain to such fullness of knowledge and vision. We look to

the Kingdom, one of the excellencies of which will be the full grasp of the Almighty unto perfection, as manifest in the death of His Son. All we *now* know is that that cross was the fullness of God, it was "the Almighty unto perfection". But then, we shall know, we shall find it out. And yet, paradoxically, in some sense even now we can *know* "the love of Christ" [a phrase often used about the cross] that *passes* human knowledge. Speaking of His upcoming death, the Lord warned that where he was going, the disciples could not then follow; but they would, afterwards. This doesn't necessarily mean they too were to die the death of the cross. Rather could it mean that they later would enter into what His death really meant; then they would see with some understanding, rather than run away from the vision of the cross. And for us, one of the Kingdom's riches will likewise be that we shall then understand that final climactic act the more fully. Yet we begin that discovery now.

God has more spiritual culture, for want of a better way of putting it, than to describe the love of Christ just with a string of superlative adjectives. Paul prayed that his Ephesians would be strengthened by the Spirit's working in the inner man, so that they would "be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:18,19 RV). There is a paradox here; to know something that can't be known, that passes knowledge. We can only know that love by God working on our inner man, so that we realize the experience we have of the love of Christ, and by seeing it manifested in others.

3:19 *And to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*- "To truly know" doesn't mean that we know to perfection every aspect of the Lord's love. It rather means that we know His love for us as the ultimate truth. "The truth" is not so much a set of doctrinal propositions as the simple fact that the Lord loved us to the end, and we shall live eternally with Him through that love.

It is surely apparent that it would be pointless to pray for our brethren if in fact those prayers have no power at all, and if ultimately we are all responsible for our own spiritual path. There is in all this an incredible and most urgent imperative. This is why Paul bowed his knees in prayer for the Ephesians, knowing that his words could really increase and enrich the quality of their relationship with God, if not their very salvation (Eph. 3:14-19). If my prayers can influence your eternal destiny, if they can lead you from condemnation to the eternity of God's Kingdom: then I must, if I have any gram of love and care within me, dedicate myself to prayer for you. And you, likewise, for me. Prayer for others' spiritual well-being becomes no longer something which is 'tacked on' to our tired, repetitious evening prayers.

All the fullness of God dwelt in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9); "and of his fullness have *all* we received" (Jn. 1:16). God's fullness, the full extent of His character, dwelt in Christ, and through His Name which speaks fully of that character, that fullness of Christ is reckoned to us. And so, in line with all this, Eph. 3:19 makes the amazing statement. And it is amazing. We can *now* "be filled with *all* the fullness of God". Let's underline that, really underline it, in our hearts. We can be *filled* with *all* the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God's character. See on Eph. 1:23. We are counted righteous, counted as if we have the Lord's moral perfection; but as Romans 8 explains, the Spirit is given in order to help us become in reality what we are counted as being by status. The language of 'filling' is used about being filled with

the Spirit in our inner person (Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 4:10; 5:18). It is the filling by the Spirit which reveals to us the fullness of God.

3:20 *Now to Him that is able to do immeasurably above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*- This is one of several allusions to Paul's final address to the Ephesian elders; I suggested on 1:1 that Ephesians was initially a follow up letter to that meeting:

Acts 20:19 = Eph. 4:2 "lowliness of mind"
Acts 20:27 = Eph. 1:11 "counsel", God's plan.
Acts 20:32 = Eph. 3:20 God's "ability".
Acts 20:32 = Eph. 2:20. Building upon the foundation.
Acts 20:32 = Eph. 1:14,18 "The inheritance of the saints."

Answers to prayer are described as “great and mighty things, which you know not” (Jer. 33:3)- i.e. the very nature of answered prayer is that it is above all we ask or think. It leads to a sense of wonderment with this God with whom we are in relationship. And answered prayer is indeed part and parcel of a living relationship with the Father and Son. But Paul may simply mean that the spiritual help he has just prayed for is far beyond anything the Ephesians could "ask or think" of requesting. He urges them to believe that God is indeed "able" to work the spiritual transformation he has just prayed for. And that ability is potentially within each of us; for each baptized believer has received "the power that works in us", it is a question of allowing it to operate. Again we note that the Spirit works *within* us; there is no reference to the miraculous gifts, they were an incidental, temporal external witness to the profound fact that God's Spirit power has been given into the hearts of believers and is at work there. God is at work in our hearts, in our psychology- but we must be open to this.

3:21 *To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen*- The allusion seems to be to the concluding doxology of the model prayer: "For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen". "The power" has been defined in :20 as the Spirit power which works within us. Our glorification of God is therefore due to our thankfulness for His power working within us to transform us into persons who shall live for ever and ever to His glory.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called*- It has been observed that there are 40 imperatives in Eph. 4-6, and only one in all of Eph. 1-3. As in Romans and other letters, we have a clear case of doctrinal exposition being then followed by related appeals to practical living. Walking, practically living, is related to the calling we received. That call is not simply the call to relationship with the Lord and eternal salvation. In the 'theoretical' part of the letter, Paul has reasoned that there were specific good works set up for us to do from the beginning, as part of God's foreknowledge of us. We were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); the whole of Eph. 1:4-11 speaks of our being foreknown and foreordained. And now Paul again says that we are to "walk" in good works, "worthily of the calling with which you were called". The calling came to us whilst we were dead spiritually; and a dead man doesn't hear anything. But the unique nature of the Gospel call is that it can be heard by a dead man and make him alive. The Lord

called to the dead Lazarus, and Lazarus heard and came forth from the grave in obedience to that call to "come forth". We, the dead, heard the call, although we were dead... and so we were given life. But we must walk according to that call. It was because of preaching these wonderful things that Paul was in prison, and he has used the same logic in Eph. 3:13 to urge them not to worry about him being imprisoned, because it is incomparable with the glorious things that the preaching of the Gospel has achieved. This is why he mentions that he as a "prisoner in the Lord" appeals to them to live according to the call of the Gospel.

Paul repeatedly expresses his resentment and frustration with his "bonds"; but he saw those limitations as "in the Lord". We are all frustrated by limitation of situation or health; but they are to be experienced as "unto the Lord". Living "worthily" or appropriately to our calling, of the Lord, of God, of our status as believers, is a major theme with Paul (Rom. 16:2; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12). Our lives are to be full of fruits worthy or appropriate to repentance (Mt. 3:8; and Paul repeats this teaching of John in Acts 26:20). The tendency then as now is to accept the Gospel but not to live and feel in response to that calling. Yet the way of the Spirit is to make us in practice what we are in status. Our calling was by grace- the fact we were called and others were not is a parade example of grace toward us, according to Romans 8 and 2 Tim. 1:9 (Who has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace"). Paul has already prayed that the Spirit would open their eyes to the huge implications of being a called person (1:18). We have heard the Gospel- we are called. Of that there is no question, for the call is in the Gospel of the Kingdom. This should have a huge effect upon us; we are to walk appropriate to such a calling, making our calling sure (2 Pet. 1:10).

4:2 *With all lowliness and meekness, with patience making allowance for each other in love*- The experience of having been called from eternity, part of God's "eternal purpose", not just 'from the beginning' but from infinite past eternity, should elicit in us appropriate humility and patience. For God waited patiently for infinite time until He called us, and is so patient with us now in our brief moment of opportunity as we live out this life. Exactly because we are the elect / chosen ones, we should put on lowliness (Col. 3:12 s.w.). This is the outworking in practice of appreciating our calling and predestined place in God's purpose- humility and patient love of others. The equivalent of this verse in Colossians is the command to make allowance for each other and therefore forgive them (Col. 3:13). Forgiveness is assisted by making allowance, by considering why a person is acting as they are, rather than taking their words or actions as they stand and judging them for them, which is how natural human justice behaves.

The idea is developed in :13,14, where maturity is seen as expressed in unity, which in practice means tolerating those who are still 'children' and unstable in their beliefs and behaviour. Maturity means accepting that they are still children of God, and like us, still growing up into the full stature of the Lord Jesus- which we will only attain at His return. "Making allowance" definitely means to tolerate; and even the Lord was driven to the limit in this when He comes closest to expressing exasperation: "How long shall I suffer you [s.w. 'make allowance for']!" (Mt. 17:17; all three synoptics record this).

4:3- see on Jn. 17:23.

Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace- The patient forgiveness and making allowance for others just spoken of (:2) will in practice mean that the unity the Spirit has potentially created will be realized in practice. We have

here another encouragement to live in practice what we are by status- a united community. The implication is that by dividing, by intolerance, both of practical and intellectual matters, we are going against the unity which the Spirit has potentially created; and we are thereby out of step with the Spirit. It is "peace" which is to be the bond or uniting principle; and "peace" is often a reference to peace with God through the forgiveness achieved in the Lord Jesus. An awareness of our own experience of forgiveness is what will connect us with others who have experienced the same in Christ; mere adherence to the same set of theology will not, and evidently does not, create true spiritual unity between believers.

4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in the one hope of your calling*- Seeing there is only one Spirit and we have each received the same calling to the same hope, we are only one body. There are not different callings and different hopes. The order of things in the list of essential doctrines in Eph. 4:4-6 is marvellous: "One body" (us) comes first, and "One God" comes last. Behold here the humility of God in inspiring this teaching in this way, and the paramount importance placed on unity between believers.

Peter says that we are to "set your hope completely" on the great salvation to be given us when the Lord returns (1 Pet. 1:13). Nothing else should be our hope, we should not set our hopes on anything else- be it material wealth, relationships, houses or whatever. Paul expresses the same idea when he speaks of how there is only "one hope" (Eph. 4:4). His idea is not so much that there are various wrong hopes in a doctrinal sense. Rather is he saying like Peter that our hope is to be singularly and completely upon the grace of salvation to be brought to us at the Lord's return.

4:5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism*- It is possible to discern within the NT letters the beginnings of a body of teaching about moral behaviour. The same outline themes are discernible in Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and James:; I suggested on 1:1 that Ephesians was indeed written to the Ephesians, but it became the basis for a more general set of teachings which was employed in the early church and was repeated, verbatim at times, to the believers in Colosse:

Theme	Colossians	Ephesians	James	1 Peter
The new birth [baptism]	2:12	4:4-6	1:18	1:23
The things of the old life that must be left behind	3:9	4:22	1:21	2:1
The image of God and Jesus; the new life that must be put on	1:19	4:24	1:18	2:21

The theme of submission to Jesus as Lord of our lives	3:18	5:22	4:7	2:13; 5:19
Exhortation to stand strong against temptation / the 'devil'	4:12	6:11	4:7	5:8,9
Watch and pray, endure to the end	4:2	6:18	5:16	4:7

4:6 *One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*- The theme here is of unity amongst the believers, and so the "all" here I would take as referring to all believers. For through the Spirit, God works through and in [within] all believers. That is a major theme of Ephesians. The "all" is surely the "each one of us" of :7, and the "men" of :8. The emphasis that "all" believers, "each one of us", have God urgently active in our hearts and lives through the Spirit was and is necessary because there will always be those in any believing community who feel they are just amongst the crowd, and God's activity is through the leadership and they are mere spectators at a show.

4:7 *But to each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*- As noted on :6, "each one of us" has been given the gift of the Spirit by the Lord Jesus, and not just the leadership or those who appear to have more spectacular usage by Him. We have all sinned, so we have all received grace, and that grace is manifest in the gift of the Spirit within each forgiven believer. This emphasis is necessary because Paul will now further speak of how the miraculous public gifts were given to some in the first century; but each of us has been given a measure or portion of the Spirit gift of Christ.

When Paul speaks of the stewardship of God's grace given to him (Eph. 3:2 RVmg.), he is alluding to the parable of the talents (see on Mt. 25:15). He saw the talents as the amount of grace shown, and for him, he knew this to amount to many talents; and he invested them, in response, through the preaching of the Gospel. And he carries on the allusion in Eph. 4:7, speaking of how unto every one of us Christ has given a gift, namely, grace. Whilst grace will produce unique response in each of us, we are bound together by the same basic experience of having been saved by grace.

4:8- see on 1 Cor. 15:28.

Wherefore He says: When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men- Ascension refers to the Lord's literal ascent to Heaven, but it is also used as a metaphor of His 'ascent' in victory over sin. What held us captive was sin, and when this was made captive by the Lord's victory on the cross, we were given gifts. The "men" are the "all men" of :6, the "each one of us" of :7. The context of Ps. 68:18

is the victory song at the Red Sea deliverance. The gifts were those taken from Egypt / sin / the world. Such gifts were not available before the victory. They therefore refer primarily to the various victories over sin which are now possible. The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were seen in Old Testament times too, so they are not the primary reference. Although the internal gifts to the "inner man" were testified to in the first century by miraculous endowments, to make the point- that God's Spirit is now indeed given to men. Acts 2:33 speaks of how the Lord received the Spirit and gave it to men, and the Comforter passages in Jn. 14-16 speak likewise. Ps. 68:18 continues: "Yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them". The purpose of the gifts was that even the backsliding might be transformed to have God dwelling within them. And Ps. 68:19,20 define the gifs as the benefits which the Lord daily loads us with- salvation. The daily blessings are not miraculous gifts but forgiveness, and guidance towards salvation. It is these blessings with which He internally fills all in Christ (:10).

4:9 *Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?*- The ascent to receive these gifts for us required the Lord's death and burial. The victory song of Psalm 68 could only be ultimately sung because of the Lord's death "first". We find here yet another connection with the thought of Romans, this time to Rom. 10:7, where 'descending [s.w.] into the deep' is connected with the resurrection of the Lord from the dead. His three days in "the lower parts of the earth" was therefore whilst He was dead; and death, Biblically, is unconsciousness. This puts paid to all speculations about the Lord doing conscious battle in some underworld with the powers of evil. "The lower parts of the earth" is a phrase used in Ps. 63:9 and Ps. 139:15 LXX for the grave.

But many times the same Greek word for "descended" is used for the Lord's 'descent' from Heaven; He 'came down' from Heaven in the same way as the manna 'descended' from Heaven- it was sent from God, but created here on earth. In this case, we would read the height of His ascent, in spiritual terms, as a reflection of His total connection with the lowest things of earthly life. "The lower parts of the earth" would be a quotation from Is. 44:23 LXX, which uses the term to describe the lower ranks of people upon earth. This would then explain the possible connection with Jn. 3:13, "no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that descended from Heaven".

It could be that both interpretations have validity; the Lord's descent from Heaven, His sending from God, involved His descending into the grave itself. His sinless association with humanity and finally His dying the death of all men was what qualified Him to be so highly exalted.

4:10 *He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things*- It was "the same" essential Jesus who died as who ascended; in terms of personality, He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8), just as who we essentially are is who we shall eternally be. The Jesus who loved little children and was pitiful to the weak is the same Jesus with whom we have to do now, and whom we shall meet at judgment day. Likewise "that same Jesus" who was crucified is the one who is now exalted Lord in Heaven (Acts 2:36).

Paul's description of Christ 'ascending up far above all heavens' seems to be rooted in his vivid re-living and imagining of the scene in Lk. 24:51, where the record says that Christ was "parted from them, and carried up".

The risen Lord has filled "all things" with His spirituality, "the whole universe", i.e. the believers (Eph. 3:19; 4:10 NIV). This is based on God's attitude in the OT; that Israel were His people, His 'world', and the other nations were "not a people";

effectively, they weren't people, in God's eyes (Dt. 32:21). Is this Biblical evidence for a social Gospel? These words are true of all those who are out of covenant relationship with Him, including those who have fallen away. Thus Elisha told the apostate king of Israel: "Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, *I would not look toward thee, nor see thee*" (2 Kings 3:14). The 'filling' surely refers to the filling of believers with the Holy Spirit in their hearts, leading to the fruits of the Spirit such as joy, peace etc. (Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:19; 5:18).

4:11- see on Lk. 11:22.

And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers- The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were given in the first century in order to visibly reflect the huge power of new spiritual life now given into the hearts of believers by the Lord's ascension. The fact that the miraculous manifestations of those gifts are not now possessed doesn't mean that the essential gift of the Spirit is not now received by us. And yet it is true that each member of the Lord's body not only has its unique function, but the Spirit enabling in order to fulfil those functions.

4:12 *For the perfecting of the saints, to the work of holy service, to the building up of the body of Christ*- The allusions to priestly service and building all recall the gifts of the Spirit given to enable the building of the tabernacle / sanctuary, which was representative of the people of God, the body of Christ. Therefore the more visible gifts of leadership in :11 were only given in order to prepare the congregation for acts of service themselves ("the work of holy service"). “Christianity was no slick imitation of existing ecclesiastical organisations. It made no attempt to set up a hierarchy modelled on previously existing institutions. It preferred *diakonia*, lowly service, to the grandiose ideas of the Gentiles”. The "building up" of believers in the first century was partly through the Spirit gift of prophecy, whereby inspired New Testament prophets spoke relevant words from God to the newly converted illiterate believers (1 Cor. 14:3,5,12). And yet the building up of the body today is by the contribution of *every* part (Eph. 4:16,29). In the special case scenario of the first century, the miraculous Spirit gifts were given; their withdrawal doesn't mean that God's work of "building up" His people through the Spirit is over. It's just that the mode of operation has changed. "Building up of the body" refers probably not only to spiritual maturing of the members; but also through the work of evangelism, building up the body to its full size through bringing in "the full number of the Gentiles".

4:13- see on Heb. 2:10.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ- "The unity" and "the faith" each have the article and grammatically do not together mean 'the one faith'. They refer to the unity created by the one faith. And that is Paul's theme here- of unity between Jew and Gentile created by having the same one faith, which is the knowledge of the Son of God. And 'knowledge' refers to the knowing which refers to relationship, rather than knowing an identical set of theological propositions about the Son of Go. It is common relationship with Him which creates unity between groups and individuals as diverse and separated as Jew and Gentile were in first century towns like Ephesus. It is that unity between persons within the church which is the sign of maturity, of having grown up into stature of the Lord Jesus, and in which His fullness will dwell. His fullness refers to the full total sum of His personality, His 'Name', in Old testament terms. Each individual believer has various parts of His total personality, and between us, the united, mature church is

completely His body to the world, they are Him in total. But division amongst us precludes us on a collective level from being Him in totality.

"Until we all come" would suggest that unity within the body of Christ is something that we grow towards. The lament that 'the body of Christ is divided' is therefore absolutely to be expected. All doctrinal inadequacy and all disunity will only be resolved when we arrive at the full measure of Christ. And that point will ultimately be at His return; the point is, that in this life we are to grow towards that. The expression "perfect man" is only found in James 3:2, where clearly the "perfect man" state is apparently unattainable in reality on the ground now: "For in many things we all make others stumble. If any does not cause stumbling by his words, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also". The same thought is in Phil. 3:14-16: "I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus [perhaps equivalent to "the fullness of Christ" here, the point when we "shall be like Him"]. Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you. For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk". Clearly 'acceptable walk' involved 'walking' whilst still less than mature, and whilst still needing further truth to be revealed to us. This is not only a comfort to us personally, but it helps us in being more inclusive and generous spirited to those who appear to us immature, morally or doctrinally. It is normal for humans to become intolerant of those who don't match their own current positions, forgetting that they too were once immature. This approach is at variance with seeking to draw a line in the sand defining 'saving truth', and excluding any beyond that line.

The body of believers is progressively educated, matured, built up, until finally at the Lord's return we are all brought to be like Christ, to know Him fully, and to "the unity of the faith". The implication would therefore be that there will never be total understanding of "the faith" in its fullness, nor will there be "unanimity" amongst us on every point as a body, until the Lord is back.

The ultimate basis of unity is going to be "the knowledge of the Son of God". I suggest that this uses 'knowledge' in the Hebraic sense of relationship. All those in relationship with Him are thereby bound together in unity. This will therefore come to its ultimate experience at His return. And we see too that 'unity' is not solely predicated upon a doctrinal statement; for there are those whose theology is good, but who do not have any 'knowledge' of Jesus in the sense of relationship with Him. The "measure" is the stature of the fullness of Christ. This, then, is the ultimate 'measure'. Paul's desire in Ephesians is for unity, and he appears here to be appropriately pointing out that this point of final maturity is to be the 'measure' by which we compare ourselves now. We are each far from that measure, and therefore, should tolerate those others who likewise visibly fall short of that measure.

The vision of eternity which we have here is similar to that earlier used in Eph. 1:23, where we have the picture of the "fullness" [s.w.] of the Lord Jesus fully filling everything in His body, which is the church. And here in Eph. 4:10 is the implication that this same fullness shall fill literally all things in heaven and earth, in the cosmos. Now we are filled with His Spirit, but not fully. And then, this lowly body shall be changed like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21), both materially and mentally. This is what eternity will be like- becoming like Him. In this sense we can have the eternal life now, in that we can begin living and being like Him in our spirit. And that spirit of life will somehow fill the cosmos. His fullness in all things. This helps us understand how all those who love the Lord's appearing, who so love Him and all He

stands for and dearly wish to be like Him... shall be saved. We see so clearly that our entire focus is to be upon Him.

The equivalent in Colossians speaks of the believer being "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10). The aim of the new creation is to produce the replication of the Lord Jesus in us- grown up into His fully mature image. This 'renewal in knowledge' speaks as here of an ever new relationship. For knowledge in the academic sense cannot be renewed. There is nothing dynamic about knowing dry facts of interpretation, of itself. This is the renewal of the Holy Spirit which is given through the laver [baptismal bath] of regeneration (Tit. 3:5). The work of the Spirit is to make us constantly renewed in relationship with the Lord Jesus, and thereby we change into His image as our ever fresh, "newness of life" relationship with Him brings us deeper into His sphere of thought and action. In reality, this is what it is, to be a Christian.

Eph. 4:13 parallels the knowledge of the Son of God with "the unity of the faith". To know the one faith is to know Christ as a person. He *is* the essence of the one faith. Academic knowledge of a series of theological propositions in a 'statement of faith', no matter how accurate their formulation may be, is still not the same as 'knowing Christ'. To perceive those doctrines as they really are, to know the unity, the sum of the one faith, is to know Christ as a person and come to "the fullness of Christ". The *unity* of the faith thus parallels the *fullness* of Christ. Those doctrines as propositions are a means to an end; and unless that is perceived they are little worth. So very often men have argued over those propositions, and in their argument have revealed that they really 'don't get it'- they simply don't know Christ as a person. They got caught up on the means rather than perceiving the end- which is to know the Son of God.

4:14 *That we may no longer be like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine devised by the trickery, craftiness and deceitful scheming of men*- We must note, however, that the contrast is between being children, influenced so easily by every teaching and conspiracy theory from dubious teachers, not "speaking the truth in love" (:15)- and the maturity of the full, grown up stature of Christ (:13). But this means that those who are immature in this way are still counted by Paul as children, children of God- although very immature. Tolerance of the immature is in fact part of the unity Paul is seeking to inspire. But it is exactly on this point that so many who think they are mature actually show their immaturity. The toleration of others' immaturity is very much the practical aspect of a unity upon the basis of that fact that we are all "in Christ" and still growing up into Him. This is the spirit of :2 "with patience making allowance for each other in love". As in a natural family, toleration of immaturity is not to say that the entire family thereby degrades to the lowest common denominator, and that the immaturity is legitimized as normal or even mature.

The intended unity of the body around the one faith spoken of in :13 requires of course that we have the one faith, and are not therefore swayed by the false teachings of men. The crafty, deceitful schemes of men referred to suggests far more than a genuine intellectual misunderstanding of some Bible verses. The reference is surely to the campaign of the Judaizers, who schemed to destabilize the churches Paul founded. The language recalls the serpent in Eden, whom Paul in Romans and 2 Cor. 11:3 (s.w. "craftiness") has used as symbolizing the Judaizers, the great satan or adversary to his work. The teachings were "devised" as part of a "scheming of men"- clearly the reference is to a purposeful program of leading others astray, rather than an innocent misreading of Bible verses by sincere if misguided believers. Heb. 13:9 uses the same

word about not being "carried about" with doctrines which take us away from the heart being stabilized by grace. It was legalism and Judaism which was the antithesis of grace.

Judah was condemned to being tossed to and fro (2 Chron. 29:8 RV; Is. 54:11); and yet the spiritually unstable also allow themselves to be tossed to and fro (Eph. 4:14; James 1:6), and thereby they effectively live out their condemnation now, ahead of the gnashing of teeth which awaits them. The type of natural Israel being rejected in the wilderness must be instructive as to the position of those who are the "goats" of spiritual Israel.

In Eph. 4:14,15, the point is made that because we are not blown around with every wind of doctrine, therefore we deal truly in love (RVmg.). Truthfulness with each other within the one body of Christ is related to our having known and deeply believed the truth of God. The implication is also that by speaking and preaching truth, we "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ", who is "the Truth" in every way. Notice how Eph. 4 stresses the need for true doctrine because this is related to truthfulness with each other; if we are not tossed to and fro by false doctrines, then we will speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:14,15); "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus… wherefore [because of this] put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" in the one body of Christ (Eph. 4:21,25).

4:15 *But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head- Christ!*- As noted on :14, having true doctrine is related to "speaking the truth", "dealing truly" (Eph. 4:13-15 RVmg.) with each other- as if the sensitive, heartfelt preaching of truth should result in our own truthfulness. English does not have a verb "to truth," but Paul uses such a verb when he urges the Ephesians that "'truthing' in love" they should grow in Christ in all things. We might understand this as "speaking the truth in love," but more probably we should see truth as a quality of action as well as of speech. Paul wants his converts to live the truth as well as to speak it. Real spiritual growth is only possible by a way of life that 'truths it'.

The state of perfection which we shall finally reach, hopefully in church life now but supremely in the Kingdom, is described as us (the complete church of all ages) having reached, "a perfect man... the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", having grown up into Christ, who is the head of the body (Eph. 4:13,15). We are now 'growing up into Him', we are on a journey, and the end point of it is to be fully as the Lord Jesus. This is the end point- where we spend eternity is one issue, but the essence is that we shall be like Him. We are indeed the body of Christ, but we are counted as that, the status is imputed to us; and the Spirit is at work to develop us to actually become as Him.

When Christ comes, we will each individually be made ruler over *all* that He has (Mt. 24:47), we will each individually be fully righteous, fully manifesting the Lord Jesus. There seems to be marked connection with the fact (brought out in the parable of the talents) that we will each have *all* the Master's goods, and the description in the next parable of those goods being distributed between us in this life (Mt. 24:47; 25:15). In the Kingdom we will no longer know partially, as a result of seeing parts of the whole picture; we will see face to face (1 Cor. 13:9,12 Gk.). See on Lk. 19:13.

4:16 *By him all the parts of the body fit and are knit together, with every joint supplying something according to its unique purpose, thus making the body grow as it builds up itself in love*- Each member of the body contributes to the overall strength and health of the body. As noted on :6 and :7, there is great emphasis on the fact that

each and every believer is unique and has a role to play in the overall strengthening of others- and not just those with more visible gifts or higher profile roles. No member can say they do not need the others; the problem with 'out of church Christians' is that they are tempted to forget that they too have something to contribute. The body "makes increase of itself" and builds itself up in love, strengthened by the nourishment mediated by the other members (Eph. 4:16). There *is* therefore strength and power from outside of ourselves within the body of Christ. Tragically, the body of believers is perceived by many sinners to be judgmental, shaming, not understanding etc., when the idea of association with the Lord's body is that we are built up and also contribute towards the building up of others. We enter the body in order that we may contribute, and not simply to take, or because we see baptism as the seal of our doctrinal assent to a set of propositions.

The builder of God's house is ultimately God, the builder of all (Heb. 11:10). We are God's building (1 Cor. 2:9). But we are also Christ's building, in that God has delegated this work to Him. And yet we build each other up (Rom. 14:19; 15:2), Paul was a master-builder (1 Cor. 3:10), and the body builds itself up (Eph. 4:16). As God has delegated the building to Christ, so He has delegated it to us. The Ephesians were built up on the foundations of the apostles' work- not that they are the foundation, for no other foundation can there be except Christ (Eph. 2:20 cp. 1 Cor. 3:11). The building up of those early brethren was on account of the work of the apostles. They were the foundation, they were 'Christ' to those brethren and converts. Hence they are called the foundation, whereas Christ is the only foundation. This is how far His work has been delegated to us. Without the work of the apostles, if they had been lazy or spiritually selfish, there would have been no Ephesus ecclesia, nor spirituality within it. Quite simply, we *are* a function of the efforts our brethren and sisters make to build us up. See on Col. 2:19.

The various parts of the one body *supply* strength to the rest of us. But the very same Greek word rendered "supply" occurs in the Phil. 1:19, about the *supply* of the spirit of Jesus Christ. How does He *supply* our need and strengthen us? Through the very human members of the one body. Which is why we so desperately need them, and to walk away from them, reasoning that they 'give nothing', is in a sense to turn away from the supply of the spirit of Jesus.

Cyprian taught that "Whatever and whatsoever kind of man he is, he is not a Christian who is not in Christ's church... he cannot have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother". And Church membership depended upon "submission to the bishop... rebellion against him is rebellion against God... the schismatic, however correct his doctrine or virtuous his life, renounces Christ and bears arms against the church". Individual spirituality and correctness of faith meant nothing; obedience to the leaders was paramount. Cyprian even went so far as to say that "the church is founded on the bishops... held together by the glue of the mutual cohesion of the bishops". This is a glaring contradiction with the Biblical emphasis upon Christ as the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and the body being held together on account of being "in Him", compacted and built up by what "every joint supplies" (Eph. 4:16). This shift from the internal, the spiritual, to the external and visible, the perception of Christianity as a human organization we belong to, has been seen in the lives of many individual Christians, churches, denominations, groups etc. over time. The warning is for us to remain disciples of the Lord Jesus, following Him as it were around Galilee,

focused upon Him alone, and finding the unity with others doing the same which will naturally follow.

“The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16 NIV). In the context, Paul is demonstrating the necessity of Jew and Gentile to work together in the ecclesia; they couldn't just run parallel ecclesial lives, even though there seems to have been temporary concessions to their humanity at the beginning. The newly baptized, Old Testament-ignorant Gentiles had something to contribute to the Bible-saturated Jewish believers; and, of course, vice versa.

4:17 *Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord: You are to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind*- Paul reminds them that his teaching here is a direct testimony from the Lord Jesus. A new section of practical advice now follows. The way of the flesh, be it wanton immorality or simply living in the vanity of the mind, is not as the Ephesians had been taught the Gospel of Christ before their baptisms. That basic Gospel had very practical implications (Eph. 4:17-27). And more than this. The new wine of the Gospel will destroy a man who holds it unless he changes his life (cp. the wine skin), so that it too is new. The new cloth of the Gospel will rip a man apart who doesn't change from his old clothing. Leaven is an apt symbol of the Gospel, in that it corrupts terribly *if it is left idle*. If the principles of the Truth lie dormant in our lives, they can only destroy us. The idea of 'walking' connects with the opening charge of :1, that we are to walk in a way appropriate to our calling. "The mind" is Biblically called "the spirit". Unbelievers think in vanity, and we catch ourselves spending large amounts of mental time imagining or chattering within ourselves about vain things. How we think in the mind is how we walk in practice. The receipt of God's Spirit into our spirit will therefore issue in a quite different walk. Vain thinking is a particular malaise of our online world. The inane and meaningless have been glorified.

4:18 *Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart*- The language of darkening and hardening could suggest that "the Gentiles" in :17 refer to those who have left the Lord's way. Perhaps those who left were labelled "the Gentiles" as a kind of technical term in the early church. Their "ignorance" was not natural ignorance, but the ignorance that comes from a darkening and hardening of the heart, which resulted in an alienated position. These people had stopped "feeling" and had given themselves over to immorality (:19). This is all the language of those who leave one way of life for another, rather than those who had never known the way of righteousness. Paul has prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians will be enlightened- and yet the work of the Holy Spirit in achieving this is matched by "an evil spirit from the Lord" of the type which pushed king Saul into a downward spiral, and which hardened Pharaoh's heart because he himself hardened his heart. "The life of God" would then refer to the gift of the Spirit which these people had been given at baptism, but they were now alienated from it. The life given by God is the concept used by John to describe what Paul would term the gift of the Holy Spirit; for John's writings speak of the eternal life given by God into the heart of the believers, the power to live now as we shall eternally live. The Corinthians were given the Spirit but were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1), and the burden of Paul's writings is that we are to make use of the potential of

the Spirit which we have within us. Those who leave the faith are alienated from that potential life or spirit within them.

4:19 *Who being past feeling gave themselves up to sensuality, to work all uncleanness with greediness*- Giving oneself over is the idea found in Romans 6, yielding our members to sin. Whereas in baptism we purpose to yield ourselves to God's service and therefore walk in the way of His Spirit.. "Being past feeling" speaks of the death of conscience. And to be feared far more than death itself is the death of conscience. As noted on :18, this language refers to those who leave one way of life for another, rather than those who had never known the way of righteousness. The Lord gave Himself over for us on the cross (s.w. 5:2,25), but in response, these people had given themselves over to pleasing the flesh. The sensuality in view was provoked by the false teachings of :14. These teachings turned God's grace into sensuality (Jude 4); the words of these false teachers allured believers into sensuality (2 Pet. 2:18). So it was not simply a case of believers falling for the temptation to live the life of the world; the false teachers were encouraging the converts to engage in the sensual practices of idol worship in the name of serving the Lord Jesus. This was the problem at Corinth and was widespread; the false teachings were attractive because they enabled believers to live the life of unbelievers whilst still thinking they were within the body of Christ.

4:20 *But that is not the way you learned Christ!*- When the Ephesians learnt their first principles from the mouth of Paul and other preachers, they "heard Him (Christ), and (were) taught by Him" (Eph. 4:20,21); the preacher of Christ closely manifests his Lord. Christ crucified was placarded forth before the eyes of the Galatians, when Paul preached the Gospel to them (Gal. 3:1). The Gospel message was totally Christ centered. And part of the basic Gospel was a call to deny immorality and sensuality. The Gospel of the Kingdom as taught by the Lord Himself was essentially an appeal for a way of life in practice.

4:21 *Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus*- Paul wonders whether they had really been taught about the moral dimensions of the Gospel when they first heard it (see on :20). The "you" refers to those whom Paul earlier calls "Gentiles" in :17; he has in view those who had left the faith (see on :17,18). But they were apparently still within the community at Ephesus to whom Paul was writing. "The truth in Jesus" referred to a way of life rather than theological truths of themselves; and Paul may mean that he wonders whether they were any longer aware of that early teaching of the Gospel which they had received. In illiterate societies there would have been a need to keep teaching the message initially preached, and perhaps that had not been done. The Lord's letter to the Ephesians in Rev. 2:1-6 commends them for having rejected false teaching; so it would seem that Paul's appeal here was heeded, but the Lord lamented their lack of love, which was going to lead to their rejection. Eph. 4:21 AV says that we are "taught by Him". The Lord "began to do and teach" things (Acts 1:1), and continues. Multiple times this word is used of the Lord's teaching people in His ministry. And that now continues. He teaches us. And He specifically says He will give us the Comforter, His teaching Spirit, to effect this. The Comforter will teach us "all things", and the "all things" are the things about Jesus (Jn. 14:26). 1 Jn. 2:27 alludes to this, saying that the anointing we have received "teaches you all things" and abides within us, in our hearts, so that we don't need any man to teach us. And any human teacher we do listen to must be judged against this teaching from the Comforter. This is why any man who does God's will through the Spirit will intuitively know if a human

teaching ["doctrine", same word as 'teaching'] is of God or not (Jn. 7:17). Whoever leaves the teaching of Christ doesn't have God (2 Jn. 9). These Johannine passages use the same word for "teach" which we have in Eph. 4:21. . Paul himself says the same when he claims that he was taught the Gospel by none other than Jesus Christ and not by man (Gal. 1:12). Heb. 8:11 may have the same idea- under the new covenant, which includes the gift of the Spirit, men shall not teach their brother to "know the Lord" because all shall know Him through His direct teaching. We see here the active nature of the Lord's work now, teaching as well as mediating, forgiving and seeking to guide our life path towards eternity with Him. He teaches us, and Paul says that thus we "learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20). He teaches us about Himself. And there's nothing better than reading the Gospel records with the Lord Himself explaining Himself to us, as an individual tutor. We are taught "Christ" (:20), or "according to the truth which is in ['which consists in'] Jesus". Those lessons, that learning, is of the final truth- which is "Christ" Himself, "Jesus". Knowing Him, being in relationship with Him, is "the truth", as John's writings make clear. Understanding these things makes us review the passages which speak of our having received a teaching / doctrine [s.w.], and needing to remain faithful to it. At first blush we may assume this teaching is from the person who taught us the Gospel. But perhaps the idea is rather than this teaching was given us by the Lord Jesus: "That form of teaching that was delivered to you... the teaching that you learned [from Jesus directly?]... holding fast the faithful word he has been taught [by Jesus?]... abide in the teaching of Christ" (Rom. 6:17; 16:17; Tit. 1:9; 2 Jn. 9). Once we are secure in this relationship, we will not be blown about by every wind of human teaching / doctrine. We will be able to easily discern teachings.

4:22 *Those things belonged to your former manner of life, which was corrupt through deceitful desires*- We must "put off the old man" (Eph. 4:22 AV); and yet "you have (already) put off the old man" (Col. 3:9), it was crucified with Christ at baptism (Rom. 6:6). Have we, or haven't we? In God's eyes we have, in that the new man has been created, and the old man died in the waters of baptism. But of course we are still in the flesh; and the old man must yet be put off. What happened at our baptism must be an ongoing process; of laying the old man to rest in death, and rising again in the newness of life. The Gospel 'instructs us to the intent that, having once and for all put away ungodliness (i.e. in baptism) and worldly lusts, we should live in a holy manner' (Tit. 2:12 Gk.). Having put these things off in baptism, we must live a life of putting them off. We are to live in practice what we are counted to be by status in Christ.

Our lusts are deceitful (Eph. 4:22), and so the Devil or ‘deceiver’ is an appropriate way of describing them. They are personified, and as such they can be spoken of as ‘the Devil’ – our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural ‘man’ is like – the ‘very Devil’.

4:23- see on Eph. 1:15.

But you, being renewed in the spirit of your mind- The sensuality of :19 is listed as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). The key to growth was to allow the Spirit they had received to renew them. They were to "be renewed" (AV), they were to allow the process of renovation to operate. This is "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5) which began in the laver / washing of baptism. And the locality and method of that renewal was by the Spirit within their minds. Again and again it is clear that the arena of the Spirit's operation is within the mind, "the inner man" of chapter 3, and the reference is not to the external manifestations of the Spirit in miraculous gifts. It was this re-newing which could create the new man of :24. The

Spirit had been given to them, as to all believers, at their baptism. But some of them were alienated from that life / Spirit of God within them. They were to allow that Spirit free course to make them new again, to form again the new man within them.

4:24 *Put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*- The creator of the new man is God through His Spirit- see on :23. The likeness of God is the Lord Jesus, who in His perfect character was the image of God (Col. 1:15). We put on "Christ", "the new man", at baptism (Gal. 3:27), but we are to put Him on throughout our lives (Rom. 13:14). The sense of the Greek is 'be clothed with'. Again there is the impression not of steel willed obedience but of allowing ourselves to be clothed, permitting the creative process of the Spirit to operate. "*True* righteousness and holiness" may be a reference to the righteousness and holiness offered by an apostate Judaism.

4:25 *Therefore, putting away falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another*- As noted on :15, the truth of Christ leads to our being truthful. Dishonesty, lying and gross exaggeration were very much part of Middle Eastern culture, and Paul is urging the converts to change in this. Because the intended unity earlier spoken about in this chapter can never happen when lying is part of our culture. In some cultures and situations to this day, this exhortation and implication of the truth of Christ needs particular emphasis. "Putting away" is the word that has just been used in :22 for putting off the old man; and it would seem that Paul saw telling lies as symptomatic of the old man. "Members one of another" is a reference to us as different limbs in the one body of the Lord Jesus. But Paul accepted there would be members of that body who had not put off the old man, who had not stopped lying nor stealing (:28). He urges them to act appropriately to their status as the Lord's body. Membership of the Lord's body is here spoken of as being members of one another. Our connection with Him is inextricably linked with our connection with each other. Evil practices such as disfellowship, mud campaigns etc. are a denial of this connection; our attitude to each other, immature as we may find each other to be, is our attitude to the Lord Jesus. We cannot therefore push off out of the body into splendid isolation.

We are the body of Christ. We are counted righteous because we are baptized into Him. We are counted as Him; and we are parts of His body, hands, feet, eyes, internal organs. As such, we are inextricably linked in with the other members of the body. We cannot operate in isolation from them. “We are members one of another... we are members of his body” (Eph. 4:25; 5:30). Only insofar as we belong to each other do we belong to Him. We must perceive ourselves not so much as individual believers but as members of one body, both over space and over time. Eph. 4:25 draws a practical conclusion from the one body of Christ: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: *for* we are members one of another". If we are one body, there should *therefore* be truthfulness between us. No white lying, no gross exaggeration, no gossiping, no presentation of facts in a distorted way. Why? Because "we are members one of another". If we *do* behave like this, we are really saying that we are not members of the one body. The one body is Jesus; and all that is true of Him must be true of us. He is not divided, and neither should we be, either within our own beings, or as a community.

4:26 *In your anger, do not sin! Do not let the sun set while you remain angry*- This is in the context of appealing for unity between the members of the Lord's body (:25). Unresolved anger with other limbs of the body is a sure way to stop that body

functioning. Anger in itself is a purely natural reaction, and is seen in both God and His Son. The issue is, how to "be angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26)? God "made a path for His anger" with Egypt, by bringing plagues upon them and slaying their firstborn (Ps. 78:50 RV). Anger has to go somewhere, for otherwise it burns within us and rises up ultimately into extremely damaging and inappropriate forms of behaviour. I say 'inappropriate' because pent up anger has a way of bursting forth upon anyone in its way, who may likely be nothing to do with the cause or object of the initial anger. Anger is a form of energy, and as such it must be harnessed. Throughout the Old Testament, we often read of God being "provoked to wrath" by human sin, and His anger burning. There's very little said about this in the New Testament; and I wonder if this is because the ultimate path which God made for His anger was in giving His Son to die for human sin, rather than endlessly seeking to punish human sin and be hurt by it. Immediately let's take an obvious lesson: don't waste your anger energy on endlessly fighting those who provoke you, but use it positively. Throw it in to some project or other for the Lord. For anger is to some extent reflective; whilst we remain horns locked with a situation, both our opponent and ourselves are feeding off each others' anger. Hence the wise advice of Prov. 22:24,25: "with a wrathful man you shall not go: lest you learn his ways". Disengage from anger situations.

In any case, we are to seek to not end any day angry. The only way to end the day without anger is to forgive- for if we make our anger dependent upon the repentance or improved behaviour of another party, then we will not be able to stop our anger. The teaching here is clearly that we have power over our own anger, and can cease it if we wish- regardless of the situation or individuals provoking the anger. The quotation "Be angry and sin not" is from Ps. 4:4 LXX- David had anger with Saul and yet rose above it, perhaps by not allowing it to cripple him because David forgave Saul. Psalm 4 continues: "commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still". It seems Paul is interpreting that as meaning that we should within ourselves decide to forgive and not be angry, and fall asleep "still" and in peace. Anger is with external issues and persons; the antidote is within our own self talk. Communing with ourselves, talking ourselves out of it.

4:27 *Give no opportunity to the Devil!*- The devil here may refer to the great enemy, sin and sinful desires within; for it is through anger and deceit of each other that sin is provoked. But so often, "the devil" or "satan" refer to a human organization or group. The Judaist 'satan' was clearly in view in :14 [see notes there]. Interpersonal frictions within the church were going to be capitalized upon by this group.

4:28 *Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, so he may have something to give to him that has need*- As noted on :25, there were members within the body of Christ who were lying and stealing. This was going to stop the development of the unity within the body which was so essential to jointly coming to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Lord Jesus. Paul's ambition for the converts is amazing. Those who stole so much that they didn't do a normal job were permitted in the church; but his belief was that they could be so transformed that they would stop doing this, get a job, and be generous to those who were in need; and grow up into the full stature of the Lord Jesus.

4:29- see on Mt. 12:33.

Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but as the need arises, speak that which is good for encouragement, that it expresses grace to those that hear you- As observed on :28, Paul's converts included some rough types- liars, those who stole so much they didn't have a day job, and those who used "corrupt speech". Paul's hope for their transformation was realistic because he believed in the huge available power

of the internal gift of the Spirit. He hoped that those who once stole would work and *give* to the needy; and here he sees the possibility for those with foul mouths to instead come to use language that was expressing grace, reflecting the *charis* or gift of the Spirit within them, in a way which would transfer that grace to them too. Such corrupt fruit of the lips cannot grow on a good tree (Lk. 6:43 s.w.). There would either be transformation, or the corrupt tree would be cut down. But that was for the Lord to do; Paul's view of the body of Christ was that it would include such immature people. "Encouragement" is the same word used in :16 for 'building up'. Coarse language and terminology is not going to build up the rest of the body; our words and conversation should be a reflection of our sense that we have a role to play in building up our hearers. The hearers in view are therefore other members of the Lord's body.

4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which you were sealed until the day of redemption*- We can grieve God, by not allowing the work of His Spirit to transform us. We are sealed unto salvation and kept in that path by the Spirit, but grating against that operation is grievous to God. We will not attain perfection in this life, as Paul has explained earlier in this chapter. We are being matured towards the achievement of the full image of Jesus at the last day. For now, we are imperfectly somewhere on the journey there. Perhaps this idea of 'grieving' God by our immaturity and sinfulness gives us some window onto how God views sin. He can view it through different lenses, just as we view the failures of others. The narrow lens views sin as an isolated act that leads to death. But God also sees sin through a wider lens view; within the context of the Lord's death, and our overall response to it. We are given the Spirit when we are baptized in water, we are sealed by the Spirit unto salvation, the Holy Spirit seeks to transform us into holiness. That is not to say that we cannot fall from that grace; and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And yet what of those of us, indeed all of us, who respond in some ways but defiantly resist in others? We have grieved the Holy Spirit, that's all we can say, and we leave the final judgment of others to God. Likewise in human relationships, we can see the failure of others, especially in family life, through various lenses. If we see a particular sin against us through the narrow lens, and keep on about it and what it means and what it implies, then relationship will break down. Only by seeing that failure through a wider lens will we retain relationship. And yet sin and failure do grieve God. He has emotions, for we are made in His image, and have emotions and hurtness and grief at others' behaviour. The difference is that God is not victimized by His own emotions, He doesn't allow them to dominate Him, nor does He act in judgment based upon the narrow lens view.

All the bad behaviour of :19-29 is at variance with the Spirit which has been given to each believer, and which seeks to bring forth in us spiritual behaviour. But we are grieving or effectively frustrating this process if we refuse to be transformed. The gift of the Holy Spirit is in our hearts- God has "sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). This gift of the Spirit is the foretaste of our final redemption (2 Cor. 5:5). After we believed, we were given this promised gift of the Spirit (1:13). Those who lied, stole and swore were given it. But by remaining in the old life and ways, they were not allowing it to function. The allusion is to how Israel in the wilderness had been baptized in the Red Sea and yet they grieved God's Spirit (Is. 63:10) in the form of the Angel who wished to lead them to the Kingdom of God.

The "Holy Spirit" may allude to a specific Angel set apart for this purpose of strengthening us so that we might reach the Kingdom, like the wilderness Angel

provided Israel with the manna (= the word of God, so the Lord Jesus reasons in Jn. 6) and every type of sustenance in order that they should get through the wilderness to the promised land. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is associated with our calling and choosing. The Angel was associated with the sealing of the believers (Rev. 7:2,3). We must not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God (cp. how Israel vexed the Holy Spirit Angel- Is. 63:10) whereby ye are sealed". Eph. 4:30 also links this grieving the Holy Spirit (referring to the Holy Spirit Angel of Is. 63:10) and abusing God's sealing of us, as if by the unspiritual behaviour Paul is speaking of in Eph. 4 we will truly grieve or sadden the Angel who has sealed us.

4:31 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and railing be put away from you, along with all malice*- "Let..." may suggest, in the context of :30, allowing the Holy Spirit to put these things away from us. We have in :31,32 a fairly common example of how the believer is told to cease from or "put off" some behaviours or characteristics, and "put on" others. This is how the Holy Spirit works, if we allow it. The removal of the old and creation of the new, forming that 'holiness' without which no man can finally see the Lord. This is the work of the "holy" Spirit.

Again we note that all these things were going on amongst those who were members of the Lord's body, and who had received the Holy Spirit gift in their hearts. The intended growth of the body in unity unto the image of the Lord Jesus could not happen on a communal level if these attitudes remained in the hearts of the individual members. We note that they are all internal issues- which could be overcome by the Spirit of God within the human mind. It is spiritual mindedness which is the essence of Christianity.

4:32 *And be kind to each other, sensitive, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ also forgave you*- The problem was that the Ephesians were not allowing the Spirit to work in their hearts. Therefore the internal attitudes of :31 remained; Paul urges that these should be replaced by the sensitivity to others which leads to kindness and forgiveness. And we recall that those who had left the faith were "past feeling" (see on :19). It is a lack of basic empathy or sensitivity which is the root of so much bad thinking and action. Captain Gustav Gilbert was the army psychologist who worked with the Nuremburg trial defendants; he concluded: "In my work with the defendants I was searching for the nature of evil and I now think I have come close to defining it. A lack of empathy. It's the one characteristic that connects all the defendants, a genuine incapacity to feel with their fellow men. Evil, I think, is the absence of empathy". The gift of the Spirit creates sensitivity; because that same Spirit is operative in the hearts of others, and is the heart of God- who is the ultimately sensitive, seeing and knowing all things. The kindness which leads to forgiveness is the antidote to all the anger and associated issues spoken of in :31. As noted on :26, it is for us to overcome our anger by forgiving, regardless of whether there has been repentance. We are forgiven by God "in Christ"; we were granted imputed righteousness, by reason of our status in Him, rather than on the basis of our specific repentance over the millions of sins we have between God and us, whether or commission or omission.

Mt. 6:14 is surely alluded to here. The Lord Jesus said: "If you forgive, you'll be forgiven". Paul subtly changes the tenses: "You've been forgiven already, so forgive". It's as if Paul is saying: 'Think carefully about Mt. 6:14. Don't think it means 'If you do this, I'll do that for you'. No. God has forgiven you. But that forgiveness is conditional on the fact that in the future you will forgive people. If you don't, then that forgiveness you've already been given is cancelled. This is what Jesus really had in

mind'. This would suggest a very close analysis of those simple words of Jesus, using all the logic and knowledge of Biblical principles which Paul had.

Paul does not say we should forgive as Christ *is forgiving* us. Our forgiveness was granted at baptism; the power of sin in our lives was overcome by baptism into Christ's death, which destroyed the devil. Therefore anyone baptized into Christ is not a servant of sin, unless they leave Christ. Of course, we know that in practice we all keep on sinning. But our spiritual man is in Christ, God looks upon *that* side of us, not upon the devil within us. We cannot destroy the devil within us- his destruction is in death (Rom. 6:23). That natural man cannot be made subject to God's word (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:17,18; James 3:8). What God requires is a growth in the spiritual man, living in a way of life which on balance shows that the new man is more fundamentally 'us' than the old man, and a 'putting off' or disassociation from the old man, of the type we see made by Paul in Rom. 7:15-25. As God eagerly looks upon that new man within us, so we too should perceive the new man in our brethren. Too often extreme brethren look upon how bad the old man is in a brother, and how publicly he is manifested (e.g. in marital problems)- rather than assessing the new man, "the hidden man" which is surely to be found deep within all believers.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *Therefore, as beloved children, be imitators of God*- The understanding seems to be that a child will imitate the one who shows love. And experiments on babies raised in orphanages in Communist regimes observed the same- the carer perceived as showing love was imitated by the baby. The love we have been shown is in the gift of God's Son; it is the cross, therefore, which elicits imitation or (Greek) 'mimicking' of God.

5:2 *And walk in love- just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us*- As noted on :1, our exposure to His love is the basis for imitating it, in the form of a life lived or walked in love. In His love is the ultimate motivation to love. Do we struggle to live the life of true love, to endure people, even our brethren; are we simply tired of people, and living the life of love towards them? Does the past exist within us as a constant fountain of bitterness and regret? “Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake [the sake of His cross] hath forgiven you... walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us*" (Eph. 4:31-5:2).

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God- The peace offering was to make a sweet savour. Through His death on the cross, the Lord was this: "Christ... hath given himself for us an offering (a peace offering?) and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). If we are in Christ, then God will see us too as a sweet savour. And this is exactly what 2 Cor. 2:15 says: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ". Yet we must fellowship His sufferings if we are in Him, really fellowship them. The peace offering was to have the fat and rump "taken off hard by the backbone" (Lev. 3:9). The ruthless division of flesh and spirit within Christ (shown superbly in the way His wilderness temptations are recorded) must be seen in us too. We must ask if we are really taking off the fat hard by the backbone. Are we even prepared for the pain, the pain of self- knowledge and self denial which this will necessitate? For His love, His sacrifice, is not only counted to us but is to be ours.

5:3- see on Josh. 23:7.

But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you- as is appropriate among saints- These terms are all elsewhere used about sexual immorality, particularly in the context of cult prostitution. There was a tendency to mix Christian worship with the prostitution of the surrounding cults, just as there is for any Christian convert to mix their new faith with previous concepts of religion. This was particularly a problem in Corinth but clearly it was also elsewhere in the first century.

We need to let passages like Eph. 5:3–5 have their full weight with us. Fornication, covetousness, all uncleanness should not be “named amongst us”, in the same way Israel were not to take even the names of the Gentile idols onto their lips (Ex. 23:13) – “but rather giving of thanks”, knowing that those who do such things will not be in the Kingdom of God. The Exodus allusion suggests that idol worship with its associated sexual vices is what is in view in this passage, rather than young couples in love 'going too far'. A thankful attitude, thinking and speaking of those things with which we will eternally have to do, is to replace thinking and talking about all the things which shall not be our eternal sphere of thought in the Kingdom age. And yet our generation faces the temptation like none before it – to privately watch and read of those things, vicariously involved in them, whilst being under the illusion that we’re not actually doing them ourselves. For this is what the entertainment industry is based around.

5:4 *Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor crude joking, which are not befitting saints; but rather the giving of thanks*- Paul always gives an antidote, a new channel into which to channel the energy which would otherwise be expended on the forbidden action. Paul's vision for personal transformation is remarkable; he envisages those accustomed to coarse language instead using words of praise.

According to the New Testament, having a spirit of true thankfulness to God *in all things* should help swamp our tendency to sinfulness; the concept of praising God in gratitude should get such a grip on our way of thinking that the thinking of the flesh is thereby suppressed. Eph. 5:3,4 states this in so many words. It reels off a list of forbidden sexual thoughts and actions; and then the antidote is stated: "Let (them) not once be named among you... *but rather* giving of thanks". A few verses later the same medicine is prescribed; this time as the antidote to an unsaintly abuse of alcohol: "Be not drunk with wine... *but* be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms... singing and making melody in your heart... giving thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5:18-20). This is a laboured, triple emphasis on praise as being the antidote to drunkenness.

5:5 *For this you know for sure, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God*- Eph. 5:3-5 has some surprises for the attentive reader; the black words on white paper have an uncanny power: "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, *nor covetous man*, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ". It's easy to assume that the coveting is of a sexual nature. But frequently Paul reels off a list of spectacular sins and inserts in the list one or two issues we would consider rather common to all men and of a different order of failure. He does this to highlight the seriousness of those apparently lesser sins. The list of sexual perversions here are the sort of words we whisk past, in the relieved confidence that *they* don't apply to us. But covetousness is there listed as a carnal sin, along with sexual perversions. That's how bad it is. No one who is covetous will be in the Kingdom.

And therefore it's hard for a rich man to be in the Kingdom. In fact, the Lord says, it's humanly impossible for a rich man to get there; it's only through God's gracious working to make it possible that it can happen, that a rich man will scrape into the Kingdom (Mt. 19:23-26). *Every one of us has the elements of covetousness very close to the surface.* Materialism is perhaps the direct equivalent of idol worship under the old covenant. They were to not even desire "the silver and gold that is on them… for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God… thou shalt utterly detest it; and *thou* [like God] shalt utterly abhor it" (Dt. 7:25,26). God despises idolatry; and we also must go a step beyond merely avoiding materialism; we must despise it.

"This you know for sure" suggests that this hard line against covetousness and idolatry was known by all Christian converts as part of their instruction in the Gospel. "The Kingdom of Christ and God" is an unusual phrase, as usually "the Kingdom of God" is spoken about. Perhaps the idea is that God's Kingdom is also going to be that of Christ, and He should therefore reign as King over His people, who should be devoted to being Christ-like.

5:6- see on Mt. 24:4.

Let no one deceive you with empty words- This would be appropriate to a warning to better control the platform and not allow false teachers to deceive the congregation with vain words, words lacking in or empty of the Spirit.

For because of these things comes the anger of God upon the sons of disobedience- Those characterized by disobedience would surely refer to those who had heard the call to disobedience and refused it. The wrath of God is coming upon them in particular at judgment day. Paul may well have in view "the wrath to come" upon Israel in AD70 (Lk. 3:7; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16). In this case, "the sons of disobedience" would be the Jews, and those claiming they would not be so judged would be Judaist false teachers, who clearly were the big problem for Paul's churches.

5:7 *Therefore do not associate with them!*- Being "parkers" (AV) with those who are not Kingdom people is the opposite of being partakers in Christ (Heb. 3:14) and of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4); we are partakers in the promised Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:6). If we partake in Christ, then we partake in His Spirit. To partake in the spirit of the world is therefore impossible if we are partaking in His spirit. This contrast with the way of the Spirit would explain why in the AV, :9 starts talking about the Spirit as if this is in view in the context: "For the fruit of the Spirit..." (AV).

5:8 *For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*- This is another example of appealing for us to live in practice who we are by status. This is why Romans progresses from talking about imputed righteousness and our status in Christ, to the language of the Spirit actually transforming us in practice into who we are by status. Although the readership were not walking as children of light, yet Paul says that there were "now light in the Lord", and no longer in darkness. He surely refers to their status rather than actuality, and appeals for them to live according to the status they have been granted by grace. Likewise he says that every believer at Thessalonica was one of "the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) when clearly there would have been some finally who were not. But they were counted that way by status.

At times it seems Paul 'unconsciously' uses a phrase from the parables, out of context, but as an indication that they were running through his mind (e.g. "children of light" in Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5 is quarried from Lk. 16:8).

5:9 *For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth*- Some manuscripts, followed by AV, read "the fruit of the Spirit". This may seem out of context, but I have argued on :7 that the entire argument here is an appeal for the Spirit rather than the flesh to be the dominant principle in Christian thought and behaviour. All kinds of goodness and truth are the fruit of the Spirit. A way of life is elicited by the Spirit / light. Light is not therefore merely correct understanding of some doctrinal points. Our participation in the Lord Jesus (:7) will elicit a life and thought pattern like His.

5:10 *Proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord*- "Proving" can mean 'experiencing'. I have argued on :7 and :9 that the context here is of the movement of the Spirit. The same Greek words for "proving" and "well-pleasing" / 'acceptable' are to be found in Rom. 12:2: "Do not conform to the mould of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may experience [s.w. "proving", Eph. 5:10) what is the good and acceptable [s.w. "well-pleasing", Eph. 5:10] and the perfect will of God". The renewing and transformation of the mind / spirit is the work of the Spirit gift which we accept at baptism into the Lord Jesus. Here in Ephesians Paul is asking us to allow the Spirit free course, to experience- for this is the way to transformation in practice, rather than by trying to force our flesh to change by steel willed self control.

5:11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*- "But rather reprove them" continues the theme so often seen in this section- of redirecting mental and spiritual energy from sin towards positive spirituality. Not sharing in the works of darkness is one thing; but enforcing our separation from wrong doing is of itself negative. The positive thing is to redirect that mere avoidance of sin into actually trying to save the sinners. Having written here of light and darkness (:8), perhaps Paul's mind is in Jn. 3:20, which says that the light is what reproves. If we are of the light we will naturally reprove the darkness; so this is an appeal in another form to live as light. Verse 13 will make this point explicitly- it is the light which reproves. I have argued throughout this section that Paul is urging us to live the life of the Spirit rather than the flesh; and it is by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit within us, that we reprove the world of sin (Jn. 16:8; 1 Cor. 14:24).

5:12 *For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret*- The sin of Ham in relation to Noah's drunkenness included the fact that he told his brothers about Noah's shame (Gen. 9:22). This incident seems to be alluded to by Paul when he says that it is a shame to speak of what sinners do in secret. A large amount of the communication which would be called 'gossip' includes the communication of sinful things which would be better not entering the minds of saints in any case- one tends to gossip about a neighbour's adultery rather than his lost cat. So the appeal here is to rebuke such wrong behaviour- but directly to the person responsible, and not by way of gossip. Nothing of course is ultimately done "in secret", so [as so often in the Bible], this is recorded from the mistaken perspective of the persons involved, without specific correction. The language of demons is another example.

5:13 *But all things when they are reproved are revealed by the light. For everything that is revealed then becomes light*- The day of judgment will be the ultimate bringing to light and manifesting of all supposedly hidden things (Mk. 4:22; 1 Cor. 4:5 s.w.). But we ahead of that time are used to reveal the hidden things; because light reveals, and we are the light of the world. But this is no call to become the Lord's forensic policemen, ever intent on uncovering the failings of others and constantly investigating vague hunches or conspiracy theories. Light reveals hidden

things quite naturally; we as the light of the world by our nature and example will reveal and thereby reprove that which is in darkness. Likewise the revelation of human sin at the last day will largely be through the fact of sinners being in the personal presence of the Lord Jesus, just as happened during His ministry. His presence and personality of itself convicted people of their sins. The revelation of the hidden things in this life is so that those things revealed "then become light", i.e. that there is real change and transformation. The revelation of hidden things at the last day will be too late. And we have noted throughout this section that Paul envisages a radical transformation now of darkness to light; he who steals now gives to the needy, the curser instead utters words of grace etc.

5:14 *Therefore it is said: Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall shine upon you*- At baptism, we were "quickened together with Christ" (Col. 2:13). But Paul wrote this to the baptized saints at Ephesus. As in Romans 6, he is asking them to live out in practice what they are by status. It is thought that Paul is quoting here from a first century baptism hymn; he is encouraging them to be as it were baptized again, spiritually, in coming to life in Christ. Note that the Ephesians were active in the outward work of the Truth (Rev. 2:2,3); but their real spiritual man was asleep. The resurrection from the dead with Christ at baptism was by the work of the Spirit; the same Spirit that resurrected Him likewise gives us internal new life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:11). That life will therefore have the Lord Jesus as the light, ever searching out our hidden things. After 'arising from the dead', the light of "Christ shall shine upon you". Paul has already prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians will be enlightened (1:18); he sees them as needing to arise with Christ and have His searching light shine upon them.

These lines are quoted from a Christian hymn sung at baptisms; Clement of Alexandria, *Protr. 9.84* gives the fuller verse:

Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you,
the sun of resurrection,
begotten before the morning star,
who gives life by his very own rays.

5:15 *Therefore, look carefully how you walk, not as the unwise but as the wise*- "Carefully" is better "diligently", and is the same word used about Apollos who was "diligent" or 'careful' in his faith at Ephesus, and would have been known to the initial readership (Acts 18:25). Our way of life is not to simply left at a default position, as it is with most people. Life in Christ is to be consciously lived, examined and adjusted consciously. This is the true wisdom; the wise of this world are spiritually unwise, which thought provides yet another connection with the early chapters of Romans (Rom. 1:14,22). James 3:13 likewise defines "the wise" as those who live in practice a spiritual life.

5:16 *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil*- They should hurry up and make the changes Paul and their status in Christ require of them. In contexts regarding the evil of our surrounding world, Paul teaches us to 'redeem the time' (also Col. 4:5). This is a word classically used of the market place, in the sense of 'buying up' while the opportunity is there. But it is used of how the Lord has redeemed us (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). His redemption of us elicits a conscious redemption by us of our time, in His service. Yet the context demands that this pressing need to buy up time be understood in the light of the evil world around us. Is it not that Paul is saying 'Buy up all the

opportunities to gain back time from this world', in the same spirit as he told slaves "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather" (1 Cor. 7:21)? This means we shouldn't glorify the use of time for the necessary things of the world. If we *must* spend our time in the things of the world, as the NT slaves simply had to, then God will accept this as done in His service. But we shouldn't use this gracious concession to do all we can in the life of the world, justifying it by saying it is done 'unto the Lord'. This concession, in its context, only applies to those who by force of circumstances really must spend their time in the things of the world (Eph. 6:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:31). We must "break up our fallow ground" (Heb. 'plough the unploughed'), analyse ourselves from outside ourselves, and use our time and our "all things" to the utmost of their potential (Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12). We were created "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); we were redeemed that we might be zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14)- not that we might drift through life playing with our hobbies and with the fascinations of our careers.

"Because the days are evil" may be a reference to the day of evil coming upon the world in AD70, which Paul expected to be the second coming of the Lord Jesus. His idea would then be that because the Lord's coming draws near, we should therefore use our time the more wisely. Col. 4:5 parallels this passage by asking us to redeem our time in the context of walking wisely towards outsiders, and perhaps the idea is that we should use our time in witnessing to them the more intensely as we see time running out for this world.

5:17 *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*- Paul is asking baptized believers not to be foolish, but to be wise by understanding the Lord's will. The reference seems to be to the Lord's urging of those who know their Lord's will to prepare themselves for His return (Lk. 12:47). The foolish servant was getting drunk rather than serving the Lord's extended family (Lk. 12:43-45); and Paul goes on to speak of precisely those kinds of weaknesses (:18). We see here a call to seek understanding of what the Lord's will is for each of us personally, what specific service He hopes for in us and has potentially enabled; which good works He has "before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*- Paul always offers an alternative to sinful behaviour, reflecting the Hebrew idea of 'holiness', which means both separation *from* [sin] and separation *unto* spiritual behaviour. Instead of alcoholism, being filled with hard spirits, we are to be filled with the Spirit. Remember he was writing to those already baptized, who had been given the Spirit at baptism. But we can be further filled with the Spirit, if we allow that to happen. The Greek *asotia* ["debauchery"] is literally 'not-saving'. Alcoholics can be saved; but the behaviours associated with alcoholism, as with any sin, are not the way to salvation. Filling with the Spirit is the answer to the alcoholic life, and has been witnessed many times in the transformation of alcoholics. Earlier in Ephesians we have read of being filled with God's fullness through the gift of the Spirit (Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:10). This filling will as it were displace the alcoholic life- for a whole new vista of existence is opened up. Clearly there were alcoholics in the Ephesian church, and Paul doesn't advise their excommunication, but rather urges transformation by the Spirit. Paul was keen for others to copy John the Baptist, to find in him the inspiration which he too had found. So he encourages his Ephesians not to drink wine but instead be filled with the Spirit- the very language of John (Lk. 1:15). In other words, 'Be like that Spirit-filled zealot John rather than enjoying the sloppy pleasures of this life!'.

There are clear parallels between Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:18,19: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord… but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". Clearly the *Word of Christ* is equated with being "*filled with the Spirit*". This is not to create a primitive, direct connection between 'word' and 'Spirit'. The word of Christ refers to the simple message that if we believe in Him, we shall be saved. And as a result, the Spirit of Christ fills our hearts (Gal. 4:5,8).

5:19 *Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart*- On :17 we detected reference to the parable of the servant who was to focus upon caring for others in the household rather than getting drunk. The opposite to the selfishness of alcohol abuse is to care for others; to be filled instead with the Spirit in order to speak to one another in spiritual terms. We noted on 4:29 and 5:4 that the antidote to swearing and blasphemy was to speak to the grace of others; it is our commitment to others which will motivate the changes required. This is exactly why we need the church, interaction with others and taking responsibility for assisting their spiritual path. And that should be precisely why we attend church or are involved with other believers- in order to contribute to them.

The Greek translated "to make melody" means 'to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument' (Strong)- evidently it's a musical term. The implication is that we should so know our own heart and spend time in communion with our own mind that we know how to rouse our own feelings in praise. Such self-knowledge is a sure antidote to fleshly thinking. So by all means get into Christian music; "speaking to yourselves (a reference to self-talk? Although it likely means 'speaking to each other') in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19 AV).

5:20 *Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*- Gratitude is again cited as an antidote to the selfishness of alcoholism and other unspirituality. That gratitude is not to be occasional but "always and for everything", a worldview that is grateful for all things, praising in the heart (see on :19).

5:21 *Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*- Another help against alcoholism and the life of the flesh is to see the Christ in others. We will submit to others in that they too are representatives of the Lord Jesus. The carnal mind, from which arises alcoholism and all unspirituality, is not subject to the spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:7); submission to Him means having His spirit within us, and so we will not be submissive to the mind of the flesh. 1 Cor. 15:28 suggests that all things are undergoing a progressive process of submission to the Lord Jesus, and when this is achieved, then the Lord Jesus will be enthroned fully in glory. This could mean that when the body of Christ is sufficiently submissive to Him, when spiritual fruit is ready for harvest, then He will come. And whilst the number of true believers appears to be in decline in the world, it would seem that true spirituality amongst them is on the increase. "All things" have been submitted under the Lord Jesus (1:22 s.w.), but we are to live this out in practice by submission to Him in our minds and living. Heb. 2:8 uses the same word in explaining that God has indeed "put all things in subjection under His feet... but now we see not yet all things subjected under Him".

5:22 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord*- This is a specific example of the principle of :21; we should submit to all in the Lord's body "out of reverence for Christ", because each member represents Him. Women were to see in their husbands the representation of the Lord Jesus, just as all members of the church were to see it in each other. Perhaps Paul particularly mentions the case of women because there may have been a tendency in Ephesus for women not to respect their believing husbands.

5:23 *For the husband is the head of the wife and Christ is the head of the church- himself being the saviour of the body*- The general principle of submission to each other in Christ, which includes men to women in Christ, doesn't mean that the woman is not to regard the believing husband as not being "the head". But Paul carefully balances against abuse of this by emphasizing that it is Christ who is Himself the saviour of all his body. The husband is not the saviour, but is of course to manifest that passion for salvation to his wife.

5:24 *But as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives should also be to their husbands in everything*- The AV adds, following other manuscripts, "to their *own* husbands", as if there was a tendency for women to be subject to other men or teachers, instead of their husbands. This subjection to the husband is in response to his attempt to love the wife with the self-sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus for us all (:25). Perceiving any realistic attempt at emulating that should elicit respect and submission in that the woman perceives that the husband's game plan and intention is her salvation. These principles therefore apply only to man and woman in Christ; there is no suggestion here that males *per se* are to be submitted to by females simply by reason of their gender.

5:25- see on Gal. 2:20.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it- The Greek for “gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. We have shown elsewhere that His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships. No wonder therefore that Paul urges the wife to respond to the husband's attempt to reach this level with respect and submission.

The Lord carried our sins "*that* we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. wheals- Peter saw them) you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). The husband should love his wife, "even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body" (Eph. 5:30 RV). Jesus loved us as much as He loves Himself; He "cannot be separated from the work which He came to do" (R.R.). He saved Himself so as to save us. And this isn't just atonement theology- this is to be lived out in married life. As Christ died for us and gave up His last breath for us, so as a supreme act of the will, the husband must give up his life for his woman. And she can only but respond to this. These are high ideals. But the very height of them can transform human life in practice.

5:26 *That he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word*- The allusion is to the laver, the large bath in which the priests washed in order to be sanctified and able to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord's death was to purify us so that we might serve; and the thoughtful love of the husband for the wife is likewise aimed at providing her opportunities to serve. There is clearly an allusion to baptism;

the Lord died so that we might be washed in baptism, so that we might be sanctified and thereby ready for His usage, prepared unto all good works (2 Tim. 2:21). This guiding of the wife into the Lord's service is part of a husband's love for his believing wife.

5:27 *That he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and blameless*- "To Himself" suggests that indeed beauty is in the eye of the beholder; the Lord Jesus aims through His love, death and work with us to present the church without spot in His eyes. The final salvation of the wife is likewise to be the husband's aim. And in that process, despite the wrinkles of passing years, he will come to see his wife increasingly as "without spot". This is the very opposite direction to the thrust and direction of secular relationships, in which men tend to hanker after the young and physically unwrinkled. In Christ, there comes an increasing respect and positive view of our partners, matched by increasing respect on the part of the wife. This dynamism and growth in perception and respect ought to be the hallmark of true Christian marriage.

5:28 *Thus husbands ought also to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself*- This and :29 are not an appeal to selfishness, as if men ought to love their wives because actually they are loving themselves by so doing. The Lord Jesus joins together husband and wife as one flesh (:21). The husband who is willingly part of this process will therefore not separate his own agendas and aims from those of his wife. Love of the partner becomes love of self in that the two are joined as one by the Lord's process of binding the two parties together.

5:29- see on Rom. 6:19.

For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church- See on :28. There is of course self harm and self hatred especially in our mixed up world. But the idea that nobody hates themselves was common in the classical writers. Curtius, "*Corporibus nostris quoe utique non odimus*" - "We do not hate those things that pertain to our own bodies"; Seneca "*Fateor insitam nobis esse corporis nostri charitatem*" - "I confess that there is implanted in us the love of our own body". It could be that Paul is alluding to these ideas, not completely correct as they are, and building an argument upon them. The Bible is unafraid to do this, without footnoting, as it were, that there is an error in the original idea. The usage of the language of demons is typical. But another option in interpretation arises from considering that "hated" can mean 'to love less', as in Lk. 14:26. The Lord Jesus did not love us less than himself, and neither should the husband love his wife less than himself. The Lord's personal salvation was tied up in ours; as Robert Roberts put it, His death was "for Himself that it might be for us". And the husband's salvation likewise. The unity between man and woman is such that he will not separate his salvation from that of his wife. They are on the journey together. Hence "flesh" is used instead of "body" because of the allusion to God's joining of man and woman as one flesh (Gen. 2:23). Nourishing and cherishing refer to nurturing with a view to growth (Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 2:7). This nourishing is provided by the Lord to the body in the form of the Spirit, which is administered through the various members of the body (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19). And so likewise the husband should be the spiritual nourishment for his wife; but each member of the body should be likewise for the others, including the wife for the husband.

5:30 *Because we are members of his body*- The man represents Christ, and the woman the ecclesia. But the ecclesia, all of it, *is* the body of Christ; so in this sense

husbands should love their wives "as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (5:28,29). The more we appreciate the strength and power of typology, the more we will realize the spiritual unity which there should be between brethren and sisters. The physical body of Christ is not divided- there is only one Jesus in Heaven. If brethren represent Christ and sisters typify His body, then there should be no division- either between husbands and wives, or amongst brethren and sisters within Christ's body. Thus marriage breakdowns and internal ecclesial strife are equally wrong- they both spoil the typology presented in Eph. 5. They effectively tear Christ's body apart, as men tried to do on the cross. We say tried to" because ultimately Christ's body is indivisible- in the same way as in a sense His body was "broken" (as it is by division in the body), whilst in another sense it remained unbroken, in God's sight. Likewise, the ecclesial body in God's sight is even now not divided- we are one in Christ.

The figure of *being* somebody's body could not be more intense and personal, indeed it almost alludes to the sex act itself. You touch your own body, feel your bones beneath your flesh- that's fundamentally *you*. Whilst of course Christ does have a separate bodily existence, we are fundamentally Christ. Without us and our sin, Christ would not have come into existence, nor would He now exist. Joseph's brothers said: "He is our brother and our flesh" (Gen. 37:27). And some manuscripts here add: "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30 AV).

5:31 *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*- "For this cause" is hard to interpret. Because of what? Does Paul mean that the whole marriage and bonding process is to teach us of our personally becoming one with the Lord Jesus? The special psychological bonding which is given by God whereby two persons become one, over time, therefore points to the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual who is attached to Christ. And as there must be a leaving of the family of origin, so there is to be a leaving of previous spiritual associations. That point had to be emphasized to the new converts to whom Paul wrote, be they from paganism or Judaism.

The radical value attached to every individual in Christ is brought out especially by the New Testament teaching about family life. There were many pagan 'household codes', which basically exhorted the slaves, children and women to be subordinate to the male leaders of the family. Paul frames his family teaching in exactly the terms of these 'household codes' in order to bring out the significant differences between God's way and the way of society in this vital area. The fact Paul and Peter in their 'household codes' speak of the head of the house being submissive and having responsibilities to love, as an act of the will, was quite radical. But those male leaders had to learn that in Christ, everyone matters, and people can't be treated by their brethren as they are by society generally, as nothing and nobody, mere cogs in a machine. The *familia*, or extended family in contemporary thought, was of itself devaluing to persons. A woman married into her husband's extended family, and effectively lost so much of her uniqueness as an individual- indeed women were so often treated as faceless. But Paul teaches, on the sure foundation of Genesis, that a man should *leave* his parents and *cleave* to his wife (Eph. 5:31). This was far more radical than may now appear. The man was being taught that merely perpetuating the extended family, using the woman you received in your arranged marriage in order to continue and expand the family, was not in fact God's way. He was to *leave* that extended family mindset and personally *cleave* to his wife in love- love which was an

act of the will. He was to start a new family unity; to love his *wife* rather than his extended family "as himself". Likewise fathers are told to bring their children up in the instruction of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 6:4)- when the task of training up children was left to the women, older children and slaves (especially the *paidagogos*) in the extended family. The value of persons implicit here was thus a call to be essentially creative, independent, perceiving the personal [rather collectively-imposed] value in both oneself and others in ones' family.

"God hath *tempered* the (ecclesial) body together... that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:24,25 AV) uses a related word as in Eph. 5:31 concerning how a man "shall be *joined* unto his wife... I speak concerning Christ and the church". Because both man and woman ultimately represent Christ, there should be no schism between either believers, nor husbands and wives. Husbands and wives become "one flesh". But "flesh" is almost equivalent to "body" (see Eph. 2:15,16; Col. 1:22)- their union of "one flesh" is parallel to the union of the "one body" within the ecclesia. We should all be "perfectly *joined* together (marriage language) in the same mind" (1 Cor. 1:10). Recall how "Israel *joined* himself unto Baalpeor" (Num. 25:3) in a sexual context. Hos. 9:10 comments on this as meaning that Israel "Separated themselves unto" Baalpeor. We cannot be 'joined to' something unless we are 'separated from' something else. If we are truly joined to Christ and each other, we *must* be separated from idolatry. It is impossible to experience this 'joining' with believers who are not 'separated'- one cannot be 'joined' in intercourse to more than one person. We *cannot* serve two masters without *hating* God.

5:32 *This mystery is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church*- The idea of "mystery" has been used earlier in Ephesians concerning the strange and profound unity possible between Jew and Gentile in Christ. The idea of two becoming one has been used earlier about the unity of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ, the church. The bond between persons enabled by the Spirit is indeed a mystery which has now been exhibited in practice. This is why the Lord in Jn. 17 spoke of the unity which His sacrifice would enable as something new, unique and powerfully persuasive as a witness in this world. The connection with the language of Jew-Gentile unity is to make the point as noted on :31- that unity within the church is to be reflected between believing partners.

5:33 *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband*- The simple practical point is that the love of the husband for the wife, after the pattern of the Lord's love for the church on the cross, is to elicit respect from the wife to the husband. This addresses the female need for love and the male need for respect- and it all reflects the far higher level of the Lord's love for us and our submission towards Him.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right*- Given the predominance of slaves, children and women in the early churches, we are to imagine the house church meetings with plenty of women, nursing mothers, kids running everywhere. Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 seem to suppose that children would be present at the church gatherings and would listen attentively to what was said. But "in the Lord" may mean that this obedience is not simply because parents are parents. It could be a continuation of the theme of respect for the sake of being "in Christ" which was

developed at the end of chapter 5. Believing children should obey their parents "in the Lord"; or perhaps, for the sake of the fact that they are "in the Lord", seeing them as the manifestation of the Lord Jesus. The whole passage in 6:1-3 is a strange allusion to Jacob; " Jacob obeyed his father and his mother" (Gen. 28:7) by going to Padan Aram (actually he fled there, but the record frames it as if he did so purely out of obedience to his parents and from a desire to find a wife in the Faith). Because Jacob did this, God promised him at Bethel that it would *be well* with him (Gen. 32:9 = "that it may be well with you", Eph. 6:3), and he too was given the Abrahamic promises of living long on the earth / land (= "the... commandment with promise", Eph. 6:2). Thus Jacob's fleeing to Padan Aram is seen by the Spirit in Paul as a righteous act of obedience to faithful parents, which resulted in him receiving the promises. And yet his flight was rooted in fear, and at the time he did not accept the promises as relevant to him, neither did he believe Yahweh was his God (Gen. 28:20). And yet the positive side of Jacob (i.e. his obedience to his parents) is seized on and held up as our example.

6:2 *Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise)*- See on :1. Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul.

6:3 *That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth*- The promise of 'long life' now means eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth. "Well" is the equivalent of the promise that "it may go well with you" (Dt. 5:16). The same Hebrew word is used of the blessing of Abraham to be received in the land of promise (Gen. 32:9,12). Again, the promises to Abraham are seen as the basis of the Christian hope (Gal. 3:8).

6:4- see on Eph. 5:31.

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord- This confirms that the parents and children in view are "in the Lord". The balance within the verse suggests that the opposite of nurturing in the Lord is to provoke them to anger, perhaps referring to anger at a later stage in the child's life. "Nurture", *paideia*, is literally 'education' or 'training'. The idea is that the Lord Jesus should educate our children; in the sense that we are to allow Him to operate through us in training them. We are to be the Lord Jesus in training our children; if we do not show them Him then we are not Him to them. We are to provide this nurture; Sunday School or church programs for kids are all very well, but the essential responsibility is with the parent. And any "admonition" is to be from the Lord, and not therefore motivated by a flash of anger or frustration.

6:5 *Servants, be obedient to those that according to the flesh are your masters, with respect and fear, in singleness of your heart, as if to Christ*- As with the commands about parents, children and marital partners, this would seem to apply to servants and masters within the church. As we each manifest the Lord Jesus because we are in Him, so servants should perceive the Christ in their believing masters. Seeing the Christ in others is what can so elevate and transform human relationships, including the difficult ones, such as between believing master and believing slave. The believing slave would have been sorely tempted to despise their believing masters, considering that really they should release them from slavery and shouldn't even be involved in slavery in the first place. To respect those who are not living as they

might in Christ is hard indeed, but again, it is because they are "in Christ" that we can find the sort of respect for them which Paul found even for the Corinthians.

6:6 *Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*- Whether or not the master was in Christ, the slave was allowed to serve them as if serving Christ. All the wonderful ideals of serving the Lord Jesus in works, such as evangelism and caring for others, would have seemed unrealistic for those who were slaves. They had no freedom nor ownership even of their bodies. With what relief they would have read that their secular service could be accepted as service to the Lord. This is a comfort likewise today to those who are effectively in slavery, working on minimum wage and paying high rent and taxes. It can all be accepted as done unto the Lord, and therefore is not to be done as work done just when the master is watching ["eyeservice"], but knowing that the Heavenly Master is watching at all times, and we are pleasing Him and not men. Slaves could also reflect that their position and labour was "the will of God". By obeying the will of their masters, they were obeying the will of God. But we need to be aware that many masters asked their slaves to perform immoral deeds, especially sexually. Paul does not call for rebellion against such masters, which would likely have resulted in mutilation or death. And yet the Bible is clear that we should be obedient to men only insofar as we are not thereby disobedient to our Master in Heaven, Peter's example with regard to preaching being perhaps the clearest. The fact the question is not directly addressed is surely because we are to this day left with many such nuanced situations, where principles appear to be in conflict, and it is not the case that not following the highest path shall lead to the Lord's rejection.

6:7 *Giving service with a good will, as if to the Lord and not to man*- "Giving service" is literally 'being in bondage'. We are His slaves, and the force of that metaphor should not be lost upon us. The depth of that servitude should mean that our 'slavery' in secular things is not significant, compared to our deep sense of bondage to the Lord. He is our exclusive Lord, and so any human servitude is to be performed as unto Him.

6:8 *Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, the same shall he receive in return from the Lord, whether he be slave or free*- The 'receiving in return' is at judgment day; the same word is used of our 'receiving' a reward in response to life lived today. Not in this life, when the righteous often suffer for their goodness. *Every* good deed will then have its recognition. "Each one" again encourages us that we are taken notice of as individuals; the slaves, who probably rarely attended church meetings, may have felt that they were somehow insignificant to the Lord. Paul is encouraging them that every act of service performed in their secular lives- yes, every errand run and meal prepared- could be accepted as service to the Lord and would be rewarded at judgment day. Our status as slave or free will not be significant.

6:9 *And you, masters, do the same things to them, and stop your threatening; knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him*- "The same things" refers to the good things of :8. For masters to do good to slaves was a paradigm breaking idea in the first century world, where a slave was not considered a person but a machine. Clearly it is believing masters who are being addressed here, and some of them practiced "threatening"; quite against the spirit of their Lord who when He suffered, "threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23 s.w.). Masters were to realize that they too are in slavery- to the Lord Jesus. He will not take account

of someone's social status in His judgments of people- "there is no partiality with Him" matches the comment in :8, "whether he be slave or free". Surely nobody actually said in so many words that the Lord took account of their higher social status; but in their hearts they assumed this, and so Paul directly tackles that attitude. I noted on 5:32 that Paul uses the same principles about the unity of Jew and Gentile to reason that husband and wife are to be united in Christ. Here too, "there is no partiality with [the Lord]" is used both about the unity between Jew and Gentile (Rom. 2:11) and now here about the essential unity between master and slave in Christ. Paul is teaching far more than that masters and slaves should be civil, reasonable and tolerant towards each other; but beyond that, they were in fact united together as one in Christ. This is the result of baptism into the same Lord (Gal. 3:27-29).

6:10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might*- It is cold comfort to be told "be strong" when facing hard times. We have no strength of our own. But we are told here, in the Greek, to 'be strengthened in the Lord [Jesus]'. Here we have the two aspects brought together: human endeavour meshed with the Lord's activity. We are to be strong, but in His strength. The strength of the Lord's might clearly refers to His Spirit. We are strengthened with His might (1:19; Col. 1:11), and that strengthening is by the might of His Spirit in the inner man (3:16,20 s.w.). The strengthening envisaged is therefore internal, psychological strengthening. But we must wish for it- this will not happen against our will. We must seek to be strong in the Lord, putting on the armour (:11), and will be strengthened by this internal Spirit strengthening.

The following commands in :11-20 are not simply a random list of 'things we ought to do and be'. They are all based upon the pattern of the Lord Jesus. The things which are to be "put on" are a form of 'putting on Christ'. Clearly the breastplate of righteousness and belt are references to the Lord's righteousness imputed to us. As He wore the belt of truth (Is. 11:5), so we are to. We are to be like Him in practice. We take the sword of the Spirit which is "the word of God"- a reference more to the Lord Jesus than the book known as the Bible. We as it were extend His conquest by taking Him in our hand as we go on the offensive. That we extend His work in the world is the idea of Eph. 1:23: "The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere" (GNB). Our works are His workmanship, He works through us (Eph. 2:10). Feet shod with the Gospel means to witness like the Lord, of whom it was written "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good" (Is. 52:7). The helmet of salvation is likewise the Lord Jesus, "the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). So far in Ephesians, the point has repeatedly been made that we are "in Christ" and counted as Him. But we are to live in practice according to how God counts us in status. Rather like the beloved seeks to live up to the overly high opinion of the lover.

6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil*- Having spoken of the strengthening of the Spirit in :10, we are reminded that we must seek that strengthening; we must put on the armour. Our battle is essentially spiritual (:12), and so we need the armour of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which will empower us against temptation, but we must seek to put it on. See on :12. This section could be "a military speech of a general before leading the troops into battle". The order in which the armour and weapons is to be put on exactly matches

Roman military patterns. Again we have a deconstruction of the cult of empire. Instead, we are the Lord's soldiers; but as noted on :10, we are to dress up as Him, the ultimate non-resister of evil. And the battle is against the flesh, it is spiritual and not literal; and there is no aspect of self glorification nor personal aggrandizement with territory or spoil. However, the excavation of a gladiator graveyard near Ephesus has led others to observe that this is rather a description of the dressing up of a gladiator as he goes into the arena to fight to the death. And whether or not "Ephesians" was written solely to Ephesus, Ephesus was certainly one destination of this letter. "Put on" (:11) is apparently the term of command to the gladiators at the start of the conflict, when they were bidden dress themselves for the fight. "Be strong!" (:10) was the call to the gladiators as they went into conflict. "Receive the helmet... the sword" (:17) speaks of the gladiator being given these items by the attendant. The final reference to "undying love" (:25) alludes to the glory of the 'undying' gladiator who wins every fight. We are 'undying' in that our love is undying, and death itself will not conquer that love, for we shall be resurrected to love Him again and for ever. The footwear was to be "bound" to the feet, so what is in view is distinctly 'sandals' rather than classic military boots. Sandals were appropriate for gladiators in an arena rather than for soldiers marching off on a campaign. And yet the imagery is totally reinterpreted; these preparations for fighting are all applied to the gentle things of the spiritual life, in this case "put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace". We should always be on the lookout for opportunities to proclaim peace with God- rather than opportunities to bring down our opponent. John Thomas rightly admitted that he had spent too much of his life in wrong spirited "theological gladiatorship". Likewise "we... wrestle" (:12) can be taken as an allusion to gladiatorship rather than military warfare. And in the end, gladiators were all slain. In this case, we are called like the Lord to go forth to fight unto our death, but with ultimate victory assured. For the Christian, death in battle is the "magnificent defeat". "The day of evil" (:13) was a phrase used for the day a gladiator died in battle. But the day of defeat turns into the day when we stand in glory. Just as the Lord's death was in fact His ultimate victory. In Him, loss, defeat and death itself becomes the ultimate victory. But the focus of the passage here is on the preparation of the gladiator- putting on his belt and footwear, 'taking' his various pieces of armour and weapons. The focus is on the preparation for the fight, rather than the fight itself. Because the idea is that ultimate victory is assured, because the picture of the gladiator or soldier is in fact the picture of the Lord Jesus, who won through the defeat of death. Indeed, the lack of any reference to the fight itself is noticeable. The idea almost seems to be that this gladiator clothes himself with armour, "stands" in victory before the fight, just stands there, falls in "the evil day" but by the same token, strangely rises up to stand in final victory.

6:12 *For we do not wrestle only against flesh and blood, but also against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies*- The Greek for "wrestle" means literally a fight, not as in a battle, but a fight between two individuals. It alludes to the gladiator, not a soldier. At least three possible interpretations present themselves. The language is partly relevant to Angels; yet also to the Judaizers and also to the Roman authorities. Those three possibilities can mesh with each other. Paul is writing in Jewish terms to a group under the influence of Judaizers and Jewish thinking. The Old Testament presents the world as under the control of Angels, with each power group having Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven. For "spirits" see on Dan.

10:20,21. Paul sees the Christian conflict as not only against their own flesh and blood, or even against individual humans; but against systems of wickedness, both Judaist and Roman. Both groups were involved because the Jews were seeking to use Roman power and litigation to destroy the Christians, just as they had in the crucifixion of the Lord. And yet Paul frames the conflict in terms of Angels because he sees great comfort in the fact that all situations on earth are allowed by Angelic control, and God is not unaware of the earthly situation. We find this kind of approach commonly used in Revelation. Here, the "principalities and powers" can refer therefore both to literal Angels and to those they represent in the Roman system; the wicked spirits in heavenlies can refer to Judaizers within the church as well as to their representatives in the throne room of Heaven.

As regards common misunderstanding of this passages, note that the world is under God's control, not that of evil beings in heaven (Dan. 4:32). "All power" in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Mt. 28:18) by God (Rev. 3:21; Lk. 22:29), so it cannot also be possessed by wicked beings in heaven. There can be no sinful being in Heaven itself (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10). There is much figurative language in vv. 11–17 – the armour of the Christian is figurative, as is the wrestling, seeing that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24); v. 12 should be similarly interpreted. If the "Devil" was cast out of heaven in Eden, how could he and his followers still have been in the literal heavens in Paul's time?

The same phrase "Principalities and powers" is used in Col. 2:15 concerning the Angels who gave the Law. The phrase "wiles" (:11) is only used again in 4:14 ("Lie in wait") regarding the Judaizer-devil circulating false doctrine. The rulers of the Jewish heavenlies were both literal Angels and the Judaizers whom they represented in the court of Heaven. Eph. 6:13 warns of a forthcoming battle: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day"- the spiritual battle between the Law of Moses and that of Christ which is detailed in Rev. 12. Paul could see that in the final conflict against the Judaizers, he would need courage to speak out as he should: "Pray... for me... that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel" (v. 19)- a phrase often used in connection with Gentiles and Jews having equal standing with God through Christ.

The Greek for "wrestle" in Eph. 6:12 is the same word as "cast out" in Rev. 12. The battle of the Christians then was not to cast out men- "we wrestle not against flesh and blood". This is a real difficulty for any 'explanation of difficult passages' that tries to make this refer to human rulers alone. It was the Jewish devil that needed casting out, and the Angel principalities and powers which co-ordinated it. There is no doubt that "principalities and powers" does also refer to Jewish and Roman authorities (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Mt. 7:29 etc.). This is to be expected once we understand that the devil and satan of the New Testament often refers to both Jewish and Roman systems and the Angels behind them. Remember that the Angels rule the world. God's system of manifestation remains constant. In the same way as the "pattern of things in the Heavens" in the Angelic organization there was repeated on earth through the organization of the tabernacle and the *elohim* of Israel's judges and priests, so that Heavenly system is maybe also reflected through the judges and leaders of the world, every one of whom is controlled by an Angel. Hence the identical language used for both Angels and worldly rulers- in the same way as Angel-Cherubim language is used concerning both Angels and earthly armies, e.g. of Babylonians, who fulfilled their will.

This passage seems a footnote to the epistle: "Finally, my brethren..." (v. 10). This is similar to the footnotes begun in Phil. 3:1; Gal. 6:12 and 1 Tim. 6:20, all of which warn against the Judaizers - indicating the immense importance Paul attached to the coming struggle with the "Principalities and powers".

The context is set in v. 13. The preparation was to be because the church was facing "the evil day". This refers to a period of especial persecution of the church, which was to come at the hands of the Romans, seeing they were the only people with enough power to create an "evil day" for the Christian church at the time Paul was writing. (1 Pet. 4:12; 5:8–9). The wrestling was against "the rulers of this dark world", who at the time were the Romans. Note that the wrestling is spiritual wrestling to keep the faith (2 Cor. 10:3–5). This time of evil had already begun as Paul was writing (Eph. 5:16) – "the days are evil'. "Principalities" is translated "magistrate" in Luke 12:11; human "rule", in the sense of human government, in 1 Corinthians 15:24, and the "power" of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20. So it does not necessarily have reference to any power or prince in heaven. "Powers" is translated as the "authority" of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20, and regarding one having "authority" in Matthew 7:29. We must "be subject to principalities and powers" (Titus 3:1) in the sense of earthly governments, insofar as they do not ask us to do things which are contrary to the law of God (Acts 5:29; 4:19; Mt. 19:17). If "principalities and powers" are evil beings in heaven whom we must resist, why are we told to be subject to them? If we accept that they refer to human governors and authorities, then this is easily understandable. "Heavenly places" may also refer to positions of authority in the secular world. Thus the king of Babylon was a figurative "star" in heaven (Is. 14:12), i.e. a great ruler. Jesus is the "sun" (Mal. 4:2), the saints are the "stars" (Dan. 12:3) of the future order. The present "heavens" of man will be replaced by the new Heavens when the Kingdom is established on the earth (2 Pet. 3:13), i.e. the positions of power and rulership, now in the hands of sinful men, will be handed over to the true Christians. The saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdoms of men (Dan. 7:27). Thus wicked spirits in the "heavens" could refer to men of wicked minds in places of power in the world who were persecuting the Christians.

"Wicked spirituals in high (heavenly) places" does not refer to wicked beings in heaven itself. The exalted position of the true believers in Christ is described as being "in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2:6). "Spirituals" can be used to describe those in the church who had the gift of the spirit; having given a list of commands as to how the gifts of the spirit should be used, Paul concludes: "If any man (in the church) think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual (i.e. spiritually gifted, see N.I.V.), let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). 1 Corinthians 14 shows there was a big problem in the church of believers misusing the spirit gifts. Hebrews 6:4–6 describes some Jewish Christians in the first century who had the gift of the spirit, but who were leading the church away from true Christianity by their attitude. These would be a prime example of wicked spirituals in the heavenlies (i.e. in the church). The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25, cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple. In the same way as wicked people could be in the temple, so, too, they could be in the heavenlies of the church. Possession of the Spirit did not mean that someone was necessarily acceptable in God's sight, e.g. Saul possessed it for a time (1 Sam. 10:10) as did the judges of Israel (Num. 11:17) although they were not righteous; they did not believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and therefore were condemned to die like the other Israelites, despite their having the Spirit – Psalm 82:1–7 says as much. For a period the churches

of Revelation 2 and 3 possessed the gifts despite their errors, until eventually their candlestick was removed (cp. Acts 20:28–29; Eph. 4:11; Rev. 2:5). Thus the wicked spirits in the heavenlies were apostate Christians within the church, in league with the Judaists, leading the church into an "evil day" of temptation.

Thus the threat to the church was twofold: from the Roman/Jewish persecution and from the (often Judaist) "false apostles" (2 Cor. 11:13) within. Remember Ephesians 6:11–13 was written to the church at Ephesus. Paul had previously warned them about this threat from within: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29–30). Rotherham's translation brings this out well: "Our struggle is against the principalities against the authorities against the world – rulers of this darkness, AND against spiritual wickedness in heavenlies".

It is possible to still interpret "the Devil" in v. 11, as having a certain degree of reference to the "Jewish Satan". The "Heavenly places" of v. 12 may refer to the Jewish heavenlies; 2 Peter 3 and Deuteronomy 32:1 speak of the Jewish heavens. This is strengthened by the fact that the "sun, moon and stars" are sometimes figurative of the Jews (e.g. Genesis 22:17; 37:9; Dan. 8:9,10,24). We have shown that the wicked spirituals may have reference to the Jewish Christians who were spirit–gifted, but turned to apostasy. They would thus be in both the Christian and Jewish "heavenlies". The threat from within the church posed by the Judaizers infiltrating the church, who were Jews. Thus "the Devil" was manifested in the Roman authorities *and* the Jews within the Christian church. The two entities were connected insofar as the Jewish synagogue powers often informed the Roman authorities against the Christians.

The "wiles of the Devil" offers support to the Jewish context in that the Greek word for "wiles" is elsewhere translated "to lie in wait to deceive", in a verse which talks about the Judaizers subtly trying to introduce false doctrine into the church: the church was being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). If the "heavenly places" also represent the Jewish system, further meaning is given to Ephesians 3:3–10: "The mystery... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs (with the Jews), and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel... To make all men (both Jews and Gentiles) see what is the fellowship of the mystery... To the intent now that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God", i.e. that by the church showing the unity that existed between Jew and Gentile within it, the Jewish leaders ("principalities and powers in heavenlies") might come to appreciate "the manifold wisdom of God". This, in turn, opens up John 17:21: "That they all (Jews and Gentiles) may be one... that the world (this phrase almost always means the Jewish world in John's Gospel) may believe that You have sent me". The "evil day" of v. 13 would be a result of the Judaizers, who were "evil men and seducers" (2 Tim. 3:13).

Another approach is to be found by considering the view that many of the later New Testament documents are full commentary upon and critical allusion to popular ideas of false religion which were circulating at the time. The commentary of David Pitt-Francis on Ephesians 6 bears quoting at more length:

"The object of the Christian message was to shake such imagined deities out of their places, so that men would give real glory to Christ, and to the God of Heaven alone. Paul describes the conflict of Christian witness as a struggle, not against flesh and blood but... "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly

places". To many unacquainted with the real impact of the gospel, both sun and moon seemed to have personalities which they did not possess, as did the stars of heaven, heaven itself, and those exalted parts of nature such as mountains and islands. Thus Isaiah 2, which contains primarily a prophecy against idolatry in Israel and describes idol–worship in the context of 'high mountains' and 'lofty hills' contains a description of the flight of men into caves and holes of the rocks from the terror of God, and this description is borrowed in Revelation. The end of the worship of sun, moon and stars is also foretold by Isaiah in a later passage, where the imagined gods of heaven are described as being punished: "On that day, the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven – and the kings of the earth, on earth – they will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit... then the moon will be ashamed, and the sun confounded for the Lord of hosts will reign" (David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester: Mark Saunders Books, 1984) chapter 4).

6:13 *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to withstand it; and after you have done everything, to stand firm-*

"To stand" is the ultimate picture. It alludes to the victorious gladiator standing fully clothed in armour. Again, the image of 'standing' is of a gladiator's victory, not of a Roman soldier. The section begins in :11 with a call to "stand" ["Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand"] and concludes with the armoured man standing. The idea is that victory in this fight is certain, just as the faithful servants went off to trade in an uncertain world convinced that they couldn't lose but only gain. Strengthened by putting on the Lord Jesus... in Him... we have to win. Every time. And at the end, in the fight of our lives, we shall "stand" or 'be stood up' at the day of judgment. Gladiators were typically slaves, often those who had significantly sinned; and winning spectacular victory was often rewarded with freedom from slavery. That too is perhaps an intended aspect of this parable.

See on :12. Protection against spiritual destruction was not therefore simply in their own strength; they were to put on God's defences. Once they had done all they humanly could, the Divine defence would operate. The same idea is found in :17. It is this huge spiritual power which enables us, as David against Goliath, to successfully "withstand" evil. The same word is used in teaching that we are not to resist evil in physical, secular terms (Mt. 5:39). We are to resist evil- but in spiritual terms. I explained on :12 that the evil in view was the power of Judaism seeking to destroy Christianity in league with the Roman authorities. The same word for "withstand", often translated "resist", is used of how the Gospel of grace was resisted by Judaists and Romans (Acts 13:8; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:15), but the power of the Christian defence / resistance could not be 'withstood' (Lk. 21:15; Acts 6:10; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:9). We in our last days face a final time of evil which shall swamp the believers unless they are armed with God's defences, which basically refer in various forms to "the Spirit". The armour described is all defensive; the peace of God (surely a reference to the Spirit) keeps hearts and minds in Christ (Phil. 4:7).

6:14 *Stand therefore, having girded yourself with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness*- "The breastplate of righteousness" was understood by Jewish ears as referring to the High Priestly breastplate. No ordinary Israelite would ever have had the ambition to dream of wearing it. But as often, Paul calls the believers to the heights of spiritual ambition. They were not mere spectators at a show, but participants, the priestly tribe, called to do even the work of the High Priest on earth. The girdle or belt of truth enabled the Christian to flee swiftly; being girded on Passover night spoke of being able to flee quickly. And it is "truth", our covenant relationship with the Lord, which psychologically keeps us mobile from temptation,

binding our minds together rather than us having the disordered and loose mind of the unbeliever.

6:15 *And having shod your feet with the readiness to announce the gospel of peace*- This is in the context of defensive measures against temptation and tribulation. Being prepared to witness to the Gospel is of itself a means of defence against temptation; for the work of witness means we will not be in league with the world but separate from it in a spiritual sense. "Peace" has been earlier used in the letter regarding peace in relationship between Jew and Gentile because of the peace with God which is in Christ (2:14,15,17; 4:3). The good news is not simply of a future eternity upon planet earth *redevivus*. It is far more than that. It includes the genuinely good and attractive news of reconciliation between persons who would otherwise have remained intractably separated.

Eph. 6:15 speaks of our each being 'sandaled' with the preparation of the Gospel. Who prepared the way of the Lord by preaching, wearing sandals? John the Baptist. It seems Paul is alluding to John here, setting him up as the preacher's example; and it was John who was described as 'preparing' the Lord's way, using the same word as here translated "readiness". The reference to "loins girt" (Eph. 6:14) would also be a John allusion- the record twice (in Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6) stresses how John had his 'loins girded'. See on Mt. 10:32. Wearing sandals again shows that the image is not of a Roman soldier, who wore boots, but of the gladiator in the arena. It is the Lord Jesus who has earlier been defined as the preacher of peace in Ephesians: "he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near" (Eph. 2:17). So again we see that the believer is being asked to clothe themselves with Christ, to have His attributes, to be strong "in Him".

6:16 *Meanwhile taking up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil*- "Taking up" here as in :17 carries the idea of receiving, accepting, as David received Saul's armour. The idea is not simply that our own faith will be our shield. That would be somewhat axiomatic, and the power of resistance and defence would rest with us alone. I suggest the idea is that we are to accept the shield of Spirit defence against temptation, which shield we receive if we believe we shall be given it. We are to believe that truly the Lord is able to keep us from spiritually falling (Jude 24). The fact He is able to do this shows of itself that we can be fortified over and above our own efforts. Otherwise He would have no role to play in keeping us from falling.

6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*- "Take" as in :16 really means to receive or "accept" (GNB); see note on :16. We are to take the defensive armour of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which will keep us from falling; the helmet guards the head, the mind, the thinking, which Paul presents as the essence of Christianity. The Spirit is the guarantee that we will be finally saved, it is the earnest of the possession yet to be received in final salvation (1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). Believing this will keep our minds in peace; if really we are persuaded that we shall eternally live the spiritual life, we shall not give in to petty temptation now. But we must clothe ourselves with that as a helmet, just as we must of our own volition clothe ourselves with Christ in baptism. We receive not 'the-sword-of-the-Spirit', but the sword which is the Spirit or given by the Spirit. "The word [*rhema*] of God" is not necessarily the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; for not all the Bible had then been written. Paul in Rom. 10:8,17 understands this term to mean the Gospel. And the Spirit is available from believing the Gospel. And the *rhema* of God is likewise understood as the Gospel message in Acts 10:22 and often. The *rhema* of the Lord is

specifically stated to be the promised gift of the Spirit in Acts 11:16. Experiencing the *rhema* of God was to experience the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:5). The grammar requires that the sword and not the Spirit is the word of God. The Spirit therefore gives us God's word; it is incorrect here to draw a direct equivalence between the Spirit and the word. The Spirit can give help through God's word- Bible verses can be brought to our mind in the battle against temptation. But the "word" in view is, as suggested above, specifically the word of the Gospel, the good news of the Spirit's help to us in times of need. This is the nourishment and strength ministered to us by the Lord Jesus, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 4:4), in our times of spiritual crisis (Heb. 4:15,16). We note that the word used for "sword" here is that for a short sword or dagger, appropriate to a gladiator, and not to the larger "sword" of the Roman soldier.

6:18- see on Lk. 12:37.

With all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit; and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints- "At all times" is really 'on every occasion'. Every occasion of temptation or testing is to be met by prayer; and we are not to simply pray for ourselves, but for others as we observe them in times of crisis. This suggests that spiritual strengthening is partly dependent upon the prayers of third parties for us. This is the reason for fellowship with other believers, opening up to others our spiritual needs. And it is why we should be continually in prayer for others- for we can play a role in their eternal salvation, just as they can in ours. Paul has listed six items in the defensive armour of the spiritual warrior; prayer is the seventh. This is the ultimate and completing weapon we are to use in withstanding temptation and the day of trial. "Prayer and petition" are hard to define separately; the sense may be that "prayer" is more general, and "petition" refers to specific supplication in time of specific need. Prayer "in the Spirit" surely connects with how the same phrase has been used earlier, of how "in Christ" we are the temple of God and are indwelt by His Spirit. If the promised Spirit of God dwells in us, then we are "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9). So the idea would be that those who are aware of the indwelling of the Spirit and live "in the Spirit" will pray "in the Spirit", in that same atmosphere, for the Spirit to provide the spiritual defence against temptation which the previous verses have offered. We are to pray whilst being alert / awake, in the spirit of the disciples in Gethsemane, indeed, in the spirit of the Lord Jesus praying there; see on Mt. 26:41. For He there was surely praying for us; and we with His Spirit are to pray for the spiritual perseverance of others in time of trial. This was exactly what the Lord was praying for in Gethsemane, whilst the disciples slept.

6:19 *And on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel*- Paul saw the Lord's "boldness" as an imperative to him to likewise be "bold" in preaching (Eph. 6:19). We all find it hard to be bold in witness, and yet in this as in all spiritual endeavour, 'thy fellowship shall make me strong'. A deeper sense of the presence of Jesus, a feeling for who He was and is, a being with Him, will make us bold too. Even Paul found it hard; he asked others to pray for him, that he would preach "boldly" [s.w.] 'as he ought to' (Eph. 6:20 AV); and their prayers were heard, for in his imprisonment during which he wrote Ephesians, he preached boldly (Acts 28:31 s.w.); indeed, boldness characterised his whole life (Phil. 1:20 s.w.). In passing, we note how Paul felt spiritually weaker than he was; he felt not bold, when he was bold; and we see how the admission of weakness to others and their prayers for it can grant us the victory we seek. The point is, who the Lord is, we are. Or, we must be. If He was bold, if He was apt to teach and patient, so must we be; indeed, so are we, if we are

truly in Him. Likewise, all the Father is, we are to manifest if we bear His Name. We should daily pray for opportunities to witness ("utterance").

6:20- see on Mt. 26:35.

For which I am an ambassador in chains- Again we sense Paul's resentment of his chains, his limitations; but he doesn't become demotivated, he seeks for ways to serve and witness all the same, and asks others to pray for him that he might be able to still be the Lord's ambassador despite them. This should be our example, as we all feel limited in some ways. There is an intended juxtaposition in ideas between being am ambassador, and yet being "in chains". The Lord's Kingdom has ambassadors / diplomats who are "in chains", who are not qualified at all in secular terms, indeed, who might appear to be precluded from such a role by the limitations of their position in life. But that is precisely the Lord's style and way of operation with us.

That in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak- After his conversion, we sense from the record of the preaching that Paul was in his element. The record of his early preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem is recorded with the same rubric: he preached "boldly", and on each occasion it seems he would have gone on, utterly oblivious of the fact he was heading for certain death, had not the other brethren "taken" him and quietly slipped him out of those cities (Acts 9:27). The same word translated "boldly" occurs later, years later, when Paul asks his converts to pray for him, that he would speak "boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:20). He has already asked them this in v.19; he asks for the same thing twice. And he confessed his same problem to the Colossians (Col. 4:4). As he got older, he found it harder to be bold. First of all, in those heady days in Jerusalem and Damascus, it was the most natural thing in the world for him. But as time went by, it became harder for him to do this.

6:21 *But so you may also know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, shall make known to you all things*- Tychicus is mentioned as running errands and messages (Tit. 3:12; Col. 4:7), and from his prison cell Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). This is another indication that Ephesians was written initially specifically to Ephesus, regardless of what later usage the letter had. Such "messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23) were vitally important in a period of very limited communications. In essence we can take the lesson that we should likewise sacrifice time and effort in order to keep the body of Christ informed of each other.

6:22 *Whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts*- Tychicus was sent from Paul's prison cell right at the end of his life, it would seem (2 Tim. 4:12 "I sent Tychicus to Ephesus"). Yet Paul looked out from his own immediate needs and sacrificed one of his few stable friends and encouragers, in order to comfort *them* and to tell them about his "state", so that they might pray for him. This was how much he valued prayer for him.

6:23 *Peace be to the believers and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- These wishes of peace, love and faith have real power. Paul clearly believed that his prayerful desire for their spiritual growth would result in them actually increasing in peace, love and faith. These are all fruits of the Spirit, or aspects of love, the one fruit; and he believed that his desire for them to be spiritually minded in these ways would produce actual fruit. It is an awesome concept- that we can actually positively influence the spirituality of others.

6:24 *Grace be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love*- "Grace" often refers to the gift of the Spirit, the power of new life within the heart of the believer. Paul has just wished them peace, love and faith- all results or fruits of the

Spirit. Paul wishes them this gift and the spiritual growth which will come from it. "Undying love" is a fair effort to translate a difficult phrase, but the same word is elsewhere translated "immortality" and "incorruption". The love we now have for the Lord Jesus is an eternal love- in that, as John's Gospel expresses it, we can live the life we shall eternally live right now. The love we have for the Lord now is the love we shall eternally have. This highlights the profound and eternal importance of who we are now; our love for Him now is an attribute we shall eternally display, indeed we could say that the type of love we now have for Him, the relationship we have with Him now, is what we shall eternally enjoy. And that is going to be unique, slightly different, for each of us.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus*- Paul was writing from prison in Rome; Timothy was with him. Yet 2 Tim. 4:9 records Paul's request for Timothy to come and be with him there as he was about to die. Perhaps this letter was written after Timothy arrived; or perhaps Timothy was with Paul there at some earlier stage in Paul's time at Rome. This seems most likely, because Paul says he is going to send Timothy to them (2:19) and hopes to come to them himself (1:26). If this was after Timothy had come to Paul on his deathbed as it were, we see here how Paul valued their encouragement more than his own. The emphasis upon "joy" in Philippians is notable, and is all the more significant when we consider that Paul was writing from prison, and perhaps at the end of his life. And we would then read Paul's words in 2 Tim. 4 as written in depression, whereas here he is confident of release and visiting Philippi again (:26); unless we are to read this as the unrealistic hopes of a dying man. Throughout this exposition I have noted hints which would support the idea that Philippians was written at the end of Paul's life, facing death, at around the time he wrote 2 Timothy (see notes on 2:12,16, 17,23; 3:13,20; 4:1,13; Col. 4:14).

It is commonly assumed that the tension between the picture of the imprisoned Paul in 2 Tim. 4 and Philippians is explicable by assuming he was released from prison after he wrote Philippians, and then imprisoned again at the time of his death in 2 Tim. 4. But these tensions can be explained another way. We could argue that he was under great stress in prison and prayed desperately for deliverance, and believed that somehow this would happen. Fixating on fantasies like being released from prison and visiting Philippi again would be typical of a long term prisoner. And yet this was nuanced in Paul's case by his faith that his prayers for deliverance would be heard. The joy of his tone in Philippians, and how he hardly mentions sin, would reflect his positive spirit of expectation of the Kingdom and perceiving how even in his extremity in prison, all things were still working together for good. He recalls his time in Philippi, when the church had started due to his imprisonment and singing hymns in prison whilst being tortured in the stocks. Now, in prison again, he recalls that joy he then had and is encouraged to feel the same again.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi- The general congregation are addressed first, and then the overseers, as if to emphasize that Paul is writing to all. There would have been a tendency for the illiterate mass of the congregations to feel they were mere spectators at a show, just as there is in large churches today. "Saints" is the term used for all Israel being a "holy people" in that they were all intended to be

priests (Ex. 19:6; Dt. 7:6; 14:2). The point was that although they had spiritual leaders, they were all to take priestly responsibility in the new Israel.

With the bishops and deacons- We must respect elders (and indeed all people) for who they are as persons, and not for any 'office' they may appear to hold. Notice how in Phil. 1:1 Paul omits the definite article ("the") in addressing bishops and deacons. Those words indicate what they do for people, rather than any position in a hierarchy. Jesus seems to have outlawed the use of any official titles for His ecclesia (Mt. 23:8-12). Paul never speaks of an ecclesial 'elder' but of *elders* in the plural. The same can be said of "bishops (overseers), see Phil.1:1; Acts 20:28. Our groups may have secretaries or teachers, but this individual must never be seen as *the* elder. There is only one author [Gk. 'pioneer'] of our faith: the Lord Himself, who worked in our lives to bring us to Himself. This is stressed in Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:10; 12:2.

Bishops- Vine notes that "The word was originally a secular title, designating commissioners appointed to regulate a newly-acquired territory or a colony". Paul may be using it in this sense, for he sought to leave behind in each new church someone who could teach the new converts, whom he saw as colonies on earth of the Heavenly Kingdom. It would therefore be possible to argue that "bishops" were a temporary office designed for a missionary context. "Deacons" are the servants of the church, those serving by practical arrangement of things. The term was very relevant to Philippi, a relatively newly acquired colony. Which Paul saw as a colony of Heaven, not Rome (Phil. 3:20).

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- "Grace", *charis*, often refers to the gift of the Spirit which is received in the heart of every baptized believer. Paul wishes them the peace which comes as a direct gift from God and the Lord Jesus. This then is no mere formal greeting, but a real desire that they experience in their hearts what was potentially available to them.

1:3 *I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you*- This could mean 'every time I remember / think of you'. But 'remembering' someone is a Hebraism for prayer. It would then parallel "every prayer of mine for you" in :4. He would then mean 'Every time I remember you before God in prayer, I thank God for you'.

1:4 *Always in every prayer of mine with joy making requests for you all*- As noted on :3, Paul likely means that every time he prays for them, he does so with joy, as he makes "requests" for them. What started out as requesting things for them merged into a sense of joy and thanksgiving for them. There's nothing wrong with a Christian experiencing both joy and sorrow at the same time. The Lord's description of His 'joy' at the time of His being the ultimate 'man of sorrows' is an obvious example. But consider too Paul's language to the Philippians. On one hand he speaks insistently of his joy: "I pray always

with joy... Christ is being preached, and I am glad... I will also continue to be happy... I am glad, and I share my joy... it made me very happy (Phil. 1:4,18; 2:17; 4:10). And yet on the other hand, he speaks of his sorrows at that very same time: "...that I may receive news about you that will cheer me up... keep me from having one sorrow after another" (Phil. 2:19,27).

We have to note Paul's joy over his converts' abiding in the faith. To see those we've worked for coming into the Kingdom will be an eternal joy that is incomparable with anything else. It's quite a theme: 2 Cor. 2:3; 7:4,13; Phil. 2:2; 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19,20; 3:9; Philemon 7.

1:5 *Giving thanks for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now*- "Your participation in the [preaching of the] gospel" is paralleled with "your faith" (Phil. 1:5). If we really believe, we will be involved in the preaching of what we believe.

Paul felt the Philippians were still assisting him in the furthering of the Gospel even whilst he was in prison, and he was likewise assisting them. They were hugely separated by distance and situation. Yet they still fellowshipped with each other in the Gospel's work through the connection in the Spirit which is actualized by prayer for each other. And similar bonds can easily be created today too thanks to the communication revolution.

"The first day" presumably refers to when Paul first preached in Philippi, and Lydia and her household responded. He was imprisoned and beaten at Philippi, but Paul remembers the positive, the glass half full rather than half empty; when many others would have been so traumatized by the experience that the post traumatic stress displaced any memory of the good. This is a great example to us all. "The first day" is to be connected with his thought in :6 that from the time of their first belief and baptism, God had begun a good work in them. He sees conversion and the beginning of God's work as having a "first day" in their lives, and that surely was "the hour I first believed" when they were baptized in water and received the gift of the Spirit. This is the equivalent of the OT constantly speaking of the day Israel crossed the Red Sea [cp. baptism] and thus were brought out of Egypt as being the day they began their relationship with Yahweh. Paul's recollection of "the first day" shows that his audience was likely those he had met during his time in Philippi in Acts 16. The church were still largely the extended households of Lydia and the jailor.

1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ*- "Confident" is a Greek word much beloved of Paul in Philippians (1:6,14,25; 2:25; 3:3,4). The word really means 'persuaded'. Writing from prison towards the end of his ministry, Paul could see how he had been persuaded of his positions throughout his walk with the Lord. He was

persuaded that the good work begun within them would come to its intended term at the Lord's return. The work begun within believers refers to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the gift given to every believer, but which only becomes actualized in those who allow it to. In Philippi, it began with the opening of Lydia's heart ["in / within you"] and the opening of the prison, leading to the jailor's conversion. Many like the Corinthians received that gift but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). The gift of the Spirit in our hearts is the earnest or guarantee / down payment on the salvation we shall finally receive at the Lord's return (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The good work begun and now ongoing will come to its intended end at the Lord's return. It is God who works His works in us (Heb. 13:21), completing the work of faith in the power of the Spirit within us (2 Thess. 1:11). His dynamic power works within us to this end (Eph. 1:19; 3:7). Phil. 3:21 clearly refers to this idea: "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself". The power of transformation at the last day is that same power which is now at work within us. And that is the explicit teaching of Rom. 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you". Gal. 3:3 echoes the ideas here in Phil. 1:6 by speaking of how the Spirit has begun a work in us, which shall be also completed (s.w. "perfecting" Phil. 1:6) at the Lord's return. This is why in :7 Paul says he feels like this about the Philippians because they have all received the grace, the gift, of the Spirit as Paul has. The Lord's work begins with the birth of the Spirit when someone is baptized. Col. 2:12 is clear: "Having been buried with him in baptism, by which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God". And that will continue until the day of Christ, when we are immortalized. If we remain with the program. The same idea, in different language, is in 1 Cor. 1:7,8: "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall also confirm / establish you to the end, unreproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ". As in Phil. 1:6, we note the context of "the day of Jesus Christ", the final day of judgment when we shall be immortalized and made "unreproveable"; and the work of the Spirit which began at our water baptism. The work which began then and keeps on within us (Phil. 1:6) is the confirming / establishing to the end of 1 Cor. 1:8. But the Corinthians were not spiritual, despite having been given this working of the Spirit within them. There has to be some freewill response.

On one hand, the fool begins and doesn't finish (Lk. 14:30 "This man began to build, and was not able to finish"). On the other hand, we are saved by grace even when we don't finish. Likewise the Lord has "begun a good work in us" and will complete it- if we let Him, for He will keep on trying to finish it ("Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ" Phil. 1:6). The Galatians 'began in the Spirit' but left that path and tried to complete the work without the Spirit, "by the flesh", and failed (Gal. 3:3). The Lord

'began' doing and teaching in His ministry (Acts 1:1; 10:37 "that word began from Galilee") and continues. So many times the Lord's words are prefaced with the statement that He "began to say..." (Mt. 4:17; 11:7,20; Mk. 4:1; 6:2,34; 8:31; 10:32; 12:1; 13:5; Lk. 4:21; 7:24; 11:29; 12:1; 20:9; 24:27). This is all quite some theme. His words were intended to commence something in the hearers, although usually that intended process wasn't and isn't allowed to go forward to its intended end. When a man today hears the Lord's words, that process likewise begins; but men truncate it. Samson was intended to "begin" delivering Israel from the Philistines (Jud. 13:5), and so the Spirit of God "Began" [s.w.] to move him to do so (Jud. 13:25). But he didn't let that process progress as intended, becoming caught up on anger and sexual lust issues. We have the sense that God began a work in and through Samson that wasn't completed as potentially possible- perhaps with the implication, that it should have been but wasn't. Not until David's time would Israel be free from the Philistines (2 Sam. 8:1). Yet despite only partially fulfilling his potential, Samson did make a beginning. And he will be saved, despite all that was unfinished and all the unrealized potential.

The beginning in Philippi was when the Lord opened Lydia's heart by His Spirit. God's work had begun "in you", in your midst, in your hearts. The idea is repeated in Phil. 2:13 "It is God who works within you". Paul wanted them all to continue to allow that movement and development within them. So many hear the same words of the Gospel that we did; but their hearts are closed. Our hearts were opened by such a huge grace. The same words are used in Gal. 3:3 of how the faith of the Galatians had been "*begun* in / by the Spirit", and the Spirit would 'perfect' that work, s.w. "will perform / perfect it". We have the same idea in Ps. 138:8; “The Lord will complete (all) for me". All this comes to its final end in the birth of our bodies by the Spirit at the Lord's return (Rom. 8:23).

To perfect or "complete" is one of the many military allusions here (see on :21). The term "to complete the battle" is used in the inscriptions. There are recorded cases of battles that went very well but were lost in the final stages because the battle was not "completed". This would have been well known in the context of the Philippians because of the first battle of Philippi: "At the outset of the battle the forces of Brutus and Cassius had the better chance of success: they occupied a more advantageous position and were well supplied. The legions of Octavian and Antony suffered from lack of provision and sickness on account of them encamping in the swamp. As the first battle progressed, the soldiers of Brutus put the forces of Octavian to flight and were able to capture their camp. The campaign could have been decided at this point in favour of the Republican army. The forces of Brutus, however, did not “complete the battle” by pursuing the fleeing soldiers, but instead allowed them to escape and reform and were themselves eventually beaten by an army they had already been victorious over".

1:7 *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, both*

in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel- The "defence and confirmation of the gospel" uses legal terms- the Greek word translated "defence" means a plea entered in a court of law; and "confirmation" refers to supporting evidence offered to a judge. Paul's idea is that in our preaching, our audiences are the judge; and we are entering a plea for the case of none other than God Himself, and His Son. We have to ask whether our witness to the world is indeed a *plea*- or whether it's a case of merely getting people in our own social group to just drop by at *our* church rather than their usual one. The fact we are speaking on God's behalf, pleading for His case to be accepted in the hard hearts of men, should impart an urgency, a desire to penetrate minds, and persistence in our witness.

You all are partakers with me of grace- As noted on :6, the grace which they had partaken of was the gift of the Spirit in their hearts, which was constantly at work preparing them for the final salvation of the last day. It is this common experience of spiritual transformation which is the basis of Christian fellowship in practice, rather than solely a common theological understanding. Paul had "fellowship in the Gospel" with the Philippians, "because... ye all are partakers with me of grace" (Phil. 1:5-7 RV). All those in the Lord Jesus by valid baptism, and who remain in Him by faithful continuance in His way, are partakers of His gracious pardon, salvation, and patient fellowship; and they will, naturally and inevitably, reflect this to their brethren as part of their gratitude to Him.

1:8 *For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus*- The legal term "witness" connects with the legal metaphors noted on :7. God was a witness to how Paul had preached and defended the Gospel and how he truly sought the salvation of his converts. "Tender mercies" translates the Greek word for spleen; the inward heart, the "inner man" where the Spirit works (Eph. 3:16). If we have the spirit of Christ Jesus, then our spirit is His; even His innermost thoughts and feelings are ours, once our spirit becomes His. And the Lord's longing after the Philippians was therefore Paul's. The "fellowship of the spirit" is achieved by having the same spleen, the same innermost values, ambitions and feelings (2:1 s.w. "If any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions... being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"). Just as the Lord's innermost feelings can be ours, so those who have the Spirit of Christ are likewise connected with us. Onesimus is therefore described as Paul's "spleen" (Philemon 12). This is a great example of how the Spirit connects in fellowship; Paul the intellectual rabbi was connected with Onesimus the runaway slave who landed in jail in Rome, because they had the same Spirit within them. This same connection was between Paul and the Philippians, and was the basis of his longing after them from such a great distance. Those why deny the working of the Spirit are left with only cold intellectual positions, and the pride of common tradition, to hold them together. But that is not the fellowship of the Spirit, and it becomes very fragile and so easily broken.

We could render this: “in the heart of Christ Jesus”. The believer is to so united to his Lord that he is “one Spirit” with Him, and thereby with all others who have His mind / spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). This is "the unity of the Spirit". James 4:5 speaks of God yearning jealousy for our spirits’ loyalty, and we likewise are to yearn to give our spirit to Him, yearning / longing for the “milk” of His word (1 Pet. 2:2 s.w.).

1:9- see on 2 Cor. 12:15.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment- "Love" in its true sense has knowledge and discernment; it is not a mere blanket acceptance of others' sins. The "Knowledge" in view is surely the knowing of / relationship with the Lord Jesus. As noted on :8, the connection or love between Paul and the Philippians was a result of the indwelling of the Spirit; yet we have to "put on" the spleen or inner feelings ("tender mercies") of the Spirit (Col. 3:12) and our love likewise grows in that the work of the Spirit is ongoing and must be allowed by us. For God will not force us against our will. Our love abounds more and more through “discernment, so that ye may prove the things that differ” (RVmg.). We grow by being given different situations to respond to, in order to develop our judgment- what Eph. 5:10 calls “proving what is acceptable unto the Lord”. By reason of use our spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). This is why, be it in church or family or deeply personal life, our consciences are constantly being probed and exercised by the situations which Providence leads us into. And thus we grow in sensing more keenly right and wrong, more victoriously overcoming all the temptations whose strength lies in the fact that in the heat of the moment we waver as to what is right and wrong... and the end result of this increased and heightened discernment, Paul says, is a love which abounds “yet more and more” (Phil. 1:9).

1:10 *So that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be sincere and void of offence until the day of Christ*- The pinnacle of love is to be a person who gives no cause of stumbling to others (s.w. Acts 24:16; 1 Cor. 10:32). This suggests that naturally we all cause others to stumble, as stated in James 3:2. We need to be aware of this; the maturity of the love which is ever growing (:9) is to come to a point where we are hyper sensitive to the possible effects of our thinking and being upon others. This sensitivity is the ability to judge / approve the things which differ (Gk.), i.e. having wisdom to know what will upbuild and what will make to stumble. The same phrase is used in Rom. 2:18 of how the Jews thought they could judge the things which differ on the basis of the Law. In Philippi as in all Paul's churches, there was the constant pressure from Judaizers. Paul is saying that it is the spirit of Christ within us, and not casuistic study of the Law, which will lead to this position of maturity. We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us; we can prove [s.w. "approve"] what is

acceptable to God (Rom. 12:2), just as He will "approve" or test every man's work in the fire of judgment day (1 Cor. 3:13 s.w.). We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10).

"Sincere" is a word that has military overtones (see on :21); literally, 'orderly separateness', used of soldiers marching in rank.

1:11 *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God-* The preceding verses have alluded to the activity of the Spirit within us. The fruit of the Spirit is what we are filled with, as a gift, rather than what we bring forth in our own unaided strength. Such fruits of righteousness are not of ourselves, but on account of the Lord Jesus; which results in praise to God rather than glory to our own psychological strength. The idea of fullness of spiritual attributes is an allusion to the righteous characteristics of God of Ex. 34- which likewise were unto the *glory* of God. The R.V. of Ex. 34:5-7 says that God is *full* of these attributes- hence Phil. 1:11 talks of us being filled with these things too if we bear the Name, even in this life. The idea of fullness and being filled often occurs in the New Testament in the context of the glory. Eph. 1:23 describes the church as "His body, the fullness of Him (God?) that fills all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory... full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34)... and of His fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:14,16). See on Eph. 1:23. Being "filled" with the fruits of the Spirit / righteousness of itself implies these are internal attributes- we are filled with them, they are within us, in our hearts and personalities.

1:12 *Now I would have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out for the progress of the gospel-*

We could reasonably infer that the Philippians had informed Paul of their great concern that he was imprisoned and facing death. Paul's response is that prison has been used by God to spread the Gospel, he has no fear of death and death will be a great thing for him, he is happy either way, for to live is Christ and to die is gain... and his only concern is for their continuing growth.

If we are truly focused on God’s agenda, knowing we have His backing, then all setbacks, even our death itself, will be understood by us as all for the ultimate advancement of the aims we are working towards. It’s a battle, a war, a campaign, a race, which we can’t ultimately lose. With God on our side, we have to win. And we shall. "Progress" is the same word as used in :25 about the progress in their faith. Paul's focus was upon the progress and development of others, and this enabled him to bear with his own apparently dead end situation in a Roman prison. "Progress" is a military term for an advance along a front; see on :21.

1:13 *So that my bonds made Christ manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest*- The *praetorium* was Caesar's palace; the reference is to his personal bodyguards. It has been suggested that if Paul were constantly chained to a succession of Roman soldiers, he would have preached to them all; and thus the Gospel was spread throughout the guard. And from Phil. 4:22 we know that there were believers amongst "Caesar's household", and the list of names in Romans 16 include some which can be traced there too (see notes there). Paul's apparently dead end situation therefore led to the Gospel penetrating the very highest of places within the Roman empire, in a manner which would have been impossible had he not been imprisoned in Rome. The Greek *praitorion* is mainly used of how the Lord Jesus was held in the Praetorium, in chains as Paul was (Mt. 27:27; Mk. 15:16; Jn. 18:28,33; 19:9). Paul quickly perceived that in essence he was continuing the Lord's witness by fellowshipping His sufferings, and we can make the same connections between our chains in life and the Lord's sufferings.

1:14- see on Acts 2:46.

And further, most of the believers in the Lord, being made confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear- Paul's amazing witness noted in :13, penetrating deep into Caesar's inner circles, was and is an encouragement for other believers to likewise preach. We too can be inspired by the witness of others. "More abundantly" is a common term with Paul, reflecting his sense that the progressive work of the Spirit in our lives makes us ever growing in love and zeal to preach. "Abundantly bold" is another military term (see on :21), meaning to "more abundantly venture".

1:15 *Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will*- Paul's ability to judge motives here may have come from direct Spirit insight. For it is not really for us to judge the motives of some preachers as being of envy. And yet it was quite clear that this category had an agenda- to make trouble for Paul and have his prison sentence extended or turned into a harder prison regime for him (:16). The believers in view were presumably those in the church at Rome. His enthusiasm to see them and be with them, as witnessed in the letter to Rome, may well have guided him in appealing to Caesar. And yet at his trial, none of them stood with him; and we get no impression that they ministered to his needs in prison. It was faithful friends from elsewhere in the empire who had to be asked to bring him a warm coat and writing materials. They may well have advertised Christianity in terms which were provocative to the Roman leadership, in order to make Paul as the high profile Christian prisoner suffer more. And this was rooted in envy or jealousy of him. Paul could have given in to bitter disappointment with the Roman church, but we never get a hint of it in his letters. He was very positive about the whole experience.

1:16 *The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains-*

Literally, “thinking to make my chains gall me”. The Greek rendered “affliction” is literally “rubbing” or “pressure”, The Vulgate has *pressura*. Alluding to his physical sufferings in the stocks that night in Philippi. As noted on :15, these believers were jealous of Paul and were presenting Christianity in a provocative way in order to add to Paul's chains- seeking to get him a longer and harder sentence. And yet in faith he believers he will be released and even visit Philippi again (:26). He could so easily have succumbed to the 'glass half empty' syndrome and wallowed in depression.

1:17 *But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel-* All preaching of the Gospel is to be motivated by love. But the contrast is with how some preached motivated by a desire to make problems for Paul, whereas others preached from love- and we could assume that the love is therefore love of Paul. And the context of this verse has been talking about Paul's love for the Philippians. Preaching from love for Paul would therefore have referred to witnessing publicly in his support, which meant witnessing for Christ; knowing that Paul had been appointed by the Lord to openly defend the Gospel before the Gentiles.

"Appointed" is AV "set", another military term (see on :21). It is used of a soldier posted, fixed to the spot he is to defend with his life. Perhaps Paul also has in view his being fixed to the spot in prison, unable to move, but defending the Gospel there. A wonderfully positive take on his limitation.

1:18 *What then? In every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and therein I rejoice, yes and will rejoice-* This is a powerful principle; regardless of the motives others have in their work, we should rejoice Christ is preached. And yet so many believers have so little joy at the witness of others to Christ because of their hangups about those who are doing the preaching work. The 'believers' out to make trouble for Paul were only 'pretending' which suggests they were false brethren, those who faked conversion in order to enter the early Christian communities and derail them (Gal. 2:4). But despite that, Paul still rejoices that the Lord Jesus was getting at least some publicity; he clearly believed that no publicity is bad publicity, and my own ministry led me to the same conclusion. These false brethren were Judaists, and the same word translated "pretence" is used of orthodox Jews in Lk. 20:47 and Jn. 15:22.

1:19 *For I know that this shall result in my salvation, through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ-* The machinations of Paul's enemies, seeking to lengthen or harshen his prison term, would, he believed, turn out in his salvation from prison in Rome- if the Philippians prayed about it. "Salvation" is rendered better by Moffatt: "The outcome of all this, I know, will be my release". The Greek here is almost identical to Job

13:16 LXX: "Though he slay me... even that is to me an omen of salvation". The context is of Job speaking of the good conscience he had maintained with God; similarly, Paul's good conscience made him fearless of approaching death, as he also made clear when on trial for his life (Acts 23:1; 24:16). The logic throughout is that we are in a win-win situation. Imprisonment leads to the Gospel being spread, those who preach Christ from wrong motives are still advertising Christ, and death itself is the greatest gain. It's not just that we lose now to win in the end; even now it's win-win.

I have noted above that Paul felt the fellowship of the Spirit with them because the same Spirit in him was in them- that of the Lord. The operation of the Spirit would result in his salvation from prison. But whether Paul was released at this point (see on :1) is unclear. "I know that..." was written by Paul in faith, although he did not know how exactly the Spirit was going to work in this case. "Supply" is only elsewhere used in Eph. 4:16, concerning how the body functions through each member supplying something towards its total function. But what they supplied was what the Lord supplied; a related word is used of the Lord's supply of the Spirit to the church (Gal. 3:5). The Spirit is supplied through the functioning of the Lord Jesus through thee ligaments of His body. See on Zech. 4:14.

There seems reason to believe that the gift of the Spirit is a way of describing answered prayer. The giving of "good things to them that ask" in prayer is the same as the giving (gift) of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 7:11 cp. Lk. 11:13). Phil. 1:19 parallels "Your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Similarly, 1 Jn. 3:24 says that we are given the Spirit as a result of our obedience to the commands; verse 22 says that obedience to those commands leads to our prayers being answered. Thus our confidence is due to having our prayers heard (1 Jn. 5:14) and also due to having the Spirit act in our lives (1 Jn. 3:21,24; 4:13), seeing that prayer is answered by the Spirit's work.

1:20- see on Eph. 6:19.

According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death- The military language (see on :21) alludes to the shame of retreat or surrender, and the desire to die an 'honourable death' in battle, whereby the individual won glorious victory for himself if he died. Paul however subverts this, saying that Christ and not himself would be magnified / glorified by his death. Paul sees not preaching the Gospel, as a result of fear for the consequences, as shame. Whether he survives or dies, that will magnify his emperor. All these military allusions are deconstructing the cult of loyalty to the emperor unto death. He knows that in Philippi, Roman citizens objected to being persuaded of the Christian faith, and seeking to do so was illegal. So he urges the believers to continue in their witness, assuring them that he faces the death penalty in Rome for doing the same. "Standing firm" rather than retreat

was the call of the Master, who Himself suffered unto death as their pattern- as chapter 2 will explain.

Not being ashamed is a major theme of Paul (Ps. 25:3; Zech. 9:5; Rom, 5:5; 9:33; 2 Tim. 1:12).

This seems to echo Job 13:13-15 (especially in RVmg.), where Job says he is willing to face every trial, but knows that death will be his lot; yet he is certain that God will still be glorified through this. All of this is very apposite to Paul's situation. Paul has just expressed confidence that he will be released from prison (:19), but his hope for 'salvation' from prison merges into his confident hope in salvation at the last day, when he [unlike the rejected] would not be put to shame but would glorify the Lord Jesus. Whether he was released from prison or died the death of a martyr, he believed he would glorify his Lord. In this sense the natural panic when faced with death was not with Paul; for his aim was the Lord's glorification, and he could see that whether he lived or died he would achieve that, seeing he intended to use the life he might be given in the Lord's continued service. When faced with death or the cutting short of life or physical opportunity, this is the choice before the believer- and if we are focused upon the Lord's glorification, it is a win-win situation.

"Magnified" means just that. Paul magnified the name of the Lord Jesus through his preaching work amongst men (Acts 19:17 s.w.). And he would achieve the same through dying for Him as a martyr. In this sense we can make the Lord greater by our witness and living. He has partially delegated His own glorification to us, as He has given us His wealth and the run of His house; and shall return to see how we have got on with running His business.

1:21 *For to me to live, is Christ, and to die- is gain*- Philippians and chapter 1 especially is packed full of military metaphor. Doubtless the effect of being chained to a Roman soldier, and Philippi being a colony for retired veteran soldiers. I have noted just some of them on Phil. 1:6,10,12,14,17,20,21,22,23,25,27; 2:6,9,10,11,12,19,22,25,29,30; 3:8,12,14; 4:1,3,16. Paul sees himself as the captain or general, leading by example in the front line himself, rallying his flagging troops with the thought that victory is inevitable- if they continue the fight, even unto death. The very heavy usage of military metaphors points up the truth that being a Christian is a full time, all consuming passion. For which by its nature we should be prepared to lose our lives. This is a calling to lay down life, to fight to a glorious end. The military language specifically relates to front line conflict, being in the line of fire with the soldier's life on the line. The metaphors of themselves mean that we can never have a merely religious view of our faith and calling, merely attending a few Christian meetings and box ticking. This is our essential self-identification, calling and career, whether or not we are confined by ill health, long working hours or social limitation.

This otherwise strangely sounding statement alludes to the call for loyalty to the emperor unto death. To live was to serve for the emperor, and to die for him was "gain", a term used for the reward paid to the fallen soldier, both financially and in 'eternal honour'. But Paul applies this to his service to the Lord Jesus in the warfare of the Gospel, which was his paramount devotion. For Paul, life was Christ because Christ is life for the believer (Gal. 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me"; Col. 3:3,4: "For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested"). "Christ" summed up his life; the Lord Jesus was the supreme interest of his life. This is the answer to the question of "Is life worth living?". It isn't, unless our life is "Christ". This parallels the thought of :20, that Christ is magnified in him through both his life and his death. In that the progressive operation of the spirit of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, which sum up as the personality of Christ, progressively breaks through into our personality. As explained earlier in this chapter, Paul was magnifying the Lord Jesus in his life in prison because he was converting the soldiers he was chained to, and they were converting others and other brethren were inspired to witness for Christ given this extraordinary position Paul was in, or had created by his unabated witness. And so Christ being magnified in Paul's life is the thought behind "to live is Christ". He speaks of this elsewhere: "And he died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). The ''gain' of dying is therefore connected with Christ being magnified in Paul's death. Because his next waking moment, he will be transformed even moreso into the Lord Jesus (Phil. 3:20,21).

We must allow Phil. 3:7,8 to define Paul's idea of 'gaining': "what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ... for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ". He would magnify Christ in his death in that at the resurrection, he would be made totally like Christ. So it was win-win. It *is* win-win for us. To live is Christ, to live in an environment of Christ; and to die is to "gain" Him, to be more intimately in Him eternally. And so Paul puts it to the Colossians, that Christ is now "our life", and His manifestation at His return will be ours: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory! " (Col. 3:3,4 GNB). Christ will be magnified, made greater, by yet one more reflection of Himself in another person. This is the sense in which we "gain Christ" through death. "When He shall appear, we shall be [made] like Him", John says. But this is insofar as He is already within us; for it is His Spirit in us now which will also change our mortal bodies into a body like His at the last day. In this sense, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" means that having Christ forming within us now is our guarantee of future glory. If you can sense that happening to you,

Christ being formed in you no matter how weakly and immaturely- this is the guarantee of final acceptance and change into a being like Him. Thus Paul elsewhere says that the presence of the Spirit in our hearts, which is the Spirit of Christ, is the earnest or guarantee of our future salvation. A related teaching is that when we are absent from the body in death, we are "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8), or, we will have His presence, His Spirit, fully in us. Literally, "Absent from the body- the Lord's presence".

As noted on :20, Paul faced the possibility of death as a win-win situation. If he lived, he would glorify the Lord through his work with the Philippians and others. If he died, he would likewise glorify the Lord. If he lived further, then Christ would continue living in him. His life would be that of Christ. To live, therefore, would be "Christ". And yet if he died- that would be gain or profit for him. He uses the same word in explaining how he counted all that was once "gain" to him as loss for the sake of Christ (3:7). His real gain was, in a word, "Christ". His life was so absorbed with that of the Lord Jesus, the Lord's Spirit was his spirit, that death itself was no great issue for him. If he lived, he lived "Christ", the Christ who was in him. If he died, whilst he would be unconscious until the Lord's coming, he would eternally have that same connection with his Lord after the resurrection and immortalization which he so eagerly anticipated.

When Paul speaks of "...that I may win Christ....to live is Christ", his idea seems to be of attaining a spirituality even in this life where the life we live is Christ living in us, totally reflected in our actions and spirit. "To die is gain" was effectively Job's attitude too, particularly in Job 10:20-22, where whilst recognizing the unpleasantness of death, he speaks as if he were willing to suffer it to maintain his integrity with God. Paul is reasoning along similar lines.

The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (:14). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be. And yet as his perception of Christ and his surpassing excellency increased, so did his warnings against apostasy, and the need to hold on to true doctrine. In other words, his absorption and appreciation of the Spirit of Christ was what fired his zeal for purity of doctrine and practice. It was this which gave him the spiritual energy and power to live the life that he did, to the point that he could truly say that for him, to live was Christ; that the life he lived in the flesh, the things he did, the thoughts he thought, was all the result of Christ living in him and through him. He brought *every thought* (and this isn't figurative language) into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). My sense is that as he was lead out to face his death, this phrase he'd coined to the Philippians was in his mind: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".

1:22 *But if by living in the flesh, this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I do not know*- "I do not know" draws the readers into Paul's inner debate. We must give due weight to the fact he had a conscious choice in the matter, coming down on the side of remaining alive. It is hard to understand this apart from thinking that he was debating whether or not to commit suicide in prison. It is perfectly normal and usual for incarcerated men facing a death penalty to consider suicide. Remember that suicide for an honourable cause was seen as a noble act in the ancient world, and carried none of the stigma it does today. Possibly Paul saw such an option as a following of the Lord who willingly gave His life, as he will describe in Phil. 2. Prisoners do often struggle with suicidal thoughts, and it would be no surprise if Paul did likewise. Paul is opening his heart to the Philippians, to show them that he overcame his thought of suicide by concluding that remaining alive was better for them. That was how much he loved them. He would rather be absent from them and present with the Lord, but he chose to be present with them and absent from the Lord- because he knew they still needed him. See on Phil. 3:11. In this way he was exemplifying the principle he was teaching the Philippians in Phil. 2:4: "each of you not looking to his own things, but each of you to the things of others". He had himself talked the prison keeper in Philippi out of suicide. And now he was in prison, feeling suicidal. We can't make these things up... life connects and interconnects in a way that can only be described as Divine.

And yet he concludes that he is actually faced with a win-win choice. It was wonderful whatever way. He totally doesn't accept the secular reality that Nero held Paul's life in his hand, apparently having the power to make the ultimate win - lose decision by either freeing Paul or executing him. But Paul sees it quite otherwise. "I do not know" can carry the sense of 'It is all the same'; which was his whole point (see on :20,21). The idea of Paul having a choice to live or die doesn't necessarily mean that he had control over his destiny at that point. He is saying that if he had a choice, it would be all the same what he chose, because his existence was a glorification of the Lord, both now and eternally. Yet if he had to choose, he reasons that he would come down on the idea of living a bit longer, because he saw that was more needful for the new converts (Phil. 1:21-23). This accounts for his emphasis in Philippians on how much he desired their growth; because he had chosen to stay alive in this mortal flesh *solely because* he wanted to achieve this. The tragedy was that all in Asia turned away- when he had 'risked' remaining alive, with the full knowledge he could himself fall away, having been offered certain salvation- all for their sakes.

Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings (examples in Rom. 3:25,26; Eph. 3:1,14). And we have another case here: "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour... nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

"Work" or "labour" in Philippians uses the standard word *ergon*. But that word has a wide range of meaning. Liddell and Scott claim that one of the common usages of the word refers to deeds of war. And we must remember that in the context of all the military metaphors in Philippians; see on 1:21. "Battle", “deeds of war” or “battle-assignment” would be fair translations.

1:23- see on 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Tim. 4:6; 4:6-8.

I am torn between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better-

"Torn between the two" is another military allusion, to being 'torn between two deaths' (see on :21)- referring to a soldier having a choice between death and death. But in the Christian warfare, it is in fact a choice between life and life. For to live now is "Christ", and to die is to eternally live with Him in our next conscious moment, at the resurrection. 2 Cor. 5:8 expresses this same "desire" to not live as we now do, but to be "with Christ": "We do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord". Quite possibly Paul was motivated by the dying words of Stephen, whose martyrdom he had orchestrated: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

I suggested on :22 that Paul had no real choice in the matter of living or dying; he is expressing his internal debate over the hypothetical question of whether it would be better to die as a martyr or be released from prison and bring forth fruit amongst Gentiles like the Philippians. He came down on the side of living longer in the flesh for their sakes. He clearly felt that he had an irreplaceable role to play for them, as their spiritual father. This description of the internal debate is by way of explanation as to why he so firmly believed he would be released from prison (:19) in order to visit them again (:26).

Paul clearly understood that the interval between death and resurrection at the Lord's coming plays no significant role in anything when it comes to our personal salvation. To depart this life in death was effectively to be with Christ- for the second coming would be the next conscious experience after death. That "with Christ" refers to being with Him at His return is made clear in Col. 3:3,4, a passage which has many points of contact with Phil. 1: "For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested in glory".

Another way of reading this language of internal debate about death is to consider that Paul may have written the letter when he was so ill that he had a choice of being able to "depart, and to be with Christ" or remain. Paul may have been so ill that he could give up his will to live if he chose, but struggled for their sake to keep alive. No wonder his mind went to the afflicted Job, to whom he alludes several times.

1:24 *Yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake*- See on Phil. 3:11; he made this decision knowing that staying alive in the flesh meant that he risked the possibility of falling away and losing his salvation. Whereas if he died at that point, he felt assured that without doubt he would "be with Christ which is far better". Paul had the choice, at least hypothetically, as to whether he wanted to die and finish his probation; but he chose to stay alive, with all the temptations and spiritual pitfalls of human existence, for the sake of the first century believers. This was love indeed. Paul has opened his heart and inner reasoning to us here, and I suggest we have here a picture of spiritual maturity at its peak. To be eager for death, because it means next waking moment to be with and part of the Lord Jesus. To see this as "far better" than remaining alive in this life. And yet to decide that it's as well to stay alive a bit longer, solely for the purpose of helping others in their spiritual growth. This desire or preference for immediate death is not at all suicidal nor uttered in depression. In the sense Paul desired it, it is the mark of true spiritual maturity.

1:25 *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and stay with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith*- "Abide and stay" is another military metaphor (see on :20,21), he would hold the line and not give in. Paul was confident that he had reasoned his way to the right decision in this hypothetical case regarding dying as a martyr or being released, and so he is confident that despite the machinations of some towards his death, he would be released. Hence the confident expectation of release in :19 and :20, and his certainty he would again visit the Philippians (:26). Indeed "stay with you all" could suggest Paul even envisaged retiring to Philippi as this was the church which seemed to be the most loyal to him. But it is in all an open question as to whether this is what happened; as discussed on :1, it is possible that this letter was written at the very end of Paul's life, and that he was executed soon afterwards. And if he was released, there is no evidence that he did revisit Philippi and significantly progress their faith. So we do feel that Paul is rather forcing and willing through his argument here, in a way we noted he tended to in his reasoning of 2 Corinthians. "Your progress" connects with Paul's thought in :6, that the Lord had begun His good work within the converts and would keep on working at completing it until the day of judgment, when their bodies and minds would be fully changed to be like that of the Lord Jesus. But His work on perfecting them, their "progress", used human encouragers like Paul to achieve that progress. And so Paul hopes he will stay alive a bit longer in order to assist them in their onward progression, although his work for them was really the work of the Lord Jesus upon them through him.

1:26 *That your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again*- I suggested on :17 that some were preaching Christ out of love for Paul, as if they were pressuring for his release and by so doing were witnessing to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps this is the boasting he refers to. For his reasoning seems to be that their

boasting of Paul will result in his presence with them; we noted on :19 that he believed their witness for him and the Lord Jesus would lead to his release.

We note in passing Paul's varying position on whether he would get out of prison and resume his missionary travels. We contrast his confidence here with “I know that you all shall see my face no more” in Acts 20:25. And in the next verse he admits he might remain "absent" from them (:27). And in Phil. 2:17 he sees the real possibility that he may be executed in prison: "But even if I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice". It sounds like a seriously ill parent assuring the children that all will be good… but going on to instruct them how to behave if he dies, because his death is a real possibility.

1:27 *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. That, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state- you standing fast in one spirit, with one mind together striving for the faith of the gospel-*

"Manner of life" is literally "your citizenship", Gk. *politeuvesqe*. Philippi was a very prosperous retirement centre for Roman citizens, especially military officers. Being a Roman citizen was seen as a living the dream. Everyone dreamed of having it, or of retaining it. Phil. 3:20 will state specifically that our citizenship is in Heaven; and here the point is made that our citizenship is characterized by preaching the Gospel. When it was illegal to seek to convert a Roman citizen to another religion or to evangelize them with beliefs and calls to join any religion. But Paul urges them to keep on with the missionary call to preach to all men.

The military language (see on :21) continues here- standing fast, holding the line, striving / fighting, "abundantly bold" as warriors (:14) for the "progress of the Gospel" (:12)- another military term, for the progress of a military campaign. Paul saw himself as in an all out campaign for Christ. And in fact, all the Philippians were too.

Whether or not their efforts for his release from prison worked out or not, and whether he did in fact use his freedom to visit them, the most important thing was their spirituality. The good news of salvation in Christ was to elicit a manner of life in them. His great wish was that they should remain in the Spirit. The parallel between mind and spirit indicates that the gift of the one Spirit was essentially a state of mind. Because there is only one Spirit- that of the Lord Jesus- they therefore would have one mind. But whose mind? That of Jesus. This is not a call for uniformity of position on all issues, but rather to be united by having the same one mind and spirit- that of Jesus. This theme will be developed at length in chapter 2.

Whoever really believes the doctrines of the One Faith and lives the life which they naturally bring forth, really will be saved. Therefore we will have a sense of true unity with our brethren who believe as we do, whatever human barriers there may be between

us. Therefore "the Faith" is linked with unity between believers (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:27). We will live eternally together, and this must begin in life together now. It is inevitable that a certain amount of 'politics' intrude upon our ecclesial experience; one group wants this, another wants that; one sees things one way, another perceives things from a different viewpoint. But here again, the principles of the most basic Gospel must govern us. The Greek word for 'politics' does in fact occur in the New Testament.- when Paul says that our *politeuesthe* must be "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). The principles of the loving, saving, reconciling, patient Christ must work their way through even the politics that are inevitably part of life together.

The early church are held up as our example here: "Stand fast in *one spirit, with one mind* striving together for the faith of the Gospel". Doesn't that sound just like an allusion to the early ecclesia? The theme continues in 2:2: "Be likeminded, having the same love, being *of one accord*, of one mind". There's that phrase "one accord" again. It's hardly used outside the Acts, so we should read that like a signpost, saying 'Go back to the Acts!'. So Paul is saying: 'You believers must always remember the great spirit of "one accord" in the early ecclesia in Jerusalem. Let the early church be your example!'. There are a number of other allusions back to the early chapters of Acts. For example, 2:4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others". Twice we read there in Acts of disregarding our own "things". Paul definitely has his eye on Acts 4:32: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul (just as Paul spoke about in Phil. 2:2): neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own (cp. "his own things" in Phil. 2:4); but they had all things common". And then in 2:3 Paul warns against doing things "through vainglory". Doesn't that sound like an allusion to Ananias and Sapphira? Then he warns them in 2:14 "Do all things without murmurings and disputings". It can't be coincidental that in Acts 6:1,9 we read twice about there being murmurings and disputings in the early ecclesia. Phil. 2 describes the exaltation of Christ on his resurrection. It seems no accident that this is then described in the very words which the apostles so often used in their preaching in the early chapters of Acts. Thus in 2:9, "God has highly exalted him" is a reference to Peter's words: "Being by the right hand of God exalted... him has God exalted" (Acts 2:33; 5:33). The whole theme in Phil. 2 is of Christ suffering on the cross and then being exalted by the Father, and given the mighty Name. The very same language is used so often in Acts (2:9-11=Acts 2:36; 2:10= Acts 4:10; 3:6,16). When Paul exhorts us to hold forth "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16), he surely has his mind on the way the early preachers held forth "the words of this life" in Acts 5:20. We are to follow their spirit.

The unity of the Philippians is connected with their preaching of the Gospel. It was their unity which would be the greatest witness to the world. The way Simon the Zealot and Matthew the pro-Roman tax collector were all welded together within the 12 would have been an arresting display of unity in the Gospel, which cannot fail to have impressed

first century Palestine. And it would have been so in the Antioch ecclesia too- the elders included Paul, the fiery ex-Orthodox rabbi; Manaen, one of the intimates of the Herod family; Barnabas, a Cypriot Levite who had owned land there to get around the Law's demands; Simeon the black man; Lucius from Cyrene, also in Africa. No wonder it was from this ecclesia that the Gospel really spread outwards. When the early church showed that uncanny unity between Jew and Gentile, slave and master, they converted the world. And so would and could and do we. And yet when and where we are divided, the power of conversion is lost. This is why the Philippians were told to live lives appropriate to the Gospel they preached, and to 'contend as one man' for the Gospel (Phil. 1:27,30). Their united witness, according to John 17, would convert the world. But if they were disunited, that great salvation would not be shared as it could potentially be.

1:28 *And not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, and of your salvation- and that from God-* The "clear sign" is understood by Vine as a legal term, an indictment; as if our lives and situations are played out before the throne of Heaven and judged right now. Lightfoot connects it with the language of striving for the Gospel in :27, claiming that it refers to the sign given by a striving gladiator when he had vanquished his opponent. But all the same, the question arises as to what was the clear sign? Was it persecution, which was the basis of condemnation for their opponents but a proof of their salvation? It could be, but we can look deeper than that. The context of :27 is of having the spirit / mind of the Lord Jesus and remaining firm in faith. This was the victory of the spiritual gladiator. The clear sign of future salvation would then refer to the one mind / spirit; which connects with how the gift of the Spirit in our hearts is seen as the earnest or guarantee of our future salvation in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5. Response to the Gospel is a condemnation of others whilst being the portent of our final salvation (2 Cor. 2:16- a savour of death to some, and life to others).

1:29 *Because to you it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer in his behalf-*

This implies that the church at Philippi was persecuted in a "severe test of affliction" (2 Cor. 8:2). They will therefore be encouraged in Phil. 3:20 that their citizenship is in Heaven (see notes there). The church was generally poor. This is also stated in 2 Cor. 8:1-3: "the grace of God has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part". "Their abundant joy" references the theme of joy found throughout Philippians, with around 17 Greek words related to "joy" being used, and continuing the theme of Paul and Silas rejoicing when in prison there, singing hymns at midnight. But their poverty is called "extreme". We know from Phil. 4:15-18

that the Philippians were very generous to Paul's mission: "You yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need... I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you". If these gifts were from the plural "churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:2), but Paul says the Philippians alone donated, we can conclude that as in Corinth, the "church" at Philippi was comprised of various house churches. Surely the homes of Lidia and the prison keeper were amongst them. Their recorded generosity means that they heeded Paul's call to them, as generally poor and persecuted people, to be "not looking to your own interests but actually to those of others" (Phil. 2:3,4). For poverty inevitably leads to the tendency to think only of our own interests.

They were not to be frightened / surprised [Gk. 'startled'] at persecution (:28). It goes with the territory of being in Christ. If we are Him to this world, then we shall be treated as He was by this world. Difficulties are going to come. The parable of the sower sought to explain this; that some accept Christ but fall away once the inevitable persecution starts. Here too Paul has to warn against an attitude that we are required to simply "believe in Christ". If we are in Him, then we have been given, as a gift, to suffer with him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Baptism into His death and resurrection proclaims we are prepared for the process of dying with Him, so that we might live with Him.

By God's grace, the Lord tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (Heb. 2:9 NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)". He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link " *our* sins" and "his *own* body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for* us, and we must lay down our lives *for* Him (1 Jn. 3:16). See on 2 Cor. 5:15.

1:30 *Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me*- "You saw..." confirms Paul is writing to those who had met him in Philippi and witnessed his sufferings ["agony", literally] there. The households of Lydia and the jailor are clearly in view. The conflict may refer to how the Philippians had been witnesses of Paul's beating

and imprisonment in Philippi for their sakes, and now they were hearing that again Paul was undergoing imprisonment for the Gospel, this time in Rome. But in essence, because of their connection in the Spirit, they were fellowshipping Paul's sufferings. Their experience of persecution was shared by him; it was in essence "the same conflict". He uses the same word *agon*, "conflict", in recalling the great conflict / agony he suffered in Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2). He is experiencing this in a different form in Rome, as they were in Philippi. In each case, they now in Philippi, Paul earlier in Philippi, Paul now in Rome... it was "the same conflict". The unity of the Spirit is thus brought about by experience in practice; and it is experience which unites. Mere intellectual theology tends to divide.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions*- The preceding chapter has spoken of the one mind and spirit which they had, and the unity of suffering experienced by them in Philippi and Paul in Rome. But the receipt of the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit of Christ in the heart of every baptized believer, needs to be realized in practice. That one mind must be put on, and the fellowship of it experienced. "If there is any..." suggests Paul is quoting the great claims made about the Christian faith; and indeed they are true. But he is saying that the Spirit is not going to just zap people with spirituality; there must be moves from our side too. If there is any consolation of love- then we are to have the same love as the Lord has (:2). If there is fellowship from sharing the same one Spirit of Christ- then we are to be of one accord and mind with each other (:2). "Encouragement" and "consolation" translate words from the *parakleo* family, the very term used for the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit which shall be within us who believe. But we can receive that Spirit at conversion and yet not be spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). The Philippians are therefore being urged to live in practice as they were potentially enabled to by the Spirit. We noted on 1:8 that the very inward 'spleen' of Paul was filled with the Spirit of Christ, and he believed that was how it was with the Philippians; and therefore they had such close fellowship. But now he is arguing that if this is true, then they must act accordingly; for the same word is here translated "tender mercies".

The repeated "if... if... if..." may be a way of saying "since there is / are all these things in Christ". He has written in Phil. 1:8 of how "I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ". So "the tender mercies of Christ" were really and actually being experienced by Paul, and he asks them to have the same mind of Christ (:2 "like-minded") where these things are abundantly experienced. The point will be developed that all these things come from believers having the mind of Christ on the cross. We could paraphrase: "Is there anything good about being a christian? Have you received any encouragement? Any love? Any fellowship? Any tenderness and compassion? These things are all from those who mainfest the mind of Christ on the cross".

2:2- see on 1:27.

Make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind- "Like-minded" is literally "set your minds on the same thing", and that "same thing" was the mind of Jesus on the cross. As noted on :1, they were to

think and be in practice how they potentially were. The one mind he goes on to define as the mind of Christ. This is the one mind, the point at which we are "like-minded". Paul exhorts preachers to be “with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel”, and then goes on to define that “one mind” as the mind that was in Christ Jesus in His time of dying. Having outlined the mind of Christ at this time, Paul then returns to his theme of preaching, by saying that the Lord’s death was so that each of us should be inspired to humbly confess him as Lord to the world (Phil. 1:27; 2:2,5,11).

2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*- “Lowliness of mind” translates a Greek word which is not found in Greek before the New Testament. The idea of voluntary humility and lowering of oneself in the mind... were totally foreign concepts. Just as they are generally today. Pride is seen by the Spirit as the root of all disunity, whereas pride was praised in the ancient world; unity is achieved by having the same kind of humbled mind as was in the Lord, supremely, when He was crucified. All human division is not so much over principle, doctrine or culture, but essentially because of personal pride. In chapter 1, Paul notes that some preach Christ from the wrong motives. Although he rejoiced Christ was preached, he urges the Corinthians to not be wrongly motivated. The idea here is that we are to have the attitude of the Lord Jesus to others and their sins and spiritual needs. For that is the surrounding immediate context. "Conceit" translates *keno-doxia*, literally 'empty glorying'. The argument goes on to play with this idea by saying that the mind of the Lord Jesus on the cross emptied itself (:7 *kenoo*) of all human glory and thereby He received the highest glory. Seeking our own glory is not therefore having the mind of the crucified Christ. And "lowliness of mind" is the basic word used of how the Lord there "humbled Himself" (:8), allowed Himself to be brought down, that He might be exalted in due time and not right away. The idea is not that we think others are better than us, for that would mean doing ourselves down in an unrealistic and psychologically unhealthy way. Rather the idea is that we should be secure in our own salvation, so that we focus upon others' needs for salvation. The Greek for 'Esteeming others better' doesn't have to mean that we think we are worse than others, and they are better. Rather, the idea is that we focus on them more than on ourselves; because we are already secure in Jesus. The whole idea in this section is that we should have the mind of the Lord Jesus on the cross, which was totally focused on saving others rather than Himself. For, in that sense, He needed no salvation from sin, He was secure in His relationship with the Father. And we likewise can be secure in that same relationship, knowing that we are forgiven, *our* sin is dealt with, and our focus is therefore on saving others.

Another view is that for the believer, that means so realizing our own sins that we *hegeomai*, place others in a hegemony, higher than ourselves. The idea is not that we think others are better than us, for that would mean doing ourselves down in an unrealistic and psychologically unhealthy way. Rather is the nuance of meaning that in any hierarchy or hegemony, we consider ourselves on the lowest level. Paul was secure in himself, confident of his salvation, satisfied with the fight he had fought and the race he had run; but he also considered himself the least of the believers (Eph. 3:8) and the worst of sinners. We are all as the beggars in the parable, who quite undeservedly are invited to the banquet, and so should take the lowest seat- that they might be invited up to a higher seat in the hegemony or ranking when the Lord comes, and not now. Or we can go with ESV, "more significant than ourselves", just as the Lord on the cross had a mind taken up with the significance of our salvation rather

than His own. It's not that He saved Himself and then thought of saving us. He thought totally of our salvation, and that selfless focus is what we are invited to emulate.

2:4 *Each of you not looking to his own things, but each of you to the things of others*- We must ask ourselves, How do I "look to" or "look on" people? Especially in their spiritual need. For we are to look at them with the look of the Lord as He went to the cross. So often we read in the Gospels that the Lord looked on a person, and we are left to imagine how He looked. "The look is the look of sympathy, kindly interest, self-forgetful cooperation". If we are to consider ourselves as appropriate only to the lowest station in God's household, we will be as a servant of all, the lowest of the slaves, just as the Lord was on the cross. We will as the lowest slave be looking to serve the "others" of :3 within the household. Perhaps Paul is thinking of the Lord's comment about how a slave will not think of his own things, preparing his own supper, but of preparing the supper for others (Lk. 17:7-9).

We should be ever “looking to” the best interests of others- the Greek word skopos is the one used in “telescope” or “microscope”. Our focus must be upon what is their best interest spiritually. Not upon anything else. Condemning, belittling, comparing, labelling, insulting, condescending, being sarcastic... have absolutely no place in a life driven by this purpose. For we are to have the mind of the Lord as He died, which was so focused upon us and our needs. When we were so immature and only rarely ever seem to 'get it'.

If we are to live lives devoted to the rest of the brotherhood, we need a motivation more powerful than just steel will-power. The constant out-giving of the cross, in the face of the most studied rejection and lack of appreciation, can be the only motivation that time and again, without fail, will revive our flagging will. Paul paints a powerful picture of the Lord's progressive self-humbling in service to others, culminating in “the death of the cross"; and with this in mind, he asks us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ...". The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

2:5 *Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*- This is the "one mind" and 'like mind' which Paul has earlier asked us to have. The mind is the spirit; the gift of the Spirit of Christ enables us to have His mind or Spirit. And Paul now argues that the quintessence of the Lord's mind was seen in Him as He died. This is an extremely high calling- to have the mind which the Lord had as He died. The context of this passage must be carefully considered. Paul does not just start talking about Jesus ‘out of the blue’. He refers to the mind of Jesus in Phil. 2:5. Back in Phil. 1:27 Paul starts to speak of the importance of our state of mind. This is developed in the early verses of chapter 2: “Being of one accord, of one mind... in lowliness of mind... look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:2-5). Paul is therefore speaking of the importance of having a mind like that of Jesus, which is devoted to the humble service of others. The verses which follow are therefore commenting upon the humility of mind which Jesus demonstrated, rather than speaking of any change of nature. Just as Jesus was a servant, so earlier Paul had introduced himself with the

same word (Phil. 1:1 cp. 2:7). The attitude of Jesus is set up as our example, and we are urged to join Paul in sharing it. We're not asked to change natures; we're asked to have the mind of Jesus- so that we may know the "fellowship of sharing in his [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10,11).

Trinitarian theology sees God's salvation of humanity as being on account of His supposed 'incarnation' in Christ, and His sending of the [supposedly] pre-existent Christ into the world. But the New Testament emphasis is upon the *death* of Christ, His victory within Himself and subsequent resurrection, as the crucial means by which our redemption was enabled. And further, how He saved us through the cross and through His own self-debasement is held up as our very real example in passages like Phil. 2 and 2 Cor. 8:8-10. We are not pre-existent gods in Heaven awaiting an incarnation on earth. We are very real, human guys and gals. His pattern can mean nothing for us if it was all about saving others through submitting to some kind of 'incarnation'. But the Biblical emphasis makes His sufferings, death and victory in resurrection our very real pattern, so real that we are to be baptized into it (Rom. 6:3-5) and live according to this as a pattern for human life every moment.

2:6- see on 1 Cor. 15:45.

Who, though being- The Greek word translated “being” here does not mean ‘being originally, from eternity’. Acts 7:55 speaks of Stephen “being full of the Holy Spirit”. He was full of the Holy Spirit then and had been for some time before; but he had not always been full of it. Other examples will be found in Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:30; Gal. 2:14. Christ “being in the form of God” therefore just means that he was in God’s form (mentally); it does not imply that he was in that form from the beginning of time.

In the mental image of God- Jesus was “in the form of God”. That “form” (Greek *morphe*) cannot refer to essential nature is proved by Phil. 2:7 speaking of Christ taking on “the form of a servant”. He had the form of God, but he took on the form of a servant. The essential nature of a servant is no different to that of any other man. In harmony with the context, we can safely interpret this as meaning that although Jesus was perfect, He had a totally God-like mind, yet He was willing to take on the demeanour of a servant. Some verses later Paul encourages us to become “conformable unto (Christ’s) death” (Phil. 3:10). We are to share the *morphe*, the form of Christ which he showed in his death. This cannot mean that we are to share the nature which He had then, because we have human nature already. We do not have to change ourselves to have human nature, but we need to change our way of thinking, so that we can have the *morphe* or mental image which the Lord had in His death. The Greek word *morphe* means an image, impress or resemblance. Human beings can have a *morphe*. Gal. 4:19 speaks of “Christ (being) formed in” believers. Because He had a perfect character, a perfectly God-like way of thinking, the Lord Jesus was “in the form of God”. Because of this, He did not consider equality with God “something to be grasped at”. This totally disproves the theory that Jesus was God. Even according to the N.I.V. translation, the Lord did not for a moment entertain the idea of being equal with God; He knew that He was subject to God, and not co-equal with Him. There are many examples in the Greek Old Testament of the Greek word *morphe* being used to mean 'outward form' rather than 'essential nature'- e.g. Jud. 8:18 [men had the *morphe* , the outward appearance, of a king's sons]; Job 4:16 ; Is. 44:13 [a carpenter makes an idol in the *morphe* or outward appearance of a human being- but not in the very nature of a human being!]; Dan 3:19 [the king's *morphe* or appearance changed because he got angry; his essential nature remained the same].

And likewise in the Apocrypha: Tobit 1:13; Wis. 18:1; 4 Macc. 15:4. If Paul meant nature or essence he would have used the word *ousia* or *physis*- as he does in Gal. 2:16 where he speaks of "We who are Jews by nature [*physis*]...".

We should remember that Philippi was in Macedonia, it was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Alexander was some sort of hero there. He was held to be successful in his exploits because after conquering a people, he did not have a policy of ruling by suppression but instead made all attempts to befriend them by making himself a servant to the people. Alexander was perceived to have an *hypostasis* (the substantial quality) of both master and servant. It seems that Paul may be making a conscious connection between the Lord Jesus, and Alexander the Great. But the Lord Jesus went so much further. He emptied Himself of all pride and became a servant to all. In our context, the point I take from this is that Alexander didn't change natures when he, the master, became a servant to his people; and the same is true of the Lord Jesus. His humiliation and self-deprecation was specifically upon the cross; and as such He is our example. We too are to have His spirit. We are unable to change natures; the challenge rather is to change our minds. Peter says the same, perhaps alluding to Paul's words here: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time".

Did not consider grasping at being equal with God- The essence of the temptation in Eden was to think that the tree of knowledge could bring salvation; it was an attempt to grasp at equality with God, according to Phil. 2, it was a vain belief that possession of knowledge / truth enables us to play God. And we, with our emphasis on the need for truth, for correct understanding, are especially prone to this major temptation. He did not conceive the equality with God with which He would be rewarded as "booty" (Gk.), something to be grasped for: instead, He concentrated on being a humble servant, working to bring about the salvation of others (Phil. 2). This sense of working for *God's* glory must really permeate our thinking. Vincent Taylor analyses Paul's hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11 and concludes that it is an adaptation of a Jewish hymn which spoke of "the appearance of the Heavenly Man on earth". Paul was writing under inspiration, but it seems he purposefully adapted a Jewish hymn and applied it to Jesus- to indicate the status which should truly be ascribed to the Lord Jesus. See on Col. 1:15. The lowest of the 30 aeons, Sophia, "yielded to an ungovernable desire to apprehend [God's] nature". And Paul alludes to this in Phil. 2:6 by saying that Jesus by contrast didn't even consider apprehending God's nature, but instead made Himself a servant of all. As more and more is known of the literature and ideas which were extant in the first century, it becomes the more evident that Paul's writings are full of allusions to it- allusions which seek to deconstruct these ideas, replacing them with the true; and by doing so, presenting the Truth of the Gospel in the terms and language of the day, just as we seek to. See on Col. 2:9.

It has been shown that the hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is alluding to various Gnostic myths about a redeemer, the son and image of the "highest God", who comes down to earth, hides himself as a man so as not to be recognized by demons, shares human sufferings, and then disappears to Heaven having redeemed them (Documented in Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology Of The New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1955) p. 166. Bultmann showed that many of the 'difficult passages' in John have similar connections (*ibid* p. 175). I would argue that John likewise was alluding to these Gnostic [and other] redeemer myths in order to deconstruct them.). I suggest that these allusions are in order to deconstruct those myths. Paul's point is that the redemption of humanity was achieved by the human Jesus, through His death on the

cross, and not through some nebulous mythical figure supposedly taking a trip to earth for a few years. The hymn also alludes to the many wrong ideas floating around Judaism at the time concerning Adam. Messiah was *not* Adam; Adam is compared and contrasted with Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11- he like Jesus was made in the image of God, yet he grasped at equality with God ("you will be like God", Gen. 3:5), which Jesus didn't do. The description of Jesus "being in the form of God" was therefore to highlight the similarities between Him and Adam, who was also made in the form of God. The choice Jesus faced was to die on the cross or not, and it is this choice which Phil. 2:6-11 glorifies. The context of Phil. 2 shows that it was in this that He was and is our abiding example in the daily choices we face. If His choice was merely to come to earth or stay in Heaven, then there is nothing much to praise Him for and He is not our example in this at all.

Paul here is not merely spouting theology. His own living and thought were deeply influenced by these insights into the Lord's mind on the cross. As He there did not count or consder grasping equality with God, so Paul will go on to say that he "counts" all his possible potential 'gains', the things he could have tried to grasp, as "loss" for Christ. Three times he uses the same word for 'counts': "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). As in Eph. 4:13-16, he sees his 'gain' as being 'Christ', being made fully like Him at the resurrection. John's vision of the Kingdom was that "we shall be like Him", and for Paul too. We too are to share this mentality of not even considering or 'counting' anything as gain- apart from to have the mind of Christ when on the cross. He there is the One we fain would be, and would sacrifice all we have to be Him.

"Grasping" is the word for plunder; again we have a military metaphor (see on 1:21). For Roman soldiers were not to even consider plundering. And because the Lord was like that, He received the greatest reward at the ultimate victory parade.

2:7 *But poured himself out*- Christ “made himself of no reputation”, or “emptied himself” (R.V.), alluding to the prophecy of his crucifixion in Is. 53:12: “He poured out his soul unto death”. He “took upon himself the form (demeanour) of a servant” by his servant-like attitude to his followers (Jn. 13:14), demonstrated supremely by his death on the cross (Mt. 20:28). Is. 52:14 prophesied concerning Christ’s sufferings that on the cross “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”. This progressive humbling of himself “unto death, even the death of the cross” was something which occurred during his life and death, not at his birth. We have shown the context of this passage to relate to the mind of Jesus, the humility of which is being held up to us as an example to copy. These verses must therefore speak of Jesus’ life on earth, in our human nature, and how he humbled himself, despite having a mind totally in tune with God, to consider our needs.

Taking the mental attitude of a servant, and was the made just the same as all ordinary men- Trinitarians please note that Phil. 2 was written by Paul with his mind on the *death* not *birth* of Christ, as their false theology requires (Phil. 2:7 = Mt. 10:28; and note the connections with Is. 53). The mixture of the Divine and human in the Lord Jesus is what makes Him so compelling and motivational. He was like us in that He had our nature and temptations; and yet despite that, He was different from us in that He didn't sin. Phil. 2 explains how on the cross, the Lord Jesus was so supremely "in the likeness of men"; and yet the same 'suffering servant' prophecy which Phil. 2 alludes to also makes the point that on the cross, "his appearance was so unlike the sons of Adam" (Is. 52:14). There was something both human and non-human in His

manifestation of the Father upon the cross. Never before nor since has such supreme God-likeness, 'Divinity' , if you like, been displayed in such an extremely human form- a naked, weak, mortal man in His final death throes.

The Lord *taking upon himself* the form of a servant is to be connected with how at the Last Supper, He *took* (s.w.) a towel and girded Himself for service (Jn. 13:4). The connection between the Last Supper and Phil. 2, which describes the Lord's death on the cross, would suggest that the Lord's washing the disciples' feet was an epitome of His whole sacrifice on the cross. The passage describing the Last Supper begins with the statement that the Lord "loved us unto the end" (Jn. 13:1). This is an evident description of the cross itself; and yet His service of His followers at the Last Supper was therefore an epitome of the cross. As that Supper was "prepared" (Mt. 26:17,19), so the Lord on the cross "prepared" a place for us in the Kingdom (Jn. 14:1 s.w.). As the observing disciples didn't understand what the Lord was doing by washing their feet, so they didn't understand the way to the cross (Jn. 13:7 cp. 36). There is thus a parallel between the feet washing and His death. But in both cases, the Lord Jesus promised them that there was coming a time when they would understand His washing of their feet; and then they would know the way to the cross, and follow Him. John describes the Lord *laying aside* His clothes in order to wash the feet of His followers with the same word he frequently employs to describe how Christ of His own volition *laid down* His life on the cross, as an act of the will (Jn. 10:11,15,17,18); and how later His sacrificed body was *laid aside* (19:41,42; 20:2,13,15). As the Lord laid Himself down for us, epitomized by that deft laying aside of His clothes, so, John reasons, we must likewise purposefully lay down our lives for our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). As He did at the last supper, so He bids us do for each other. John uses the same word for Christ's "garments" in his records of both the last supper and the crucifixion (13:4,12 cp. 19:23). It could be noted that the man at the supper without garments was seen by the Lord as a symbol of the unworthy (Mt. 22:11 cp. Lk. 14:16,17). He humbled Himself to the level of a sinner; He created the story of the sinful man who could not lift up His eyes to Heaven to illustrate what He meant by a man humbling himself so that he might be exalted (Lk. 18:14). And He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:9), He took upon Himself the form of a servant and of a sinner, both in the last supper and the final crucifixion which it epitomized. As the Lord Jesus laid aside His garments and then washed the disciples' feet with only a towel around His waist, so at the crucifixion He laid aside His clothes and perhaps with a like nakedness, served us unto the end: the betrayers and the indifferent and the cautiously believing alike. Throughout the record of the Last Supper, there is ample evidence on the Lord's awareness of Judas' betrayal (Jn. 13:10,11,18,21,25). The account in 1 Cor. 11:23 likewise stresses how the Supper was performed with the Lord's full awareness of Judas' betrayal. It is perhaps therefore inevitable that we in some ways struggle with the problems of rejection, of betrayal, of being misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. For these were all essential parts of the Lord's passion, which He asks us to share with Him.

The Lord in His time of dying was and is the definition of self-humbling: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mt 23:11-12). Being a servant to others is the ‘abasing’ or [s.w.] humbling that will lead to exaltation. The Lord became a servant of all in His death (Mk. 10: 44,45). These things are brought together in Phil. 2:5-11, where we are invited to have nothing less than the mind of Christ in the self-humbling of the cross: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who…thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men…he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name…". The seven stages of the Lord's self-humiliation are matched by seven stages of the Father's exaltation of Him (read on in Phil. 2 and note them!). And this pattern is to be ours. This mind is to be in us. Because of this, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other… look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil 2:3-4). Every time we look on the things of others rather than just our own, not seeking our own glory but esteeming others enough to see them as worth suffering for…we have achieved the spirit of the cross, we have reached self-humbling. As the Lord died for Himself and others, so we are to look on the things of our salvation *as well as* those of others. This must be the foundation principle of all aspirations to preach or strengthen our brethren: esteeming others, thinking they are worth the effort, seeking their salvation.

"In the likeness of man... in human form" doesn't mean that the Lord Jesus only appeared as a man, when He was in fact something else. Rather the emphasis is upon the fact that He truly was like us. Going deeper, F.F. Bruce has suggested that these terms "represent alternative Greek renderings of the Aramaic phrase *kebar-'enash* ("like a son of man") in Daniel 7:13" (F.F. Bruce, *Paul And Jesus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1977) p. 77).

2:8- see on Heb. 2:3.

And being perceived as a normal man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death-

The language in :7,8 of pouring Himself out, humbling Himself, becoming a slave etc. must be seen in the context of the church at Philippi, living as they did in an honour / shame obsessed society. In that city, full of Roman citizens and those rewarded with citizenship for that military valour, the "dream life" was to get Roman citizenship. And the fate worse than death was to be a slave or to somehow lose status. These verses are alluding to that scenario, through demonstrating the great inversion of it all in the mind of the Lord Jesus. He became a slave, dying "the slave's death" of crucifixion["even the death of the cross"], resigned whatever status He had, never grasped even at equality with God nor any high status, and just got on with dying the death of a slave. And His mind is set up as the model for all in Him.

"Became obedient" suggests that in His mind the Lord worked down and down, until He came to the final humility of the cross. Likewise Heb. 2:9 describes how Christ was "made lower" than Angels- the same Greek word is translated "decrease". He was decreased lower than the Angels "by the suffering of death"; perhaps because previously the Angels had been subject to Him, but in His time of dying he was 'decreased' to a lower position?

He wasn't a God who came down to us and became human; rather is He the ordinary, very human guy who rose up to become the Man with the face of God, ascended the huge distance to Heaven, and received the very nature of God. It's actually the very opposite to what human theology has supposed, fearful as they were of what the pattern of this Man meant for them. The pre-existent view of Jesus makes Him some kind of Divine comet which came to earth, very briefly, and then sped off again, to return at the second coming. Instead we see a man from amongst men, arising to Divine status, and opening a way for us His brethren to share His victory; and coming back to establish His eternal Kingdom with us on this earth, His earth, where He came from and had His human roots. We read that Jesus was found

(*heuretheis*) in fashion (*schemati*) as a man, and He humiliated Himself (*tapeinoseos*), and thereby was exalted. But in the next chapter, Paul speaks of *himself* in that very language. He speaks of how he, too, would be “found” (*heuretho*) con-formed to the example of Jesus in His death, and would have his body of humiliation (*tapeinoseos*) changed into one like that of Jesus, “the body of his glory”. We aren’t asked to follow the pattern or *schema* of a supposed incarnation of a God as man. We’re asked to follow in the path of the Lord Jesus, the Son of man, in His path to glory. Repeatedly, we are promised that *His* glory is what we will ultimately share, at the end of our path of humiliation and sharing in His cross (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Jn. 17:22,24). The more we think about it, the idea of Jesus as a Divine comet sent to earth chimes in with some of the most popular movies. Think of *Superman* and *Star Trek*- the hero descends to earth in order to save us. Or take the "Lone Ranger" type Westerns, set in some wicked, sinful, hopeless town in the [mythical] American West... and in rides the outsider, the heroic cowboy, and redeems the situation. The huge success of these kinds of story lines suggests that we like to think we are powerless to change, that our situation is hopeless and beyond human salvation... an outsider is needed to save us, as we look on as spectators, feeling mere pawns in a cosmic drama. And this may explain the attraction of trinitarianism and a Divine comet-like Christ who hit earth for 33 years. It breeds painless spectator religion... go to church, hear the Preacher, watch the show, come home and spend another rainy Sunday afternoon wondering quite what to do with your life. Yet the idea of a *human* Saviour, one of us rising up above our own humanity to save us... this demands so much more of us, for it implies that we're not mere spectators at the show, but rather can really get involved ourselves.

Even the death of the cross- Our Lord Jesus seems to have gone through seven stages of progressive humbling of himself, rungs up (down) the ladder, before He was *made* perfect (complete) by His sufferings (Heb. 2:10); which equate with the seven aspects of His glorification which this hymn goes on to list. The climax of His humiliation was being obedient not only to death, but even to the death of the cross. In our Lord's progression towards that ultimate height, of laying down his life for others, we see our ultimate prototype. He stepped progressively downwards in the flesh, that He might climb upwards in the Spirit. So Philippians 2:6-9 describes the progressive humiliation of the Lord Jesus on the cross (not in His birth, as Trinitarian theology has mistakenly supposed. Note the allusions back to Isaiah 53). *There* He was supremely "in the form of God", but notwithstanding this He took even further the form of a servant. In that blood and spittle covered humility and service, we see the very form and essence of God. My understanding of Phil. 2:8 is that being in the form of God, being the Son of God and having equality with God are parallel statements. The Lord understood being 'equal with God' as some kind of idiom for His Divine Sonship (Jn. 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). He was in God's form, as His Son, and He therefore didn't consider equality with God something to be snatched; He had it already, in that He was the Son of God. In other words, "He considered it not robbery to be equal with God" is to be read as a description of the exaltedness of His position as Son of God; not as meaning that it never even occurred to Him to try to be equal with God. He was equal with God in the sense that He and the Father were one, spiritually, and on account of the fact that Jesus was the begotten Son of the Father. This interpretation depends upon understanding 'being equal with God' as an idiom for being the Son of God; it doesn't, of course, mean that 'Jesus is God' in the Trinitarian sense. There, on the cross, the Lord Jesus was the form of God, equal with God in that sense, the only begotten Son. And yet on the cross His form was marred more than that of any man, He finally had

no form that could be desired (Is. 52:14; 53:2). And yet this was the form of God. *He* was contorted and marred more than ever, there was no beauty in *Him* that men should desire Him, in those hours in which His Son suffered there. The Lord Jesus then had the form of God, although in His mind He had taken the form of a servant. The Lord made Himself a servant in His mind; He looked not on His own things, but on those of others (Phil. 2:4,7). This is the context of Philippians 2; that we should have the *mind* of Christ, who disregarded His own status as Son of God and humbled Himself, even to death on the cross, so that we might share His status. His example really is ours, Paul is saying (which precludes this passage describing any 'incarnation' at the birth of Christ). The Lord had spoken about the crucial need for a man to humble himself if he is to be exalted (Lk. 14:11); and this is evidently in Paul's mind when he writes of Christ humbling Himself and then being exalted. He saw that the Lord lived out on the cross what He had asked of us all. If that example must be ours, we can't quit just because we feel rejected and misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. *For this is the very essence of the cross we are asked to share.* See on Jn. 19:19.

Trinitarian theology uses Phil. 2 to justify their 'V-pattern' view of Christ- that He was high in glory in Heaven, then descended briefly to earth, and then returned to high glory in Heaven. All such talk of a V-pattern, albeit on the lips of eloquent churchmen and theologians, is frankly a serious missing of the point. Phil. 2- and the whole teaching of Jesus- is that the true greatness is in humility, the servant of all becomes Lord of all. The pinnacle, the zenith, the acme- was in the humility of the cross. The New Testament presents the death of Christ as His final victory, the springboard to a J-curve growth, involving even literal ascent into Heaven. What seemed to be defeat turned out to be the ultimate victory.

2:9 *Wherefore God highly exalted him*- The Lord Jesus "humbled himself", and was later "highly exalted" (Phil. 2:9), practising His earlier teaching that he who would humble himself and take the lowest seat at the meal would be exalted higher (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). The Lord Jesus at the Last Supper humbled Himself from the seat of honour which He had and took not only the lowest seat, but even lower than that: He washed their feet as the servant who didn't even have a place at the meal. And both James and Peter saw the Lord's humbling Himself at that supper and His subsequent exaltation as a direct pattern for us to copy (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Paul takes things one stage even further. He speaks of how he humbled himself, so that *his hopelessly weak and ungrateful brethren* might be exalted (2 Cor. 11:7). He is evidently alluding to the Gospel passages which speak of how we must humble ourselves so that *we* may be exalted (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). But Paul sees *his* exaltation, which his humbling would enable, as being identical to *theirs*. He doesn't say: 'I humbled myself so that I may be exalted'. He speaks of how he humbled himself so that *they* might be exalted.

We can understand 2 Cor. 8:9 in this same context- the choice of Jesus to 'become poor' for our sakes is held up as an example to the Corinthians, to inspire their financial giving. The choice is whether or not to live out the cross in our lives- rather than deciding whether or not to come down from Heaven to earth. Jesus gave up the 'riches' of His relationship with God, calling Him "abba", to the 'poverty' of the cross, in saying "My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). Poverty was associated with crucifixion, rather than with a God coming from Heaven to earth: "Riches buy off judgment, and the poor are condemned to the cross" (Quoted in Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion In The Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) p. 60 note 15.). It is Christ's cross and resurrection, and not this supposed

'incarnation', which is repeatedly emphasized as being the source of our salvation (Rom. 5:15,21; Gal. 2:20; 3:13; Eph. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). This is a far cry from the teaching of Irenaeus, one of the so-called 'church fathers', that Christ "attached man to God by his own incarnation" (*Against Heresies* 5.1.1). The New Testament emphasis is that we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son. The whole of Phil. 2 is about the Lord's attitude in His *death* and not at His *birth*. It was *after* His birth but *before* His death that the Lord could talk of his freedom of decision as to whether or not to lay down His life (Jn. 10:18)- and it is this decision which Phil. 2:9-11 is glorifying.

And gave to him the name which is above every name- These verses are taken to mean that Jesus was God, but at his birth he became a man. It is significant that this is almost the only passage which can be brought forward to explain away the 'missing link' in Trinitarian reasoning - how Jesus transferred himself from being God in Heaven to being a baby in Mary's womb. Yet "God also has highly exalted" Jesus "and given him a name" (:9) shows that Jesus did not exalt himself - God did it. It follows that he was not in a state of being exalted before God did this to him, at his resurrection.

Jesus carried the name of Yahweh when on earth- He came in the Father's Name (Jn. 5:43) and did and said many things which previously had been specific to Yahweh. Thus He walked on the water and stilled the waves as Yahweh was said to do (Ps. 107:29); yet Phil. 2:9 implies He was given the Name at His ascension: "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name". Does this suggest there are degrees of God manifestation and degrees of bearing His Name?

Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus- this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this.

Phil. 2:9 in the AV says that the Lord Jesus has a name "above" every name. Yet His Name surely cannot be "above" that of Yahweh. The Greek for "above" is usually translated "for [the sake of]", and I would suggest we read Phil. 2:9 as saying that the name of Jesus is for [the sake of] every name, in that every man and woman was potentially comprehended in His all-representative sacrifice. By baptism into the name of Jesus, they confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; "every name" under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how "all men" could have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And thus they were motivated to preach to "all men". And thus Paul's whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Christ as our representative means that He is the representative of the church as a whole, the entire body of persons who are "in Christ", we each have some unique contribution to His body upon earth. This is why He suffered *so* much- so that He found a fellow feeling true with every tempted mind which is in Him. In society and the workplace, nobody is irreplaceable, no cog can somehow not be replicated albeit

in a slightly different form. But the part we have to play in Him is unique and in one sense irreplaceable by anyone else. He has been highly exalted and given a name *huper* every name, that each of us should bow our knees before Him (Phil. 2:9). *Huper* here is usually translated "above", but perhaps the idea is rather that through His representative sufferings, the Lord has now a Name *for* every one of our names / personalities / histories / characters. He tasted death *for* every man (Heb. 2:9), and we are therefore to be *for* Him and all that are in Him. His whole suffering *for* us was to leave us an example, that we should follow in His steps to the cross (1 Pet. 2:21). Forasmuch as He suffered *for* us, we are to arm ourselves likewise with that same mind (1 Pet. 4:1- this is repeating the teaching and reasoning of Phil. 2, that we should have the same mind in us which was in Jesus at the time of His death). As He laid down His life *for* us, so we should lay down our lives *for* our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16)- in all the myriad of large and small sacrifices this requires, from phone calls through thoughtful comments and cash generosity to literal death *huper* others if that's what's required. His whole priestly, reconciliatory work is to be ours. Not that *we* are Saviours of the world in ourselves, but we are to do this work *huper* Him and *huper* this world.

2:10 *That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth-*

The record in Acts 16 stresses that Philippi was a Roman colony. And so there is a starkly subversive message here- not at the name of Caesar, but at the name of the Lord Jesus, every knee must bow. But Caesar only had authority over men on earth. The Lord Jesus had authority over Angels in Heaven, and over those who had died in Him whom He would resurrect so they could also bow to Him.

I have discussed on Phil. 1:21 how this letter is full of military metaphor. It continues here in the descriptions of the Lord's exaltation. It involved giving the glory (to God); receiving a name; every knee bowing; every tongue confessing [the wonderful deeds of the exalted one]. These are all terms taken from the military decoration ceremonies. Finally all glory was to be given to Caesar; but Paul deconstructs that, with all glory being given to God. The Lord Jesus was the ultimately decorated soldier, and His exaltation is a pattern to us, His fellow soldiers. We have a general who Himself was in the front line and fought the ultimately good fight. Victorious generals were given the name *Imperator*, emperor- the title of Caesar himself. We have an example in Tiberius, after his victory over the Germans, being named and saluted as *Imperator.* This is the basis for the otherwise confusing language here- that "Jesus" receives the Divine Name whilst still being "Jesus". Such generals were saluted as Caesar- just as the Lord Jesus, whilst not God Himself, receives the same salute as the Father. And yet the military metaphor is somewhat deconstructed; for the death of the general meant almost always defeat of the army. But the Lord's death led to His resurrection, and the inevitable victory for His men.

These words are alluding to Is. 45:23,24: "...unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". We all find humility difficult. But before the height of His exaltation, a height which came as a result of the depth of the degradation of the cross, we should bow our knees in an unfeigned humility and realization of our sinfulness, and thankful recognition of the fact that through Him we are counted righteous. The reference in Phil. 2:10,11 to every knee bowing and every tongue confessing the Lordship of Jesus is perhaps a reference back to the great commission to take Him to all peoples. That day when every knee would bow to the Lord Jesus will be the result of the outcome of His exaltation. A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present

exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1).

In Phil. 2:10, the Lord Jesus is said to have been given power over all beings in heaven, earth and the nether–world. The Romans understood the cosmos to be divided into these three spheres. But this passage is based upon Is. 45:23, which says that God has total supremacy – and this has been granted to His Son. As I understand it, Paul is reasoning that if God is all powerful, and if that power has been given to the Lord Jesus, then whatever cosmology there is around, e.g. belief in a nether–world, well, in that case, Jesus has all power over that as well. The same argument applies to demons. If they exist, well the essence is that they are well and truly under the Lord's control and aren't essentially powerful. Paul doesn't so much ridicule the idea of a nether–world, rather he takes the view, as Jesus did in His dealings with the demon issue, that God's power is so great that their existence is effectively not an issue.

2:11 *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*- The whole process of Christ's humbling of himself and subsequent exaltation by God was to be "to the glory of God the Father". God the Father is not, therefore, co-equal with the Son. Is. 45:20-24 speaks of how "all the ends of the earth" will look unto "a just God and a Saviour [Jesus]" and be saved- evident reference back to the brazen serpent lifted up for salvation. The result of this is that to Him "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess" his moral failures, rejoicing that "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength... in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory". These words are quoted in Phil. 2:11 in description of the believer's response to the suffering Saviour. And yet they are quoted again in Rom. 14:10-12 regarding our confession of sin before the Lord at judgment day. The connections mean simply this: before the Lord's cross, we bow our knee and confess our failures, knowing the imputation of His righteousness, in anticipation of how we will bow before Him and give our miserable account at the judgment. And both processes are wonderfully natural. We must simply allow the power of a true faith in His cross to work out its own way in us. At the judgment, no flesh will glory in himself, but only in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:29). And even now, we glory in His cross (Gal. 6:14).

Is. 45:23-25 cp. Rom. 14:11,12, about our reaction at the judgment seat	Phil. 2, about our reaction to the cross of Christ today
:23 every knee shall bow	:10 every knee shall bow
:23 every tongue shall swear	:11 every tongue shall confess
:24 in the Lord	:11 Jesus Christ is Lord
:25 shall glory	:11 to the glory of God

Clearly our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience.

2:12 *So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence*- This call to obedience follows on from the way the Lord has been set before them in :8 as obedient to the call to death, even death on a cross. The fact they needed exhortation to be obedient when Paul was not present with them is another hint that Paul's warm commendations of them in chapter 1 were how he wished to see things, or because he as it were shared the Lord's approach of imputing righteousness. We noted the same about his "confidence" in the Corinthians, when he goes on to be far less than confident in them (see on 2 Cor. 7:16).

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling- This exhortation is in the light of his preceding poem about the Lord's total focus upon us on the cross. This should motivate us to respond; His efforts for our salvation should elicit similar from us. The "fear and trembling" would more speak of our deep respect for what He has done for us, rather than any idea of our being petrified as to the outcome of judgment day. The parable of the unjust steward makes the point that in the Kingdom, the faithful will be given by Christ "the true riches... that which is your (very) own" (Lk. 16:12). The reward given will to some degree be totally personal. Each works out his *own* salvation, such as it will be (Phil. 2:12)- not in the sense of achieving it by works, but rather that the sort of spirituality we develop now will be the essential person we are in the eternity of God's Kingdom.

Moses' last speeches are often referred to by Paul here (e.g. Phil. 2:15 = Dt. 32:5; Phil. 2:28 = Dt. 31:16; Phil. 2:12 = Dt. 31:8,27,29). This could be a hint that the suggestion on 1:1 was correct- that Paul wrote to the Philippians at the very end of his life, facing death in prison.

"Salvation" may be another military allusion (see on 1:21); for *soteria* is a term also used for victory. The LXX uses it for "victory" in battle. As the Lord had won the ultimate victory, we are to be inspired to have His mind and not just get a free ride on His salvation, but to win our own victory inspired by Him.

2:13 *For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work, for His good pleasure*- Christianity is meant to be lived in a community. Indeed, God has created salvation in a community, in the body of Christ. “Work out your [plural] salvation... for it is God who is working in your midst [as a body]” (Phil. 2:12,13). But our working out (:12) is in response to God's working within us, in our hearts. The initiative is His. He works in us to work [s.w.] His will- this is fair emphasis on the fact that God is really at work within us, in our hearts. And the will of God is that none of His should perish, but we should all be saved. Eph. 1:11 likewise connects God's will with His working in us. Clearly enough, this working is by the Spirit, which works [s.w.] in each believer (1 Cor. 12:6,11; Gal. 3:5). Eph. 3:18-20 states that this working [s.w.] is through the gift of the Spirit "in the inner man". But we are to respond to that working of God- just as Paul laboured according to God's working which worked mightily within him (Col. 1:29). As discussed on Phil. 1:6, the work of God within the Philippians began with the opening of Lidia's heart by the Spirit, and the opening of the doors of the prison to release the prisoners- with all the Biblical allusions present in that Divine act.

2:14 *Do all things without complaining and questionings*- Awareness that God is working in us to perfect / mature us into the image of Christ (:13)... means we will not murmur and dispute (AV). Grumbling and petty argument are subsumed beneath this far grander picture and awareness of what is ultimately going on in our lives. In the preceding light of the Lord's death for us with a mind totally focused upon our redemption, reflecting the will of God for our salvation, and His continued working within us to that end... we should be focused on far higher things than complaining and academic questions and the striving which accompanies them. Our way of life will make an inevitable witness to the world. Simply not moaning and groaning in the daily round will be a holding out of the word of life to those with whom we trudge through this life (Phil. 2:14 cp. 16). The allusion is to how Israel were saved with such great salvation- but murmured and questioned instead of rejoicing in it (1 Cor. 10:10).

2:15- see on Mt. 3:11; Jn. 3:18.

That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world- "Blameless and harmless" alludes to Lk. 1:6 (as does 1 Thess. 3:13). We are to have the serene spirituality, all down the years, of Zacharias and Elizabeth. "Become..." continues the idea that the Philippians had been given the Spirit, but had much growth left. Lights shining is alluding to the Septuagint of Dan. 12:3, concerning the saints in the Kingdom shining as the stars. Once it is appreciated that we are now in the spiritual heavenlies (Eph. 2:6) then this makes sense. And Paul was using language which Moses had earlier used of how apostate Israel were the "crooked and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5). The point of his allusion may have been that despite the darkness and apostasy of the surrounding brotherhood, we must all the same shine with the constancy of the stars. Those among God's people who break their covenant with Him, He sees as the world. Thus Moses prophesied of an apostate Israel: "They have dealt corruptly with [God], they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation" (Dt. 32:5 RSV). These very words are used by Paul here regarding the Gentile world. Apostate Israel are the pagan world; and therefore the rejected at the day of judgment will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). Likewise Is. 42:1,2 concerning Christ's witness to the *Gentiles* is quoted in Mt. 12:19 regarding His witness to an apostate Israel. Israel were to be made like “the top of a rock” just as Gentile Tyre would be (Ez. 24:7; 26:4). “Fill you up then the measure of your fathers”, the Lord said to Israel (Mt. 23:32)- yet He was alluding to how the Gentile Amorites filled up the cup of God’s judgments and then had to drink it. Pharaoh's heart was hardened to bring about God's glory, but Paul uses the very same language, in the same context, to describe what was happening to an apostate, Egypt-like Israel (Rom. 9:17). Korah and his company were swallowed by the earth, using the very language which Moses so recently had applied to how the Egyptians were swallowed by the earth at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12).

2:16 *Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain*- The context of shining as lights in the world encourages me to translate "holding fast" as in AV, "holding forth". The Lord Jesus was the light of the world; and by doing “all things without murmuring and disputing… blameless and harmless [as the Lamb]… *you* shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” [i.e. the Lord Jesus; Phil. 2:14-16]. Paul felt he would have "run in vain" if his converts didn't in their turn preach. The quality of our converts affects the nature of our final reward- for Paul elsewhere uses the image of a race as a symbol for the Christian life which ends in the victory of the Kingdom. But whether he won or lost, he felt that the whole thing would be meaningless if they did not spiritually develop. If as suggested on Phil. 1:1 and Phil. 2:12,17,23; 3:13,20; 4:1,13 Paul was writing this at around the time he wrote 2 Tim. 4, his comment there that he had run a good race in 2 Tim. 4:7 therefore meant that he was satisfied with the fruit of his labours amongst his converts; for here in 2:16 he says that his race would have been run in vain if they were not spiritually fruitful. And yet all in Asia left him, and so many of his converts clearly fell away, according to how he writes to the Galatians and Corinthians. But some did not, especially some at Philippi, and so he considered his race to have been successful. We too can follow his example and see the glass half full rather than half empty. Paul's joy at the last day was to be a function of the efforts he made in this very brief life for others. And this is the thought which gives eternal significance to our patient teaching and involvement with others

who are on the path to the Kingdom. Even a career helping unbelievers will not have the same eternal result; for those folks shall be eternally dead. But life lived for others in Christ shall have this eternal joy of fulfilment. Paul, like us, therefore had a personal investment in the spiritual success of those in his life.

2:17- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Yes, and if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all- As noted on :16, the nature of our eternal experience will be a reflection of what we have sacrificed for others in this life. Paul saw his life as the drink offering which gave acceptability and completeness to the sacrifice of those for whom he laboured. The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk; Rev. 6:9), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal victory of the flesh which it can appear. The only other time we encounter the Greek word for 'poured out as a drink offering' is in 2 Tim. 4:6, where Paul felt he was ready to be poured out. This is another reason for thinking that Philippians was written at the very end of Paul's life; see on 1:1; 2:12,16,23.

Paul says that he saw his brethren as an altar, upon which he was being offered up as a sacrifice. He saw his brethren as the means by which he could serve God. And for us too, the community of believers, the ecclesia, be they strong or weak, a pain in the neck or wonderful encouragement, are simply the method God has chosen for us to offer ourselves to Him. Running around for others, caring of others, patient sensitivity with our brethren… these are but the altar provided by God, upon which we can serve Him and give ourselves to Him.

"I am glad and rejoice" is in the present tense; Paul has said that their final acceptance will be his eternal joy at the last day (:16). But we are to live the Kingdom life now, for in this sense we "have eternal life" in that we are living the kind of life which we shall eternally live. Paul felt the Philippians were on track to the Kingdom; if the Lord came at that moment, they would be accepted. And so he rejoiced for them right now.

2:18 *And in the same manner you also should be glad and rejoice with me*- As explained on :16 and :17, Paul would rejoice eternally at the last day because of their salvation; but they were on track for salvation, and so Paul rejoiced even now. And he asks them to share that joy, as if they were in some unnecessary doubt about their salvation. There will be both now and eternally a mutuality in our joy. Joy in its true sense is not selfish; to rejoice regarding issues only pertinent to ourselves would surely be selfish.

2:19 *But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be cheered by news of you*- Paul's joy in their salvation was because he believed they would be saved, just as we ought to believe that others far away from us shall be saved. But he intended to send Timothy to them to actually know the real state of their faith, so that his joy could be based on reality rather than blind faith that they were strong in the Lord and on track for salvation. Paul's "hope in the Lord Jesus" indicates that he saw the Lord Jesus as the One who would decide whether or not Timothy's visit would happen. The Lord is indeed so very active, permitting or blocking various things in our lives, and certainly not sitting idle in Heaven leaving us to our own devices. As noted on 1:1, if this sending of Timothy to Philippi was at the time of 2 Timothy 4, this was indeed a sacrifice. For Paul felt abandoned and forgotten by all,

and had begged Timothy to come to him in prison; and this letter to the Philippians was written by Paul and Timothy together whilst Paul was imprisoned (1:1).

"To send" here and in :25 is military language; see on Phil. 1:21. These brethren were being sent on an information gathering mission, necessary for the success of the campaign.

2:20 *For I have no one likeminded, who will truly care for your welfare*- Timothy's visit was so as to return to Paul with good news about their spiritual state (:19), but this would perhaps be a result of Timothy's true care for their spiritual welfare. The "care" of all the churches daily pressed upon Paul, and had nobody else who had this same mind as he did apart from Timothy. "Likeminded" connects with Paul's request that the Philippians be "likeminded" in the sense of having the mind of Christ on the cross (:2); and in :21 he says therefore that Timothy doesn't seek his own things but those of the Lord. This in turn connects with the description of the Lord Jesus not seeking His own exaltation, but pouring Himself out in service of us. Likewise "truly care" translates a Greek word that also refers to the mind; "has such mindfulness" would be a fair translation. He is presenting Timothy as one of those who "got it" about what he has just been saying about the mind of the Lord on the cross, and our need to replicate it. Paul likewise paints Epaphroditus in the same way in :30. He will present himself in chapter 3 as an imitation of the Lord's mind; and he will use this idea of having the Lord's mind to seek to resolve the divisions in the church in Phil. 4:2.

2:21- see on 1 Cor. 13:5.

For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ- The things that are Jesus Christ's are His people, our fellow believers. In the spirit of the mind of Christ on the cross, Timothy didn't seek anything for himself, only the salvation of God's people. Paul realized more clearly the apostasy of the brotherhood; "all men seek their own" he commented, in conscious allusion to his earlier words that such self-seeking should not be the case amongst the ecclesia (1 Cor. 10:24). Paul was clearly disappointed in how little care there was for the spiritual welfare of others; he felt Timothy was the only one who 'got it'. And yet he is so positive about his brethren, whilst seeing their deep weaknesses. His 'cup half full' approach was therefore not the result of some naive, Alice in wonderland optimism. It was the more notable because he was not blind to the weaknesses of his brethren. He really believed what he wrote about the imputation of righteousness.

2:22 *But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served as an apprentice with me in declaring the gospel*- Paul has been explaining that he feels Timothy is the only one who really 'got it' about caring for the spiritual welfare of others (:20,21). But he partly attributes this to how Paul had spiritually nurtured him, to the point that although Paul had not baptized Timothy, he considered him his spiritual son. Again here in "proven character" we have a military metaphor (see on Phil. 1:21), this time to the Roman military practice of keeping records of the character of soldiers, and listing their virtues in letters and reports of recommendation.

2:23 *Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me*- This would suggest that Paul was at a critical point in his imprisonment, as noted on chapter 1. He wanted Timothy with him if it came to having to die. Paul is here apparently more realistic about his situation; in 1:19 he had written of being confident of his release from prison and his continued living in order to strengthen the

Philippians. But now he is more realistic, recognizing that he doesn't actually know how things will turn out. There is no record of Paul revisiting Philippi, and so we can assume that perhaps things did not turn out as Paul confidently hoped, and he was executed. In this case this letter to the Philippians was written at the end of Paul's life. His great theme of joy was because he indeed was finishing his race with joy (Acts 20:24).

2:24 *But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly*- In 1:19-23 Paul speaks as if his desire to not die but continue living had been accepted by the Lord, and so that was how it would be. But it was a matter of trust / faith, although Paul speaks of what he prayed for as if he had actually received it. As soon as his case was decided positively, Paul would send Timothy to them, and then himself follow shortly afterwards. These were his plans, but there is no record of them coming true.

2:25- see on 1 Thess. 3:1.

But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need- The "But..." suggests that Paul knew there would still be some time before his case was decided, and so he had sent Epaphroditus to them, even though this brother was the one who was arranging for Pauls care whilst incarcerated. It was largely over to relatives and friends to provide for the imprisoned, and so this was a huge sacrifice. Especially as Paul writes in 2 Tim. 4 as if he lacked even a cloak and writing equipment. We observe that the church in Rome, who he had felt so warmly towards in his letter to them, were not providing for him. This was indeed a sad way for such a great missionary to meet his end- ignored or avoided by his local brethren. We may consider Paul as the leading light of the early church, but that is not how he was perceived at the time. All Asia turned away from him. He describes Epaphroditus as the one "that ministered to my need". The Greek for "ministered" is used in the LXX concerning the priests (and Joshua) ministering to Moses in practical things; one of several examples of where Paul saw himself as Moses.

"Fellow soldier" implies they were all soldiers; see on Phil. 1:21 for the use of military metaphor throughout Philippians. "Messenger" is likely also a military allusion.

2:26- see on Mk. 14:36.

Since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick- His longing for them was the longing Paul had for them (Phil. 1:8 s.w.). Like Timothy, he shared Paul's care for them. This longing for other believers is described with this same word in Rom. 1:11; 2 Cor. 9:14; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4. It was a feature of the believers, and we must ask whether we have that today. For we live in an age of isolationism as never before. And in this connection we note how news of a brother's sickness in Rome travelled as far as Philippi, and they were so concerned about the brother that on his recovery, he wished to go visit them- in an age when international travel was generally unheard of. This was the kind of unity the Lord's death enabled, and which he foresaw in Jn. 17 as alone having the power to convert the world. We live in the time of communication revolution, whereby we can have unparalleled contact with each other. This ought to be powerfully harnessed in the interests of the kind of unity which we have a taste of here. "Distressed" is the word used for the Lord's soul being "sore troubled" in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:37; Mk. 14:33). Again the idea is that Epaphroditus had attained something of the mind of the Lord Jesus in His sufferings. Which is the whole theme of this letter.

2:27 *For indeed he was sick and near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow*- Again we see the connection between brethren. The loss of Epaphroditus would have been a loss to Paul too. Losing him would have been a sorrow and loss- and yet Paul was prepared to lose him by sending him to visit the Philippians. His recovery from the face of death was being used for the Philippians, and in 1:19-23 Paul has said that this is how he wishes to use his salvation from the death penalty and the limitations of imprisonment. In this too we see the connection of spirit between these two believers. And the same connections in the Spirit are forged continually in the Lord's body today, if we are open to them. Losing Epaphroditus in death would have been another "sorrow" for Paul; and yet when he recovered, Paul wilfully lost him again by sending him to the Philippians. And this resulted in sorrow for Paul (:28), which would be compensated for if Epaphroditus were to find the Philippians as strong in faith in reality as Paul imputed to them by faith in their status before the Lord.

2:28 *Therefore I have sent him more diligently, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and that I may be less sorrowful*- Their joy would reduce Paul's sorrow, because their joy was his joy; see on :27. 2 Cor. 2:3 speaks in similar terms of the joy of the Corinthians being Paul's joy. This is the ideal of fellowship in the Spirit- our spirits are connected if we both have the Spirit of Christ. If we are focused only upon our own feelings then we will never achieve the joy which comes from caring for others' spiritual progress.

2:29 *Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy and hold such in honour*- That Paul had to ask them to "receive him in the Lord" could be another hint that the spirituality of the Philippians was not as great as he had praised them for in chapter 1. We receive each other on the basis that we are "in the Lord"; to refuse to accept those who are "in the Lord" but who fail to meet some document based fellowship requirement is wrong indeed. Epaphroditus was to be honoured by them because of his labour in the Lord (:30). This respect of others for their labours is all part of the general picture the New Testament gives, of the true church being a place of respect and praise of its members. 'Holding in honour' is military language for the honour given a soldier for distinguished service; see on 1:21.

2:30 *Because for the work of Christ he came near to death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me*- Again we have front line military metaphor (see on Phil. 1:21) of a soldier risking his life to bring supplies which others should have brought. I discussed on Phil. 1:22 how *ergon*, "work", can be translated as "battle" or "battle-assignment". The ageing Paul stuck in prison saw himself as in the thick of battle, being supplied with finance and resources to keep going, by an other soldier who had risked his life to do so in travelling dangers. Epaphroditus may have been carrying the cash needed to pay for Paul's "hired house" in Rome where he could hold Gospel meetings, and carrying cash was done at risk of death. The "lack of service" may simply refer to how the Philippians were unable to come personally to Rome, but Epaphroditus did.

"Unto death" is the same term just used in :8 of the Lord pouring out His soul unto death on the cross. As discussed on :20, Paul is painting Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of men who did indeed "get it" about living life for others in the spirit of the Lord's mind on the cross.

We have just read that Epaphroditus was near to death due to sickness. It could be that this sickness referred to some physical result of persecution he had endured in an incident in which he risked his life to supply Paul's needs. Perhaps his identification with the imprisoned Paul and attempts to provide for him had led to him being so physically beaten up that he was sick and nearly died. Their ministry to Paul was "lacking"; and yet Paul speaks so positively of their great love for him in chapter 1. He later praises them for sending him material help when he was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), and they had also sent gifts for Paul with Epaphroditus when he had previously visited them (Phil. 4:18). In Phil. 4:10 he writes of how their care for him had "revived", and excuses their lack of service to him as not having had the opportunity to do so: "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your thought for me. I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity". The rebuke here in 2:30 stands as it does; but Paul positively seeks to excuse them, whilst not turning a blind eye. Seeing the cup half full is no call to naivety or pretending not to notice things; for that is no basis for legitimate, authentic relationship. Just as Paul praises the Corinthians for their love of him and then reveals their lack of love and respect for him, so with the Philippians Paul is so positive about their care and love for him, and yet is not blind to the fact that their lack of service led to Epaphroditus nearly losing his life. This is not merely seeing the cup half full rather than half empty; this is the rightful praise of others for what devotion they do show, even if it is lacking, insufficient (Gk.), more than half empty. Paul's attitude was surely a reflection of how the Father sees us His wayward children, focusing with joy upon what little obedience and devotion we do show rather than overly lamenting 'that which is lacking in [our] service toward Him'.

"The work of Christ" was done by caring for Paul in prison, and like Paul, Epaphroditus did not consider his life worth holding on to if it meant not doing "the work of Christ". He like Paul considered that "to live is Christ"; and like Paul he did not count his life dear to himself for the sake of the ministry (Acts 20:24). "The work of Christ" may not mean simply 'work done for Christ', for in :12,13 we have read of how God works through our works. So "the work of Christ" would then refer to the work done by Christ through us. And we like Paul and Epaphroditus should be so absorbed in being Him and letting Him work through us, that the continuation of our lives is not significant; for after resurrection we shall eternally continue this way of being.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Finally my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. For me to repeat the same things to you as I did before is not tedious, indeed it only confirms their certainty*- "Finally" sounds as if the letter is being concluded, but Paul is only half way through the letter as we now have it. He seems to get carried away now [in the Spirit] in warning against false teachers and Judaism. Paul says he is repeating what he has said before, and the fact he is doing so prompted by the Spirit inspiring him "only confirms" the reality of the problem. He may have written these things before in an unrecorded letter, or perhaps he is reminding them of the warnings he gave them whilst present with them. He feels he has to make these warnings against legalism because he wants

them to "rejoice in the Lord", and legalism takes away the joy of salvation by grace on account of the Lord's work.

3:2 *As so I say again: Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers*- The Jews called Gentiles "dogs" and Paul is reversing this. Likewise "mutilators of the flesh" was a term used for pagan Gentiles who cut their flesh in their idol worship- we think of the Baal worshippers at Elijah's time (1 Kings 18:28). "Dogs" were unclean animals; to call religious Jewish people workers of evil, when they considered themselves full of good works, and unclean body cutters [an allusion to pagan idolatry] was extreme language. Indeed "dogs" could refer to the male prostitutes of the idol temples. This was how Paul saw the Judaists- their legalism was a form of the crudest idolatry.

Beware of the mutilators!- "Look out for those dogs… who do evil… who cut the body" (NET). If this is merely a reference to circumcision only, it would contradict Paul's tolerant attitude towards those who in their immaturity still practiced the rite. He wasn't so passionately against circumcision as such; his reference is to those who divide the body of Christ through insisting upon such things. This cutting of the body is so easily done, whenever discord is sown. The language used by the Spirit here is some of the strongest anywhere in the New Testament. Sowing division is *so* seriously wrong.

3:3 *For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*- Circumcision was understood by Paul to refer to what is done to the heart of a person after they have been baptized: "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29). The inward man is where the Spirit operates (Eph. 3:16), strengthening us with God's psychological power. And here in Phil. 3:3, Paul again associates spiritual circumcision with the work of the Spirit; for it is the Spirit which empowers us to cut off the flesh. It is this work of the Spirit which is the seal or token of the fact we are in covenant with God and are His true Israel. Human willpower cannot cut off the flesh; those who seek justification by steel willed obedience are placing "confidence in the flesh" rather than in God's operation through the Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we glory or (as AV) rejoice in Christ. This connects with the opening thought in 3:1, that we are to rejoice in the Lord Jesus rather than go the way of Judaism. There can be no joy for those who try to cut off the flesh by the flesh. And they have no sense of rejoicing or glorying in the Messiah Jesus if they effectively do not need Him to cut off their flesh. Circumcision is something done to another person when that person is immature and powerless. This is exactly what God does to the new born convert to Christ, through sending forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart to cut off the flesh (Gal. 4:6).

This 'worship in the Spirit' and appeal against circumcision is not out of context with the preceding chapter. The Christian call is to have the mind or spirit of Christ on the cross. We are circumcised in heart / spirit and worship God therefore in our spirit. All arguments for physical circumcision and obedience to Mosaic law are therefore irrelevant and wrong compared to that huge reality.

3:4 *Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more*- Paul is not boasting here, but rather saying that even the best qualifications of Judaism were irrelevant to salvation. Phil. 3:4-11 reads rather like an encomium [see on Gal. 1:10], with Paul writing of how he was "circumcised on the eighth day... of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). But then he as it were alters course half way through, as if to say 'Nah, just kidding". He speaks of his "confidence in the flesh", his former "gains",

as being now "loss for Christ"; he's almost sarcastic about his humanly impressive encomium. For he says all this in the context of the preceding chapter, Phil. 2, where he has shown that the only true path of glory lays after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who had to die the death of the cross in order to be highly exalted. A similar sarcasm about his humanly impressive encomium is to be found at more length in 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10.

3:5 *Circumcised the eighth day, of Israelite stock, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee*- Benjamin was in the middle of Israel, the tribe of their first king, and the only son of Jacob born in the promised land, indeed he was Jacob's favourite son; and the only tribe faithful to Judah. The battle cry of Israel was “After thee, O Benjamin”. Paul was a pure blooded Jew with no question of intermarriage in his recent ancestors, a Hebrew of Hebrews in that his Hebrew parents had not become Hellenized; and belonging to the strictest school of interpretation of the Law (Acts 26:5).

3:6- see on Phil. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:16.

As touching zeal, persecuting the church. As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless- Judaism at the time apparently considered persecuting Christians as a sign of high qualification as a Jews. In saying that he persecuted the Christian church "zealously" he was alluding to the way that Phinehas is described as 'zealous' for the way in which he murdered an apostate Jew together with a Gentile who was leading him to sin (Num. 25). Note that the Jews in Palestine had no power to give anyone the death sentence, as witnessed not only by the record of the trial of Jesus but Josephus too (*Antiquities* 20.202; *BJ* 2.117; 6.302). Paul was a criminal murderer; and he had justified it by saying that he was the 1st Century Phinehas. Ps. 106:30 had commented upon the murder performed by Phinehas, that his zeal "was accounted to him for righteousness". This sets the background for the converted Paul's huge emphasis upon the fact that *faith* in Jesus is what is "reckoned for righteousness", and it is in *this* way that God "justifies the unGodly" (Rom. 4:3-5; 5:6; Gal. 3:6). Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as him- passionately obsessed with going about our justification the *wrong* way, and having to come to the *huge* realization that righteousness is *imputed* to us by our faith in the work of Jesus. Paul saw himself as learning the lesson of Job. Phil. 3 has several allusions back to him- like Job, Paul suffered “the loss of all things” (:8), although he considered himself previously “blameless” (:6). He threw away his own righteousness, that he might be justified by grace and know thereby the essence of Christ (:9), just as Job did.

Paul's technical obedience to the Law was "found blameless"; but it was only "found" that way by men, externally; for in Rom. 7:15-25 he admits to gross and continued disobedience to the Law in his spirit. If we seek justification before God by legal obedience to the Law, we shall be "found sinners" (Gal. 2:17). We can only be found truly blameless before God if He imputes righteousness to us through our being in Christ, and we are "found in Him" (:9).

3:7 *However, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ*-

Paul is alluding to his explanation in Phil. 2 of how the Lord Jesus gave up what He could have had, and was rewarded with far greater things. We too are to "count loss" our secular gains in this great inversion of things, whereby "to die is gain". 'Counting' things as loss (also in :8) alludes to how the Lord has just been described as not 'counting' equality with God something to be even grasped (Phil. 2:6). His outpouring of self on the cross was not only for our salvation; it was and is to be our pattern for life and living "in Christ". Paul was consciously emulating this spirit, as he

asks us all to; he was being made conformable to the Lord's death (:10), sharing the *morphe* He had there. We discussed on Phil. 2:20,30 how Timothy and Epaphroditus are likewise painted by Paul as men who "got it" about living in the spirit of the crucified Christ.

Paul saw himself as the man who gives all to buy the pearl (Mt. 13:45,46 = Phil. 3:7,8; although this passage also alludes to Moses; as if he took inspiration from Moses to be like the man in the parable). He saw the excellency of the knowledge of Christ as the pearl whose beauty inspired even a rich man to give up all that he had. "Gain" could imply financial gain; but Paul has recently used the word in saying that "to die is gain" (1:21). This is the radical inversion of values which there is in Christ; secular gain becomes spiritual loss, and secular loss becomes spiritual gain. Paul alludes to this idea when he says that the shipwreck on the way to Italy was gaining from a loss (Acts 27:21 uses the same words). It could well be that he had reflected on that incident, the casting overboard of secular wealth with his own hands, and it now influenced his later thought now imprisoned in Rome.

3:8- see on Lk. 9:23-25.

Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ- Paul truly believed, "doubtless" (AV), without even temporal doubt, that the loss of secular things was gain. We tend to doubt that sometimes; waves of worry about our financial future and longer term security swamp us at times. But Paul was without doubt about his position. The "all things" which Paul lost were largely psychological values and standing amongst men; although the words for gain and loss can have a distinct financial sense too. And he likely lost much of his family, seeing he was from a line of proud Pharisees. The power of Paul's teaching about singleness is backed up by his personal situation. As a member of the Council who condemned Stephen, he would have had to be married. An unmarried Orthodox Jew would have been a contradiction in terms at that time. And yet he is evidently single in his Christian ministry. It seems fairly certain that his wife either died or left him at the time of his conversion, probably taking the children with her. If this is so, it gives extra poignancy to his comment that he had suffered the loss of all things for the sake of his conversion. The chances are that he thought and wrote that with a difficult glance back to that Jerusalem girl, the toddlers he'd never seen again, the life and infinite possibilities of what might have been... And it gives another angle on his description of his converts as his children.

Paul "counted" the things of this life as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and His sufferings, so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated "esteemed" when we read of how Moses "esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The "reproach" of Christ is the same word used concerning Christ being "reviled" on the cross. Paul felt that the intellectual heights of knowing the mind of our crucified Lord, of being able to enter into the riches than are even now in the mind of Christ (Col. 2:3) more than compensated for his sacrifice of all material things in this life. And Moses was the same; he esteemed the "reproach of Christ", the knowledge that he was sharing the sufferings of his future saviour and would thereby enter the Kingdom which he would make possible, as far greater than the possibility

of being King of Egypt. He knew that he was sharing the sufferings of Christ, and that therefore he would be rewarded. It was this knowledge which motivated him in rejecting the riches of Egypt.

Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else (Gal. 1:14). But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I way win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). Why did he do it? Not just because he wanted to get salvation. "For the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*". For the *excellency* of who Christ is, as *my* Lord, he did it. Grasping the wonder of our salvation in the Lord Jesus should do even more than motivate us to write out a cheque; Paul not only gave, but he counted the things of this life as *dung* (and that's just what it means); he *despised* material advantage. This is a stage beyond just being generous.

'Gaining' Christ is another military allusion (see on 1:21). It was the reward and honour for being killed on the battle front. Paul says that nothing was worth dying for except "Christ", an eternal relationship with Him. "Christ Jesus my lord" connects with Paul's explanation of how every tongue must confess Jesus Christ as Lord- because of His humility unto the bravest death, and subsequent exaltation (Phil. 2:11). This is the only time Paul speaks of Jesus as "my Lord"; it is a very personal statement of his following the pattern he has laid down for us of glorifying Jesus in Phil. 2:5-11.

3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own which is of the law, but which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness which is from God by faith*- As noted on :6, it matters not if we are "found" blameless before men; it is our standing in Christ which matters. Righteousness "of the law" is not God's righteousness, but 'our own'. It is merely a feeling good about ourselves because we were technically obedient to some laws. Righteousness which comes from God has to be imputed, or given- on account of our faith in Christ. This is absolutely what Paul taught the Romans and he is repeating it here. "Found in him" uses the same word as in Phil. 2:7 for how the Lord was "found" as a man. Always, Paul has in mind the Lord Jesus on the cross as the pattern for his own life and thought.

3:10- see on Acts 9:16.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death- The full knowledge of the Lord Jesus will be when we know materially the "power of His resurrection". Eternity will be about relationship with Him, and that is why eternity begins now insofar as we have relationship with Him. Knowing Him, therefore, refers to relationship rather than technical knowledge of theological propositions concerning Him.

The centrality of the cross is reflected in the way in which to live a life crucified with Jesus is set up as the ultimate aim of the Christian life. We are “becoming conformed [coming towards His *morphe*, His form and appearance] unto his death" (Phil. 3:10 RV). Slowly, our lives are working out towards that end; this is intended by God to be the final position we all reach by the time of our death or the Lord’s return; that we will in some vague, feint way, have become conformed to the mind of Jesus as He was at *His* death. For as chapter 2 has explained, His *morphe* there is to be our pattern. His Spirit is to be ours. And through His resurrection, we are given

that Spirit to displace our natural spirit (Jn. 7:39). The process of transformation by the gift of the new spirit, of "becoming conformed", is ongoing now and continues until our last breath. Old age is thereby given meaning once we grasp this. And then finally at the Lord's return, our body will be “conformed" (same Greek word) to His in a physical sense (Phil. 3:21). And this is why we should count all things loss in order to come to know Christ (Phil. 3:8)- which the context suggests we are to read as knowing the spirit of His death. This is why His cross, the mind He had at His death, is so vital and central to our lives.

3:11 *If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead*- As noted on :10, the idea is that it is through this ongoing conforming to His *morphe* our mind / spirit, we shall become fully like Him at the resurrection from the dead. This is the "means" by which we shall share His resurrection in literal terms. Paul clearly speaks of "the resurrection" as meaning 'the resurrection to eternal life'. Some will indeed be raised, condemned, and shall die "the second death". But Paul is focused on our resurrection being that of the Lord, and so he speaks of "the resurrection" as meaning 'the resurrection to life'. Paul uses the same word for "attain" in writing that through the work of the Spirit we shall come to 'attain' the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus and become like Him, a "perfect man", fully sharing His spiritual stature (Eph. 4:13). This shall finally happen at the transformation of resurrection; for "we shall be changed", not just physically, but into Him in the fullness of all that means. Note that Paul here uses the same ideas of attaining to a 'perfect' state (:12) and knowing the Lord Jesus (:10).

Grammatically, "If by any means..." definitely reflects a sense of doubt; he apparently only tentatively looks forward to this resurrection. Although at that point he was strong in faith and confident of the resurrection, as witnessed in many statements by Paul, he recognized that he still had to finish the race. He has argued in Phil. 1 that if he dies at that point, he would be "with Christ, which is far better". He was sure that at that point, his next waking moment would be experiencing salvation with Christ. But he has also expressed the desire to remain alive and serve the Philippians. His love for them was so great that he as it were risked staying alive in the flesh, knowing that he could fall away from eternal salvation by doing so. This was indeed true love. He had the humility to recognize he might still fall away. Or we could read this "If by any means" as meaning that Paul had no idea how mechanically the resurrection would work, but he wasn't fazed by that. Or the simple truth may be that Paul's personal confidence in salvation went up and down, just as ours does; for this "If by any means..." is hard to square with Paul's confident argument that "in Christ shall all be made alive"; and in Rom. 6:5 that "if we have become united in the likeness of his death, then *certainly* we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection". Although even there, Paul may not be teaching that baptism saves; it is *if* we united with His death that we shall be saved. And beholding the Lord's death, who would be so bold as to think that without doubt, they are living and dying as the Lord did.

3:12- see on Acts 18:18; 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me- As explained on :11, the final attainment of perfection will be at the resurrection. Relatively late in his career Paul could comment: “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect”, alluding to the Lord’s bidding to be perfect as our Father is (Mt. 5:48). Through this allusion to the Gospels, Paul is showing his own admission of failure to live up to the standard set. Yet we must compare this with “Let us therefore, as many

as be perfect…" (Phil. 3:12,15). In 1 Cor. 13:10, he considers he is 'perfect', and has put away the things of childhood. Thus he saw his spiritual maturity only on account of his being in Christ; for he himself was not "already perfect", he admitted. We are counted as if we are in Christ, as if we are Him; but we are to live like that in practice. In a marvellous statement of our mutuality with the Lord, we are to lay hold on what we have been laid hold of for; and what is in view is the final perfection of body and spirit which shall be achieved at the resurrection to life. We have been seized (Gk.), laid hold of, for salvation. The grip is tight, and only by our wilfully wriggling out of it will the Lord not achieve His intention with us.

We have here another military metaphor (see on 1:21). The Lord Jesus had "laid hold" on Paul- the language of a prized prisoner of war, now captured and displayed as a trophy in the 'triumph' of the victorious general. Paul felt he was that special prize captive the Lord had taken.

3:13 *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet. But one thing I do, forgetting the past and looking forward to those things which are ahead*- Paul twice stresses that he does not consider himself to have arrived at the "perfected" state (:12). Perhaps this was in response to slander that he considered himself perfect. "Forgetting the past" doesn't mean to delete past events from our memory banks- because that is not within our power to do. And Paul talks freely about his awful past, h had not obliterated memories. So Paul presumably means that we are not to wallow in past failure. The certainty of what is ahead means we will focus on that; the glass is not only half full rather than half empty, but more than half full. We admit we have not yet attained perfection, but this doesn't mean we are to allow the past to exist as a fountain of constant regret. We are to look forward in sure hope to the things ahead- which is to know Christ, to be perfectly and fully like Him through the resurrection to life (:10,11,14). Paul sees this hope as being "ahead". He looks forward to it without any doubt as to whether it shall be true for him; because 'hope' means a confident assurance that what we hope for we shall certainly receive. It is not a mere 'hoping for the best'. But "looking forward" is literally 'reaching forth', and connects with the image of the runner which will be used in :14. The idea is of the athlete stretching forth head and body towards the finishing line. Paul felt that the end of his race was very near- another indication that he wrote this at the very end of his life, when he felt he had all but finished his race (2 Tim. 4:7). See on 2:16. Here he speaks as if he is but centimeters away from the tape and is reaching forward to touch it.

In the Christian race, all who finish are winners. No matter how slowly they run. Finishing is of the essence. "Run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1); "Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself" (1 Tim. 6:12 GNB); "I run straight for the finish line" (1 Cor. 9:26 GNB). Running straight for the line means not looking back- in Paul's case, neither to our own shameful sins, nor to the glories of a previous life.

Forgetting what is behind is a critical component of the Christian life, made possible by the work of the Spirit in our minds. So many spend their headspace churning over the past. We have everlasting joy ahead of us for the vast majority of our eternal existence. That must be our focus, not our brief past so far in this life. "The former things" shall pass away, and, we are assured, shall not come to mind. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Is. 35:10), and sorrow and sighing comes only from looking back at what we think might have been or should or could have been. "The days of your mourning shall be ended" (Is. 60:20). Seeing eternal joy is ahead, we are to live like that now. For we can live the eternal life now, the kind of life we shall eternally live. In response to the promise of eternal joy, Isaiah broke forth into

response: "I will [therefore, now] greatly rejoice in Yahweh, my soul shall be joyful in my God" (Is. 61:10).

3:14- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus- The Greek for "goal" is literally 'the line'; Adam Clarke's commentary gives examples of its usage like this in contemporary literature. As noted on :13, Paul is reaching forth towards the finishing line, just centimeters away. The "prize" is to be as the Lord Jesus (:10,11,14). This is the essence of our future salvation and eternity; the Abrahamic land promises are incidental to this. Eternity will be about knowing Him, and the location of that relationship is not much emphasized in the New Testament. It is a high or heavenly calling in that to be called to be like Him is the highest calling, the greatest end point of the journey, which could be imagined.

However, on Phil. 1:21 I have discussed the huge amount of military metaphor used in Philippians. It could be that in fact in :12-15 we have military language rather than athletic. "Press on" translates a word which nowhere means 'to run' as an athlete runs; rather does it mean to chase hard after, to pursue in battle, to capture. This is indeed the context of :12, where again military language is used for chasing after ["press on"] and seizing and capturing ["laid hold"]. It is found in an inscription: "[Crassus]... *pursued* [s.w.] the fleeing forces of Spartacus to the sea, where they tried to pass over to Sicily". "The prize of the high calling" (:14) would then be military victory at the end of the campaign, and the phrase is used like that in inscriptions, e.g. "Zeus gave to Menelaus the prize of battle, saying: The victory was clear for warlike Menelaus". Specifically the "prize" and "high / heavenly calling" are terms taken directly from the award ceremonies for soldiers. They were 'called up' to receive their medals and rewards on a raised dais, with their good deeds recited. The military prize for Paul was the resurrection and to see his Lord face to face for ever. He then says in :15 that his attitude was to be an example for all to follow. They were to be inspired by him as themselves soldiers.

3:15 *Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you*- "Mature" or "perfect" (s.w.) is the state which Paul says we have not yet attained (:12). But we are counted as perfect by being in Christ. "Decided" is literally "minded" (AV). Paul repeatedly brings everything back to the state of our hearts, how we think, and whether we are letting the Spirit operate within us or not. Those who have received the Spirit will be thinking of the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5 s.w.). The "mind" we should have is that of the Lord Jesus, and that is a gift, of His Spirit (Rom. 15:5). The same word has been used in 2:2,5 of how we should have the mind or spirit of Christ in His time of dying on the cross. In the immediate context, the "mind" we should have is one of pressing toward the goal or finishing line of final and total identity with the Lord Jesus. But a mindset is an outlook which incorporates many aspects of thinking, attitude and behaviour. In some things we will be out of step with the total mind of Christ; the work of the Spirit is to transform us towards His image in every way. And so in those things or aspects wherein we are 'otherwise minded', the Spirit will reveal these areas to us. We think of how the Lord used the same word in commenting that the Father, rather than the unaided mental strength of the flesh, had "revealed" the Lord to Peter (Mt. 16:17). The Father both hides and reveals things to people (Lk. 10:21); and He does all things by the Spirit. The arm of the Lord has to be revealed to men (Jn. 12:38). 1 Cor. 2:10 is clear as to the connection between the Spirit and God's 'revealing' things to believers: "God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (also

Eph. 3:5). God revealed His Son *within* Paul (Gal. 1:16). Stage by stage, aspect by aspect, those areas of our thinking and being which are not of the spirit of Christ will be revealed to us, so that we might move towards that total transformation into Christ which shall be at the last day.

3:16 *For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk*- As noted on :15, we are on a journey towards the full mind of Christ within us. But we are not yet perfect (:12), aspects of the Lord's mind are still being revealed to us (:15); but we are to live according to what we do currently understand. This conception of each believer being on a journey is important in enabling us to live together in the church, being at different stages on the journey. We cannot expect another to have grasped what has been revealed to us; we have to be patient, recognizing that full completeness of understanding and Christ-mindedness will only come at His return. It has been observed of Paul here: "In Phil. 3 he concludes a fundamental statement of his own Christian conviction by commending his opinion: 'So let those of us who are mature think in this way. And if in any way you think differently, this too will God reveal to you. Only we must stand by that conclusion which we have already reached' (3:15,16). That is: I am sure that mine is a correct, mature, Christian view, and I believe that in God's time, you will in the end share it. But what matters is that you honestly maintain and live by the position you have at present reached". "Rule" translates *kanon*, a line or boundary. And yet we will each have different lines or boundaries. It is this question of drawing lines and establishing boundaries which tends to divide believers, especially once they are written down as 'canon', as documents such as statements of faith and definitions of behaviour. All this is an attempt to impose the understanding or maturity of one upon another. We are to each individually walk according to the *kanon* which we have come to understand, realizing that we will likely have other aspects revealed to us as the Spirit transforms us towards full understanding or knowing of the Lord Jesus (:15). We simply cannot impose our *kanon* upon another. The fact the wider church has spoken of 'canon law' is the tragic opposite of what Paul is teaching here.

3:17 *Brothers, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern*- The example in view may specifically refer to the attitude expressed in the notes on :16. They were to be 'co-followers', bound together by a common attempt to walk as Paul did. The 'walking' in view is surely that just spoken of in :16, of walking according to our present state of understanding of the Lord Jesus. Paul's tolerance of others, of meeting them where they stand and going further with them, is to be our pattern. And yet it is also clear from 1 Tim. 1:16 that Paul saw himself as "a Christ appointed model" (Robert Roberts).

3:18 *For many walk, of whom I told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*- The 'walking' is that of :16, walking according to our current understanding of the mind of Christ, and open to being taught further of Him (see on :15). Those who did not walk like that, in the context of this chapter, were the legalistic Judaizers. Legalism requires that all jump the same bar; the idea of each individual being on a personalized journey, being progressively led by the Spirit ever closer towards the full mind of Christ, is all anathema to legalism. Such Judaizing requires that each have an identical understanding and position at the same moment. Growth is thereby disallowed. And Paul wept tears on the parchment, as it were, because he saw that such attitudes were robbing the cross of Christ of its power in men.

The cross of Christ is personified here as if to show that the Lord's whole being and life was crystallized in His cross. He could take the bread and wine with the comment that *right then* His body was being broken and His blood shed (note the present tenses). We can be active *enemies* of the Lord's cross unless we carry it, no matter how soporific and unaggressive our lifestyles may be.

3:19 *Whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*- The Judaizers in view (see on :18) were not actually bringing people closer to God by their insistence upon a common obedience to the same set of legislation. They were glorying in shameful things, and worshipped their own sensual desires as a god. Again, Paul brings it all down to the state of mind, whether we have the Lord's Spirit or not. And they were minding or thinking of *earthly* things; for the *heavenly* calling is to think with the mind / Spirit of the Lord who is now in Heaven (see on :14). We noted on :2 what extreme language Paul uses of the Judaizers. By teaching obedience to a few rules, they were allowing shameful behaviour to be glorified, and sensual desires in other areas to become a god to people. This is why we have noted time and again in expounding Paul's letters that Judaism was so attractive to newly converted Gentile Christians, who didn't want to leave behind the sensuality and shameful behaviour they had once enjoyed. Their "end", *telos*, is in contrast to the end or perfection / maturity (*teleios*) of the Spirit filled believer, which is to be immortalized with the mind of Christ at His return. But the end of legalism and these Judaizers at the Lord's return would be destruction; the same word is used of how Jews justified in their own minds by the Law are destined to "destruction" (Rom. 9:22). The 'enemies' of the Philippians of 1:28 had advance notice of their "destruction" (s.w.); and these opponents were therefore the Judaizers who are here referred to. The Jewish Christians who were drawing back from Christ, rather than reaching forward unto Him (3:13,14), were drawing back unto destruction (Heb. 10:39 s.w.). Peter uses the same word about the end of the Judaizers in 2 Pet. 2:1,2,3.

3:20- see on Mt. 6:10.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ- The record in Acts 16 specifically notes that Philippi was a Roman colony. The dream of the residents was to have Roman citizenship; the colony was full of retired Roman military officers apparently living the dream in retirement. Perhaps this is why Paul didn't initially mention his Roman citizenship when tortured and imprisoned without trial. He felt so keenly that the only citizenship worth having was that of Heaven, and not of Rome. It's rather like us pointedly despising the 'living the dream' things of our society. The stress upon our heavenly citizenship was not just comfort to the non-citizens of Philippi to realize that they should not be jealous of the Roman citizens; for they had a greater citizenship. It was also a reminder to those in the church like the prison keeper, who was likely a Roman citizen, that their apparent worldly advantage was of no value compared to their heavenly citizenship. Although as noted on Phil. 1:29, the church was generally poor. This is also stated in 2 Cor. 8:1-3: "the grace of God has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part". "Their abundant joy" references the theme of joy found throughout Philippians, with around 17 Greek words related to "joy" being used, and continuing the theme of Paul and Silas rejoicing when in prison there, singing hymns at midnight. But their poverty is called "extreme". We know from Phil. 4:15-18 that the Philippians were very generous to Paul's mission: "You

yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need... I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you". If these gifts were from the plural "churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:2), but Paul says the Philippians alone donated, we can conclude that as in Corinth, the "church" at Philippi was comprised of various house churches. Surely the homes of Lidia and the prison keeper were amongst them. Their recorded generosity means that they heeded Paul's call to them, as generally poor and persecuted people, to be "not looking to your own interests but actually to those of others" (Phil. 2:3,4). For poverty inevitably leads to the tendency to think only of our own interests.

When Paul speaks of redemption, he alludes to the practice of manumission, whereby a slave could be redeemed by his master and given the breathtaking gift of the much coveted Roman citizenship. Thus there were slaves who actually became Roman citizens. Hence here he invites all of us to see ourselves as a citizen of a Heavenly state (Phil. 3:20). We learn from Acts 22:26 that Paul was a Roman citizen from birth. The question therefore arises as to how they obtained citizenship. It would not have been through army service, because they were observant Jews (Phil. 3:5) and Jews didn't serve in the army. "The most common origin of this status for Jews outside Palestine was the manumission of Jewish slaves by masters who were themselves Roman citizens. In this case the citizenship was acquired… after one or two generations" [Simon Legasse, 'Paul's pre-Christian career' in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Book Of Acts* Vol. 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) p. 372.]. So it seems Paul's father may have been 'redeemed' by manumission. And yet he uses the very language of manumission about all who are redeemed and freed in Christ. Roman citizenship was the most coveted thing in the Roman empire. Phil. 3:20 claims that we *all* have the coveted citizenship of the Kingdom / empire of Heaven. The Judaizers were minding earthly things (:19); but our minds should be full of Heavenly things. We are pressing towards the goal of being made fully like the Lord Jesus (:10,14), and this pressing towards that is spoken of here as eagerly awaiting the second coming. Rom. 8:23 uses the same word for "eagerly wait" in describing how we who have the spirit / mind of Christ therefore and thereby eagerly await the redemption / manumission of our bodies. And Paul is to speak of this in :21. It is by or on account of the Spirit that we "eagerly await" the Lord's coming (Gal. 5:5). The Spirit is progressively at work in us, transforming us into His mind- and so due to that work, the work of our lives and hearts, we eagerly await the moment when we shall be fully changed into His image. This is why all who eagerly look for His coming on this spiritual basis shall be saved (Heb. 9:28; 2 Tim. 4:8). We note the connection of thought with 2 Tim. 4:8, written by Paul apparently at the end of his life in Rome: "From this time forward there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing". This would be further reason for thinking that Philippians and 2 Timothy were written at around the same time, at the end of Paul's life and imprisonment in Rome. See on 2:16.

3:21 *Who will transform our lowly body-*

The idea of our humbled body being exalted connects back to the hymn about the Lord's attitude on the cross in chapter 2. Paul has bidden us all have the same mind that was then in the Lord (Phil. 2:2), and he now presents our final salvation and glorification in terms of the path set by the Lord- of extreme humiliation before extreme glorification. Humiliation was something which the typical person from

Philippi feared more than death itself. In a shame based society, death was better than humiliation. The link between our mortality and humility is brought out in Paul's description of our present state as being "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21 RV). Believing we are mortal ought to be a humbling thing. The fact we lose faculties and memory, needing to be cared for by others, is humbling. But it is built into our human experience purposefully, because God's whole game plan with us is to progressively humble us, to bring us down, so that He might exalt us in due time (2:2,5). We must go with the program and not resist it, humbling ourselves under His humbling hand that we might be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).

That it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself- There is a clear parallel in Rom. 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies-through His Spirit that dwells in you". The gift of the Spirit given at baptism is the means whereby God is "working" within us. That gift is the guarantee of our eternal salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The transforming work of the Spirit is leading us through processes which will come to their final term in our body being transformed into the form of His glorified body, at His return. Bit by bit, every part of our lives is being subdued to Him through the internal work of the Spirit. This is the huge significance of our death; that is the point at which we will have been humiliated and subdued unto Him. As noted on 2:2-5, we are called to have the *morphe* of the mind of the Lord Jesus, especially His *morphe* in His time of dying. This will be revealed in more physical terms at the second coming by our bodies being "conformed" to His body. This is the end intention of the entire working of the Spirit in transforming our minds now.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, my beloved, stand firm in the Lord*- This longing for each other in Christ was how Paul opened the letter (1:8); and see on 2:26. The joy of the Kingdom will therefore be far greater for those who longed for their brethren, than for they who went off into spiritual isolation from others, seeing only the issues that made them differ rather than what they had in common. There will be differences between us, but we are united by what we have in common in Christ. This again is a case of Paul seeing the cup half full rather than half empty. Paul assumed that at this moment in time, his brethren were in Christ and would be accepted in God's eternal Kingdom at the Lord's return. For to think any other way is to judge / condemn in a way we are unqualified to do. But his earnest desire was that they should "stand firm in the Lord", just as the Lord in John's Gospel speaks of "abiding" in Him. Their abiding in the Lord would mean that Paul's joy and crown in the Kingdom was them. The nature of his eternity was therefore bound up in their endurance in the faith. Our attitude to the endurance or stumbling of others simply cannot be to shrug the shoulders. In 2 Tim. 4:8 Paul at the end of his life wrote from prison that he looked forward to receiving "the crown" (2 Tim. 4:8). This would be another indication that Philippians was written around the time of 2 Timothy, at the end of Paul's life. See on 2:16. But that "crown" was the immortality of his brethren for whom he had laboured (1 Thess. 2:19). This may be why Peter uses the same image in saying that faithful pastors will receive a crown at the last day (1 Pet. 5:4).

Paul clearly envisioned seeing and recognizing his converts at the day of judgment (also 1 Thess. 2:19,20; 3:9; 2 Cor. 1:14). We will recognize each other in the Kingdom. Immortality will mean that those we are now in relationship with... we shall remain eternally in relationship with. We simply must get it right in this life in our relationships, as much as lies in us.

"Stand firm" is yet more military language (see on Phil. 1:21); and it is metaphor taken from the very front line of conflict, refusing to retreat, staying put, to either die in glory or win. Military correspondence of the time refers to soldiers as "brothers", and it seems this is also a military allusion when Paul uses the term in Philippians.

4:2- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord-

We note that Paul doesn't simply speak of "Euodia and Syntyche", but as it were addresses each of them personally: "I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche". It's all about personal relationships. Here again we have a practical outworking of the Lord's death and the example of His mind on the cross- the reconciliation of two strong minded sisters. Their strong minds could only be dealt with by both of them focusing upon the one mind of Jesus as He was on the cross. The idea is as in Phil. 2:2, which is directly in this context: "Make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind". It's not a case of agreement or signing off on a cleverly wordsmithed document about life together going forward, it's a matter of all parties vowing to seek above all the replication of the Lord's mind in theirs. This is the unity in view, and unity is not always uniformity. Paul gives no other advice on how to live together in this case. Paul's naming and shaming of specific individuals is unusual in his letters; he's calling out these two sisters before the whole church. He clearly saw their attitude and mind problem as being worthy of such special mention;

quite possibly that lovely church was set to be torn apart by an argument between these two women. This repeats the earlier appeals to have the same mind, that of the Lord Jesus (2:2,5). The appeal is not simply that they should have the same mind about the issues dividing them, but to have the same mind which is "in the Lord" Jesus. Whatever the differences between these two sisters (:3 "these women"), the fundamental issue was that they were not of the mind of the Lord Jesus. We will never have the same mind over many issues; but we can each be devoted to the replication of the mind of Jesus within us, and this of itself will bring about the unity of the Spirit. "Exhort" is *parakleo*, inviting association with the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. The word is elsewhere used in connection with having a "mind" which will preclude interpersonal divisions (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11). The presence of the spirit of Christ in these women would bring them together, in what elsewhere he calls "the unity of the Spirit". This unity of / brought about by the Spirit is in fact the only real unity between persons. It is only through people each sharing the mind of Christ that they can be unified. This is the whole force of the passage about the mind of Christ in Phil. 2- it is part of an appeal to be likeminded, to be of one and the same mind. Not uniformity of thought and intellectual position, but rather having the same one mind- of the Lord in His time of dying.

4:3- see on Mt. 11:29; Eph. 1:5.

Yes, I urge you also, true companion, help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also- The women are Euodia and Syntyche (:2); although as noted on :2 they were not fully of the mind of Christ, yet they laboured with Paul in the work of the Gospel. As explained on 3:15 and :16, we do not fully have the mind of Christ and it is progressively revealed to us where we fail to have it. But this doesn't mean that we cannot work for the Lord or be accepted by Him as we are. We note that again "the gospel" is put for "the work of the Gospel", because the Gospel of itself elicits labour for it. The "help" required from the undefined "true companion" was presumably to help these women to have the mind of Christ, so that they would be united. The anonymity may have been to avoid naming someone in a document for reasons of avoiding persecution; or it could be that *synzugos* should be read as proper noun, the name of a person, and it should just be transliterated as that. Or it could refer to Epaphroditus or perhaps to Lydia. Paul clearly saw those women as just as much his fellow workers as men like Clement; we see here an example of how Paul was so far ahead of his time in considering man and woman equal in Christ, and the work of the Gospel equally open to women as well as men. Paul asks Lydia, or whoever is the true companion, to help these women reconcile exactly because they were workers in the Gospel. He was most concerned that disunity and inter-Christian conflict not be displayed in evangelism. Exactly because the Lord had taught that the unity between us should be enough to convert the world. And our disunity will deconvert the world.

And the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life- Perhaps the idea is that these other fellow workers were already dead, asleep in Christ, and assured of salvation. Heb. 12:23 speak of those who had died faithful as "written in heaven". Our names are written already in that book, but can be blotted out from it (Rev. 3:5; Ex. 32:32). Salvation is assured for each baptized believer, but we can lose it if we do not stand fast (:1). All Paul's fellow workers were written in the book of life. And so the feuding sisters of :2 were also written in the book of life, for they were also his fellow workers. Despite their division between each other and lack of the complete mind of Christ (see on :2), they were still going to be saved. This is a comfort when we consider the immaturity of our brethren. This is why there is the call

in :4 to rejoice, despite the division within the church between these two sisters. Division may be lamented but it is never to take away our joy.

Names written in the book is another miltiary allusion (see on 1:21), to the master roll kept of soldiers' names, with a record next to their names of their deeds. But of course the reality is so much greater in the Christian context- this is the book of life, of eternal life, and not mere military records.

4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say: Rejoice!*- Possibly this double command to "rejoice" is in the context of the interpersonal tensions just alluded to between two sisters. Being overcome with Christian joy should mean that such tensions are at least, not foremost in our minds. And yet some believers live and breathe such tensions 24/7. The command to rejoice "always" is unrealistic if he has in view a joy that comes from circumstance. That isn't in view here; the joy is "in the Lord" Jesus. Such joy is only possible if we are confident of our future salvation; that our names are written in the book of life (:3). If the Gospel is perceived not so much as good news as a list of theological tenets we must believe, then there will be little joy. Faith is not the same as understanding theology; it is faith in the good news that truly I shall be saved because I am in Christ and counted as Him. This is why the call to rejoice is predicated upon being "in the Lord". That status is constant, and so our rejoicing likewise is to be "always", at all times. If indeed Paul is writing this facing death (see on 1:1; 2:16), his repeated focus upon joy is wonderful (3:1). He was indeed achieving his aim of finishing his race with joy (Acts 20:24).

4:5 *Let your gentle attitude be known to all men. The Lord is at hand*- The Greek translated "gentle attitude" in NEV has been the subkect of very wide attempts at translation, as is apparent from comparing the English versions. The original word "signifies the gracious condescension of a superior, one so sure of his strength and greatness that he is above the competitive scramble that makes men selfish and cruel". The power and authority we have is very real; but for now in this world, it is not openly articulated. That day is yet to come in God's Kingdom. We however are to act as if we have it, with the condescension and patience with others which it brings. The word could be translated "Clemency", and is used of the gracious condescending attitude of the Caesars to some. This is the power of forgiveness and grace which we have. Indeed the Wisdom of Solomon 12:18 has the word translated as "clemency": "Though you are the absolute master, you judge with clemency". And it is used in the same sense in 2 Cor. 10:1. The idea of concealed power and authority was perhaps of great relevance to those Roman citizens in Philippi who had perhaps lost their citizenship and all the visible power and authority that went with it.

The appeal to be gentle is perhaps in the context of the fierce dispute between the two sisters of :2. There was a particular need for this to change because they were involved in the work of Gospel proclamation (:3), and disunity between believers is the biggest disadvertisment for the Gospel. The 'making known to all men' is because "the Lord is at hand". We should preach especially in the last days, knowing that a witness must be made to all nations before the Lord comes; and Phil. 4:5 seems to imply that just because “the Lord is at hand” we should let our “moderation” [RVmg. “gentleness”] be known unto all men” in the hard world of the last days. "The Lord is at hand" is also how Paul signs off his letter in 1 Cor. 16:22, although there he uses the Aramaic equivalent of this term: "Maranatha".

However, it is possible to understand "at hand" as meaning near in space rather than near in time. The appeal for gentleness would then be based around the fact that the Lord is present with us, and in His close presence we should be always gentle. In

support of this we note that the same Greek phrase is used in the LXX of Ps. 119:151 "You are near, O Lord".

Forbearance and tolerance are to be characteristic of our attitude to others (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 4:5). Paul was aware that on some matters, brethren can quite honestly hold different points of view (Rom. 14:5,6). But there is a difference between tolerance and indifference. The tolerance which is the fruit of the spirit is something hard to cultivate, and it can only spring from love. It's not that we think something doesn't matter... but rather that in sympathy with the other person, we seek to understand why the other person is thinking and behaving as they do. There is some truth in the saying that to know all is to forgive all. And when false doctrine does have to be challenged, the truth must be spoken *in love* (Eph. 4:15). Opponents are to be corrected "with gentleness" (2 Tim. 2:23-25; 1 Pet. 3:15). It is all too easy, knowing the truth as we do, to win the argument but lose the person. And so often I have been guilty of this.

4:6 *In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*- This surely alludes to the six occurrences of the same word in Mt. 6:25-34. But here Paul explains how concretely we can "take no thought" for our lives. It is by praying consciously for every little thing that you need in secular life, e.g. daily bread. It can be that we take the exhortation to “be careful for nothing” as meaning that we are intended to live a care-free life. But the sentence goes on: “but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”, and a few verses later we read of how the Philippians were “careful” to support Paul’s ministry in practice (Phil. 4:6,10). The idea is surely that we should have no anxiety or care about the things of this life- and the world in which we live is increasingly preoccupied with the daily issues of existence. The same Greek word for “careful” or “anxious” (RV) is repeatedly used by the Lord in the context of saying we should *not* be anxious (Mt. 6:25,27,28,31,34)- but rather, we should be anxious to serve and hear the Lord in practice. We must “be careful to maintain good works” (Tit. 3:8), “care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25), “care” for the state of others (Phil. 2:20). So the NT teaching is that we should not have the anxious care about our daily existence which characterizes the world, but rather, should translate that into a life of anxiety for *others.* See on Lk. 10:42.

Prayer should be "with thanksgiving". Any request we make known to God should be framed within deep gratitude for what He has already done for us. Paul perhaps realized the tendency to make prayer just a list of requests when he commanded his Philippians: "In every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God". This is what prayer is all about; an opening up of life before God, not specific requests; a conscious casting of our care upon Him (1 Pet. 5 :7). The believers of the parable told their Lord of the ungrateful behaviour of their brother (Mt. 18:31)- they brought the situation before Him, without asking specifically for something to be done.

4:7 *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus*- The peace of God fills the mind simply as a result of making our requests known. Praying alone in the room, kneeling, maybe at the bedside, pressing your little nose into that mattress as you concentrate your thoughts and requests; the very experience of this close communion will *of itself* enable you to unbend your legs and rise up a new man. But "peace" Biblically refers to peace with God on the basis of having been forgiven. This is the wonderful atmosphere in which we are to live daily life, and which guards our thinking. That peace passes all

definition or "understanding" expressed in words. This guarding or keeping of our minds is due to God's action, through the Spirit. We are "kept [s.w. "guard"] by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5).

4:8 *Finally brothers*- This is the second "Finally..." (3:1). We get the feeling that Paul is writing in a flow of consciousness, albeit under Divine inspiration. I have commented much more about this in discussing the apparent contradictions within Paul's arguments in 2 Corinthians 7-9.

Whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things- Again Paul is focusing upon where our thoughts are. We are to have the mind or spirit of Christ, and in practice this means making a conscious effort to think on spiritual things. If we are to achieve spiritual mindedness, we need to surround ourselves with positive influences- Bible verses on the walls, regular Bible reading, not filling our minds with the trash which passes for entertainment; and cultivate a culture of gratitude and appreciation for all in our lives. Too much of our lives can so easily be spent going over the past, reliving old hurts- when our mental space should be taken up with positive spiritual things.

4:9 *The things which you both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do*- Ours isn't just a religion like anyone else's; it is *real*, creative life. There is congruence between belief and action, an honest admission of our humanity, just as there was then, and this yet further compels a response in those who see it. Paul could tell the Philippians to think on whatever *things* were true, honest, just, pure etc.; and then boldly say that "Those things [which he has just listed] which ye hath both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do" (Phil. 4:8,9 RV). What they had learnt and heard from Paul, they had seen in him. He was the word which he preached made flesh, after the pattern of his Lord. Paul could speak of "my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). His ways, his life, his person, was what he taught- there was congruence between his teaching and himself. And this congruence was consistent- in every place and in every ecclesia, be it in Corinth, Jerusalem or Rome, Paul the person was reflected in the teaching of Paul. The lack of congruence between the message and the life is what is turning people away from the true church in these last days; and yet the opposite is true now as never before. Congruence between life and teaching, to the point that they are one and the same, is powerfully attractive, especially in these days of shallowness of personality, playing out of roles and other forms of hypocrisy. This was why people believed in Jesus.

And the God of peace shall be with you- The God of peace can mean the God who gives peace. In response to their conscious effort to copy Paul in thinking about spiritual things, God would give peace in their hearts.

4:10 *But I rejoice in the Lord greatly*- Paul's joy, as explained on :1, was in the spiritual progress of others. His joy in this context was that they were showing spiritual fruit by caring for him. If we are given a significant unexpected gift, we naturally tend to rejoice. But Paul spends some verses explaining that his leap of joy on receiving that gift was not because of any personal benefit- his joy was because their account in Heaven was added to. That reflects a very high level of spiritual maturity. Paul explains that he has this, as it were, personal emotional indifference to the receipt of the gift because God has strengthened him spiritually in order to cope with hunger and abundance, with poverty and wealth. That 'strengthening' had really worked- because now on receipt of the Philippians' gift, Paul was untouched

emotionally on his own account- but he was overcome with joy purely and totally because he knew that their gift had accrued to their account in Heaven.

That now at length you have revived your thought for me- In the form of the gift he has just received from them (:18).

I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity- Paul has rebuked them for not caring for him to the extent that Epaphroditus nearly lost his life (see on 2:30). But as in writing to the Corinthians, Paul puts the best possible slant on their behaviour, saying that they had not had the chance to help as they must have wished to. This is a worked example of the mind which thinks on positive spiritual things (:8) having the love which covers weakness; not in a naive, cup half full way, not papering over disappointment and failure, but genuinely wanting to move on from that which is past and press forward positively, as noted on Phil. 3:13.

4:11 *Not that I speak regarding want*- If Paul didn't really need material help whilst imprisoned, why does he make such an issue about it in Phil. 2:30 (see notes there)? It could be that his reasoning is similar to that we find in 2 Corinthians, where he says that the project of donating for the Jerusalem poor, and also temporarily excommunicating the immoral member, was not for the sake of the poor or for the sake of that individual (see on 2 Cor. 7:12). Rather it was all an opportunity to bring forth fruit for the Lord. He states that specifically in :17: "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account".

For I have learned to be content whatever my situation- This is the same word used in :9, where he asks the Philippians to "learn" from him. But he the teacher has also had to learn. He does not place himself above them, but rather as an example of how to learn. "Content" is similar to the word found in 2 Cor. 12:9, where Paul was taught that the Lord's grace was "sufficient" or content enough for him. If Paul had nothing materially but had the Lord's grace- that was enough. "Whatever my situation" is an attempt to render a strange phrase- literally 'with what I am'. This is a concept far wider than simply his material state. To be content with ourselves, recognizing that we are not perfect nor as mature in the mind of Christ as we should be (see on 3:13,15,16)- but content with how "I am", knowing that we are in the true Name of "I am", Yahweh of Israel.

4:12 - see on Lk. 3:5.

I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have plenty and to be in want- Here we have yet another allusion to Phil. 2. The Lord on the cross was abased and thereby abounded. The "secret" which enables this in our lives is therefore to have the mind / spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Life is littered with examples of people who do not know how to be. They may abound or be abased, but they do not know how 'to be' in that situation. We noted on :11 that Paul was content with 'how I am'. From how he reasons here, we can assume that Paul had experienced wealth. He had "profited" in Judaism, and the word has a distinct financial meaning (Gal. 1:15). At the start of his imprisonment he had funds to rent a house large enough to entertain a large crowd of visitors in; he was considered wealthy enough to pay a significant bribe (Acts 24:26), and his family were wealthy enough to send him to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel. And yet he had to work with his own hands at other times, and needed material assistance ("to be in want" is used of his situation whilst living at Corinth, 2 Cor. 11:9). He says here that he has experienced actual hunger; and yet he doesn't mean that he has simply experienced those things. He had learned the secret how to be both hungry and filled.

This is different from simply experiencing things, for there is no secret to be learned by experience alone. People experience things and yet never learn 'how to be'. He had been "instructed" (AV) by those things, he had learnt from experience rather than simply passed through experience. "To be in want" is a phrase quarried directly from the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:14), as if Paul felt he had squandered so much opportunity, and had come back to the Lord only "in want". But he had learnt from it all- and therefore didn't need their material assistance for the sake of the assistance in itself.

4:13 *I can do all things in him that strengthens me*- The "all things" refer to the attitudes to plenty and want he has just spoken of in :12. The strengthening of Paul was therefore psychological, and that ability to learn and cope with varying life situations is granted by the work of the Spirit in our minds. The same word for 'strengthen' is to be found in Col. 1:11; Eph. 3:16,20 about the strengthening "by his spirit in the inner man". The Lord Jesus strengthening him is exactly how he concludes 2 Timothy (2 Tim. 4:17 s.w.), again encouraging us to see Philippians as written about the same time and in the same broad circumstances. See on 2:16.

4:14 *However you did well in that you had fellowship with my affliction*- Fellowship is not simply an on paper agreement about theological propositions, sharing membership in the same church or fellowship. It means feeling in common with an afflicted brother and therefore doing something in response; or as :15 puts it, a fellowship in giving and receiving. "My affliction" may have specific reference to the "affliction" which had been brought upon the imprisoned Paul by false brethren seeking to create "affliction" for him in prison (1:16 s.w. "supposing to add affliction to my chains"). The Philippians would have been amongst those who sought to help him out of that situation (see on 1:17). They suffered his afflictions with him, just as he and we all share in the afflictions of the crucified Lord Jesus. If we ask how exactly we do that in concrete terms, the answer is that we fellowship with the afflictions of His body, which is the members of His church.

Paul's "affliction" uses the same word used in 2 Cor. 8:2, concerning how the Philippians were also in "affliction" but despite that, were 'richly' generous. Their fellowship or sharing in Paul's affliction was on the basis of common experience; and it is experience which elicits fellowship in practice.

4:15 *And you yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only*- As noted on :14, "fellowship" is no theoretical matter, but concerns not just giving to those we have commonality with, but the art of receiving from others too. Paul was not perceived in his lifetime as the charismatic Christian leader whom all tried to support. In his time of need after leaving Macedonia, not one church apart from the Philippians sent him material support. He would have been perceived as a difficult maverick, a pariah figure rejected by conservatives and liberals alike in the church. We note that although the Antioch church sent him forth on the Gospel's work (Acts 13:1-3), they did not support him in his time of material need; when they as his sponsoring church would surely have been the ones who ought to have done so. We can assume there was some falling out between them and Paul. And yet he speaks of their fellowshipping him in "giving *and receiving*". It is too simplistic to read this as meaning that they fellowshipped him by giving to his material needs; for they fellowshipped in giving "and receiving". This consideration makes attractive the GNB rendition: "You were the only ones who shared my profits and losses". The trading metaphors continue in :17,18: "I want to see profit added to your account. Here, then, is my receipt for

everything you have given me..." (GNB).

4:16 *For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need*- How are we to square this with Paul's claims elsewhere that he did not receive personal support but was self supporting financially? Maybe the answer is in the way that Paul saw his brethren's need as his personal need. We see this by studying the apparent contradiction between Paul's comment that the Philippians sent support to him repeatedly for *his* necessities (Phil. 4:16), and the way he boasts to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:7) and Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9) that he did not receive personal financial support from others, but worked with his own hands so as to be self-supporting (see too Acts 20:33-35). Yet he wrote those things at roughly the same time as the Philippians were sending him help towards 'my necessities'. The conclusion seems to be that Paul viewed the necessities of his converts as *his* personal necessities- hence he can say that the Philippians sent money and support for *his* necessities, whilst at the same time truly stating that he took no *personal* support from his converts. Perhaps he is arguing that he took donations to support others, but not for himself. Or quite possibly, they sent support to Paul- but it didn't get through.

'Sending to my need' is yet more military language (see on Phil. 1:21); Paul was as it were on the front line, and needed support urgently. And they provided it, they got the resources through to him, quite possibly money pay the rent on the large "hired house" he used for his Gospel meetings in Rome. Paul in prison is a wonderful example of a man refusing to be cramped by his obvious limitations; he acted and felt as a front line soldier, so engaged in front line Gospel work that he called up supplies from his men in Philippi who were to the rear. Their support of him was all part of being fellow soldiers in the same campaign.

4:17- see on 1 Thess. 3:12.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account- Paul prayed that others would bring forth fruit (Col. 1:9,10), and he here tells the Philippians how he is willing to accept donations from them, because he wanted them to bear fruit. We can help others please God- by our prayers for them, and by giving them the opportunities to bear fruit. Their 'minus' by giving to Paul's work was a 'plus' in God's accountancy. The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and in that sense nothing can be given to Him (Ps. 50:8-14). And yet, for our benefit, He asks for sacrifice to be given to Him. And Paul realized that it is similar with their giving for him. "Fruit that accrues" is read by some as referring to interest on a deposit paid by a bank. The actual money was given to God, but the interest upon the gift was spiritual fruit, which arises from the process of giving. Although salvation is by grace, a penny a day for all, it is clear that works do affect the nature of our eternity. And therefore there is an "account" of 'pluses', according to how Paul reasons here. Paul breaks with the strict social conventions about gratitude for gifts- in that he doesn't specifically 'thank' them for their gift, and only mentions the issue at the end and not at the beginning of his letter. But I suggest he did this because he believed that if he didn't thank them, then God would; and it would accrue to his account.

4:18- see on Jn. 12:3.

But I have all things and abound. I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, they were as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, pleasing to God- "I have all things" is quoting from Jacob in Gen. 33:11. Having earlier deceived Esau of the blessing, he asks Esau to now "take away my

blessing, for God has dealt with my in grace, and I have all things". Jacob eagerly resigned all the material blessings he once held dear, because God's grace was "all things" to him. The same argument is used to Paul in 2 Cor. 11, where he is told that having God's grace is sufficient; we need nothing more, because with that we have all things. Paul is reasoning here that he is "filled", his cup is not half full but full; not because of what they have sent in itself, but because that gift was spiritual fruit for them, and a very acceptable sacrifice to God. Paul has earlier written that the sacrifice of his life to God was made upon their sacrifice to Him; he wrote in 2:17 in the conditional tense: "If I be offered upon [your] sacrifice... I joy and rejoice with you all". Now he had seen their sacrifice, he was the more ready to be offered himself. And this is why he could speak of his joy at their offering (:10). Again we see how the nature of his eternal salvation was bound up with their salvation; his offering of his life and theirs went together. Truly no man is an island in Christ; we are inextricably linked, both now an eternally, with our brethren.

Clearly :10-20 is Paul's message to the Philippians that he has received their much needed material support. We note however that there is never any actual statement of 'thank you' here. And in any case, this section is at the very end of the letter rather than anywhere else in it. This may well be a tacit reflection of how close he felt to them- so close that the word 'thank you' for a gift, or equivalent statement, wasn't strictly required within the closeness of the relationship. Or it could be that as true to life, some people don't verbalize the obvious, they may express gratitude without even saying "thank you". However I suggest that Paul felt that their generosity had pleased God, and He would bless them because of it (:19). This is far more significant than any 'Thank you'. His lack of thanks would, he felt, mean that God would 'thank' them with the blessing of the Spirit and meeting their spiritual needs. His perspective is totally spiritual, and therefore he breaks with all the expected conventions regarding writing 'thank you' in a letter. Even though his letters generally stick to the usual conventions of letter writing at his time. His readership would have been very sensitive to the word "thank you" and would have noticed the glaring omission. Just as we tend to look for 'thanks' when we are generous to others, and we teach our children to always say the magic words 'thank you'. The omission would therefore have been noticeable; and this was to flag up his spiritual point. That instead of thanks / blessing from him, thanks would come from God. Thanks for a gift was supposed to come at the opening of a letter. And he opens instead by writing that "I thank my God every time I remember you" (Phil. 1:3). He thanked God, not them. He mentions in 2 Cor. 1:11 that the donations to the poor brethren in Jerusalem would elicit "thanks by many". So he is not unaware of the need to say 'thank you'. But he doesn't do it to the Philippians, and the omission is intentional, I suggest. Because he knew that if we do not receive recognition from men for our good deeds, then we will from God (Mt. 6:2-4). And he was mature enough to wish that for them.

He shows in 2 Cor. 8:2 that he is aware that they are poor and can't afford what they have given to him; but he never mentions that to them. He doesn't praise them at the obvious point, nor show his awareness of how deeply they have given. Not because he was not grateful for it, but because he seems to reason that by not publically mentioning it, they will thereby get more praise and recognition from God. And this whole section is at the end of the letter because the issue of material needs is not at all the most important thing in life. Although he is careful to show that he really did warmly appreciate their support, he uses a phrase from cold commercial dealings to acknowledge receipt of their gift: "I have received (payment) in full" (:18). It is as if he especially doesn't want to express *his* thanks because he wants them to get as

much thanks as possible *from God*. Their meeting of *his* need (:15) would result in God meeting all *their* needs (:19 s.w.). Because he was "full" or 'supplied' (:18) by their generosity, God would "supply" them (:19 s.w.). These are perspectives we can take with us in our approach to giving and receiving charity. It helps us feel able to receive charity; and comforts us against the commonly expressed disappointment at inadequate thanks for charity that was given ["they didn't even say thank you!"] .

4:19 *And my God shall supply every need of yours*- Paul has used the idea of "supply" earlier, writing of "the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19). That supply of the Spirit, that great spiritual richness, would be granted in response to their giving; for grace, giving, *charis*, the gift of the Spirit, would be God's response to their giving. "Supply" is the same word just used in :18 for "full". As Paul had been filled with their gift, so God would fill them with the Spirit and all its rich blessings. For the same word is in Eph. 5:18: "Be filled with the Spirit" (as Rom. 15:13 "Now may the God of hope *fill you* [s.w. "supply"] with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit"). The idea of supplying or filling is often used of being filled with the Spirit. And this is man's greatest need. The same word is in Mt. 9:12 "They that are sick *need* a doctor, not they that are healthy". "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men... he might fill all things... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 4:8-10; 3:19).

According to His riches, in glory in Christ Jesus- This is a tacit recognition that Paul did have material needs, although he discounts them. He understands "riches" to refer to spiritual blessings given through the gift of the Spirit in the inner man (Eph. 1:7; 3:16 "according to the riches of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"). The "riches in glory" is the term used in Rom. 9:23 and Eph. 1:18 for our final salvation. The response to such generosity was going to be eternal. This is not to say that we can buy our salvation, but all the same, there will be an eternal outcome of generosity. And in this life too, the gift of the Spirit is given as a foretaste and guarantee of that great salvation in the future. Their generosity was "rich" (2 Cor. 8:2), in the sense that it the "riches" they gave would be matched by the gift of spiritual riches

4:20 *Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen*- The whole wonderful way of God's working, filling us with grace and His Spirit that we might be saved, our response to that in giving... all this leads to glory to Him, and not to ourselves. And we shall glorify Him eternally for the wonder of it all, perhaps recalling incidents from this life where His giving and our giving meshed together, to the glory of His grace and gift in His Son.

4:21 *Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers that are with me greet you*- "Every saint" is a reminder again that Paul is not writing just to the eldership. Every believer, including the illiterate and the slaves who could rarely attend meetings, were saints in Christ. Likewise in :22, "All the saints...". Paul saw himself as facilitating person to person communication, real fellowship between ordinary people, and not just high level communication between elders. The brothers with Paul could refer to his fellow prisoners whom he had converted, or the few faithful friends who had come to Rome to minister to him. We note he does not extend greetings from the Roman church, with whom he seems to have parted company; for nobody stood with him at his final trial (2 Tim. 4:16). To die in such isolation from local brethren was a hard

thing, but he clearly felt the Lord's personal presence with him compensating for it (2 Tim. 4:17).

4:22 *All the saints greet you, especially they that are of Caesar's household*- "All the saints" again emphasizes the value of the rank and file believers; see on :21. As noted on 1:13, Paul's witness (presumably via the soldiers he was chained to) had led to conversions within the extended family and slaves of Caesar's palace; although according to Romans 16 there were already some believers there. Through all the hard things that happened to Paul, the Gospel had entered the very elitest centre of the Roman empire. Josephus even suggests that the Empress Poppaea may have been favourably inclined to Christianity. This is an encouragement for all time that even the worst experiences and situations have a role to play in the extension of the Lord's saving way amongst men. And Paul realized that, hence "especially they...".

4:23 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*- The gift or *charis* of the Lord Jesus often refers to His gift of the Spirit to every baptized believer. And that is surely in view here, having alluded to the work of the Spirit so much in this letter. His gift, of Hi Spirit, was to be with *your* spirit. Paul's greatest wish was that the Lord's spirit would displace our carnal thinking or spirit.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understood the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

And Timothy our brother- The "our" connects Paul with the Colossians. The rather unusual grammar suggests Paul is identifying himself with his audience. This identity is a vital part of all preaching and pastoral work.

1:2 *To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ that are at Colosse*- This doesn't refer to two tiers of believers in Colosse but rather reminds them that every believer is a saint. In both Judaism and paganism there was a tendency to consider some believers to be in a 'super' category. Paul carefully debunks that concept.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ- This is no mere standard literary introduction. God's grace and subsequent peace was willed and prayed for by Paul to come upon his audience, and prayer for third parties indeed makes a difference.

1:3 *We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you*- Paul tells so many that he is "always" praying for them. His life was a life of prayer for others.

1:4 *Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus*- Perhaps Paul had never visited them nor knew them personally. 2:1 suggests they had never seen his face. But his warmth towards them is remarkable. We must ask what emotions and feelings are called forth in us by news of believers we have never met. The same connection between faith in Christ and love for the others in Christ is made in 1 Jn. 3:23. We cannot therefore profess faith in Christ personally and remain in splendid isolation

from others in Him. For we are baptized into the body of Christ, which is the church. There are many parallels between the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, and the parallel here is in Eph. 1:15, where Paul says again that he has heard of both their faith in Christ and their love to the other believers.

And of the love which you have toward all the saints- Loving other believers is part and parcel of accepting the faith in Christ; this love is the intended outcome of it, the fruit of the Gospel (:6), which can be powerful enough to convert the world by its display.

1:5 *We thank God because of the hope*- Paul has spoken of faith and love in :4. The Greek suggests that the love of :4 was elicited by their hope. Faith, hope and love are so often spoken of by Paul together. If we really believe in the Gospel of salvation then we have a sure hope, and the certainty of that hope results in love for others.

Which is laid up for you in the heavens- A specific reward is prepared for each of us, s.w. 2 Tim. 4:8 a crown of righteousness is laid up for Paul. The nature of each of our battles is unique, and therefore our crowns or rewards / signs of victory are going to differ. In the parable, we will each have different towns we rule over. It's an upward spiral. We have "love toward all the saints, because of the hope which *is* laid up for you" (Col. 1:5 RV). If we doubt the hope, thinking we don't know if we will be accepted or not… there isn't much inspiration to love our brethren with the similar senseless grace which *we* have experienced. Note that the hope was 'laid up' in Heaven in the sense of being stored safely there- rather than the hope consisting of being one day in Heaven. For the Kingdom of God shall come on earth. Although Paul had never met these brethren, he strongly assumed they would be saved; this is an assumption which we must make about all believers in Christ. For it is not for us to condemn.

Of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel- The parallel Eph. 1:13 says that the word of truth is the good news of salvation. The ultimate truth is that we shall be saved. This is the good news of the Gospel- no reference is in view to some set of theological propositions which are logically true. The truth is that we shall be saved, not that we have figured out a true set of interconnecting theological explanations which ring 'true' to our own minds- at this point in our lives. We should be able to positively answer the question 'Will I at this point in my life be saved if I die?'. This is the final, ultimate and only truth. We may at some future point change our interpretations of some Bible passages and themes, but the ultimate truth is that we shall be saved. And if we lose that confidence, and only then, we will have 'left the truth'. Departure from some particular interpretation is not necessarily the same as 'leaving the truth', neither should 'the truth' be used as a kind of code word summarizing our association with a particular church or denomination.

1:6 *That Gospel is come to you, even as it has also come to all the world*- This is not to be read as a statement that the Gospel had been spread into all the world let alone the entire *kosmos*- for it had not been. The idea may be that there is something universal about the Gospel, in contrast with the various false religions and gospels of paganism, which tended to have mere local appeal. They offered good news for the local people of a certain city or area, whereas the true Gospel of Christ has universal appeal and relevance and is addressed to all people equally. Colossians appears directed against a particular false 'gospel' which was circulating in Colosse and surrounds.

Bearing fruit and increasing, as it does in you also, since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth- Paul enthuses that the Colossians were in the good

ground category of the sower parable: the Gospel "*bringeth forth fruit*... in you, since the day *ye heard*" (AV). The important doctrines of the basic Gospel bring forth the fruit of spirituality in the converts (Col. 1:6). The *euangelion* is pictured in Colossians 1 as a mighty, personal force working powerfully in the lives of men and women. It produced fruit, i.e. concrete actions (Philemon 11). The Gospel gives "understanding *that* ye might walk worthy" (Col. 1:9,10). We bear fruit and increase in this "by the [increasing] knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10 RVmg.). Thus we are to be renewed in knowledge, finding full assurance of our salvation in *understanding* (Col. 2:2; 3:10). The Hebrew word for "understanding" is also that for "certainty"- e.g. Josh. 23:13 "Know for a *certainty*…" [s.w. "understanding"]. To understand is to be sure, in God's language. Understanding, "being filled with the knowledge of his will", *does* have a place in determining our daily walk in Christ. What and how we understand, and thereby what we believe, *does* therefore matter.

1:7 *Even as you learned it of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf*- The same as Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25; 4:18; Philemon 23, which mentions he was a prisoner in Rome at some stage). He was a local Colossian, "one of you" (Col. 4:12).

1:8 *Who also declared to us your love in the Spirit*- Perhaps the Spirit inspired Epaphras to give Paul an inspired account of how they were doing. Or maybe the idea is that their love had been brought forth as a result of the function of the Spirit in their hearts; for love is a fruit brought forth by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). This would be the "love of the Spirit", the love brought forth as a fruit of the Spirit, which Rom. 15:30 refers to. God's love is poured out in our hearts through the function of the Spirit within us (Rom. 5:5).

1:9 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make requests for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*- Paul wishes that the Colossians would be "filled with the knowledge of his will", just as at his conversion he had been chosen so "that thou shouldest know his will" (Acts 22:14). He wanted them to share the radical nature of conversion which he had gone through; the sense of life turned around; of new direction… See on Acts 13:11. He clearly believed, as we should, that our prayers can affect the internal spiritual condition of others; and that the Lord is willing to fill believing minds. The parallel in Eph. 1:22,23 is that the church, the individuals within the body of Christ, is filled with the fullness of Him who fills all in all. This filling can be complete- insofar as we allow it and are open to it. There's nothing more wonderful to behold than the life and heartbeat of a secular man or woman being taken over by the things of the Spirit.

1:10- see on Col. 2:1.

To walk worthily in the Lord fully pleasing him, bearing fruit in every good work; increasing in the knowledge of God- This is wonderful encouragement when we as sinners wonder how we could ever please the Lord Jesus. We can, according to these words, *fully* please Him. This doubtless is a function of His way of imputing righteousness to us, and the way love has of being thrilled at the slightest move of the beloved towards the lover. This is why Paul goes on to say that we are "suitable" for immortality (:12), and are spotless before Him (see on :22). We are "filled" (:9) so that we might "fully" please Him. The fruit which pleases Him is empowered by the Spirit He grants which brings forth that fruit if we allow it. In this sense we are "strengthened" by Him (:11). "Fully" translates *pas*, "all", and we find the word again

in :11 speaking of the "all" power which strengthens us to be fruitful. We too easily assume that it is circumstance or environment which enables our pleasing of Him; and too many have sold their souls to create wealth, believing that this will enable them to somehow purchase a situation in which they can more fully please their Lord. But here we are told that it is His will that we please Him, and He gives us "all" that is necessary in terms of internal strengthening and attitude. If we are honest, we all know that it is those internal attitudes which are most important, and they are a gift which cannot be bought with wealth or situation.

1:11 *Strengthened with all power*- See on :10 *Fully pleasing him.* A play on words, 'made able with all ability'. It's the same word as found in Mt. 25:15, where we read that talents are given to each one "according to his personal *ability*"; but *kata* ("according to") needn't be translated like this at all, and could mean that the talents given *are* [what results in] the personal abilities. This connects with a major theme of Paul's- that we are *made* able, rather than having existing abilities which God asks us to use. The parallel Eph. 3:16-20 speaks of "the power that works in us" as being far above all we ask or think; and it is exercised within our minds ("strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man", Eph. 3:16). We are given psychological power, strength within, to do what would have been impossible otherwise. Constantly we're faced with mental situations we feel we can't endure- the need for continued patience with a difficult person, to keep on keeping on forgiving and showing grace... The strengthening which Paul has in mind is exactly what we need. It is internal, "in the inner man". And this is the same context in which Paul speaks here in Col. 1; for the mighty strengthening we receive enables the mental, internal attributes of patience and joyful endurance (:11). We who were once alienated "in your mind" (:21) are now changed; the Christ formed "in you", the mind of Christ within, is the basis for our "hope of glory" (:27). 2:2 continues this theme when Paul speaks of his urgent concern for the state of the believers' *hearts*. Indeed the whole hymn of praise to Christ in :15-18 is in this context; Paul is emphasizing the utter supremacy of Christ because this should lead to Him dominating our thinking. Appreciating the height of His exaltation will lead to Christ mindedness. "He is the head of the body" in the sense that He is the mind of it, the thinking of it. Members of Christ's body are shown to be in the same body by the fact that they are Christ-minded, they have Him as their "head". Christ-mindedness is therefore the basis upon which we feel that someone is also in the body of Christ rather than membership of the same denomination, fellowship, church etc. But note that the idea of the Greek word translated "strengthened" is essentially ability, and therefore potential. Nobody is forced against their will. We are given the potential ability, and must use it.

According to the might of his glory, to all patience and endurance, with joy- This appears to be a reference to the immense and total power which the Lord Jesus now enjoys, as King of the cosmos and prince of the kings of the earth. The idea is that the internal strengthening of the believer is performed by He whose power is unbounded throughout the cosmos. This is encouragement indeed, when we wonder how ever we might be able to change, or rather, be changed.

1:12 *Giving thanks to the Father*- This is a function of the work of the Spirit in us, which Paul has introduced in :9.

Who made us suitable- See on :22. The Greek is clear that the idea is not that we are in process of being made qualified, as if 'making us suitable'. We have been made

suitable, in that we attained this new status at baptism into Christ. This is indeed the breathtaking good news of the Gospel.

To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light- Paul may well have Angels in mind- we shall become like the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36), who are "Angel[s] of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). But he has defined the "saints" in :2 as the believers. We walk now "in light"; insofar as we do, we are experiencing the essence of the future inheritance. The parallel idea in Ephesians is that "You were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Our future and present hope is expressed in terms of partaking in something collective, the inheritance of all the saints; no man can therefore be an island in this life.

1:13 *Who delivered us out of the power of darkness*- "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness (cp. Egypt, 1 Pet. 2:9,10), and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear son; in whom we have (now) redemption through His blood... for by Him were all things created (the new, spiritual creation of believers is finished in prospect) ... you... now hath he reconciled... *if* ye continue in the faith... whereunto I also labour, striving..." (Col. 1:13,14,16,21,23,29). This shows how our comprising the Kingdom in prospect is dependent upon our continued personal effort. The contention is sometimes made in discussion with those who wrongly believe that the Kingdom in its full sense is the church of today that "into" in Col.1:13 can mean 'for'. However, the Greek preposition *eis* means 'in the interior, into, indicating the point reached or entered' (Strong). Thus Phillip and the Eunuch "went down both into (Gk: *eis*) the water" (Acts 8:38)- from which we correctly argue that baptism is by full immersion into water. However, it is true that at times 'eis' is translated with the idea of 'towards', although this is not its primary meaning. The rest of the quotation from Col. 1 made above would suggest that we should understand 'eis' here in its normal meaning.

And translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love- Used of the removing of people from one nation to another, as in the exile of the Jews to Babylon and thence back to Judah. The language of Judah's restoration is so often applied to what has happened to the believers. But the idea presented in :12 is of us receiving the lot or inheritance of the saints- suggesting the allusion is at least equally to the bringing of Israel out of Egypt through baptism, to receive an inheritance in Canaan.

"Kingdom" means literally the dominion of the King. We are now in a limited sense beneath God's dominion, and thereby part of His "Kingdom". Those beneath His dominion are worked upon by Him, through His Spirit, through His Son. That influence of the Spirit is powerful. And this is why the ideas of "Kingdom" and "power" are so often placed in parallel (1 Chron. 29:11; Dan. 2:37; Rev. 12:10). Truly, "the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Being "in" or "under" God's Kingly dominion is not just a status, a matter of words. It means that He powerfully works in us, in our hearts, in our lives, through the Holy Spirit. And in turn, we "will speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk about Your power" (Ps. 145:11). Col. 1:13 contrasts unbelievers under the "power" of sin, and believers who by contrast are in the Kingdom of the Lord, i.e. under His power and influence: "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". This understanding may provide insight into the Lord's comment that "there are some standing here, who shall in no way taste death, before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mk. 9:1). This would then be a reference to the disciples living to see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

1:14 *In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins*- The Greek for "redemption" definitely refers to a ransom payment. In Christ- through baptism into that "in Christ" status- we were bought out of slavery. This metaphor [with all the limitations of any metaphor] was used of Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt, and on :13 *Translated us* I have noted that this image is in view in this chapter. The ransom payment is in that we have been forgiven our sins- which continues the slavery metaphor with the suggestion that we were in slavery because we were hopeless debtors. The Lord Himself used that idea in framing the parable of the unmerciful debtor. It's highly likely that the language and metaphors chosen by Paul here were aimed at deconstructing the heresies about 'redemption' and ransom which were common amongst the incipient Gnosticism of that time and area. But that notwithstanding, the truths he elicits are for all time.

1:15 *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*- This interprets the creation of a man in God's image as a reference to the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus. *This* was what the Angels had worked for millennia for, in order to fulfil the original fiat concerning the creation of man in God's image. Even now, we see not yet all things subdued under Him (Heb. 2:8); the intention that the man should have dominion over all creation as uttered *and apparently fulfilled* on the sixth day has yet to materially come to pass. The Angels are still working- with us. For 1 Cor. 15:49 teaches that *we* do not now fully have God's image, but we will receive it at the resurrection. Therefore we are driven to the conclusion that the outworking of the creation directives regarding man in God's image was not only in the 24 hours after it was given, but is still working itself out now. The new creation is therefore a continuation of and an essential part of the natural creation; not just a mirror of the natural in spiritual terms. See on 2 Cor. 4:6.

The idea of a new creation is well explained in Gal. 6:15: "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is being a new creation". This seems to parallel Gal. 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love". Paul's argument so far has been: Faith rather than works results in an identification with the Lord Jesus as the seed of Abraham; for to him were the promises of salvation made, and not through the Law. That faith and identification with Christ is confirmed by the Spirit being sent forth into our hearts (Gal. 4:5), which results in love as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). In that way, faith works through love. The parallel to that is that "what counts is being a new creation"; in other words, being created as Christ, being created as a Son of God as Jesus was, with His spirit whereby we also cry out "Abba, Father" just as He did. So the new creation in view is that we are created to be as Christ. Hence if any man is *in Christ* he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The language of "new creation" need not call up ideas of planets and a new cosmos. The new person created is Christ. Hence "the rule" of the new creation (Gal. 6:16) is another way of saying "the law of Christ". The Lord Jesus is "the image of every [new] creation" (Col. 1:15); we are made / created like Him, by the agency of the Spirit. He is thus "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). Hence the Gospel was preached to "every creation" (Col. 1:23), i.e. every convert. No "creation" is not open to the scrutiny of God's Word in Christ (Heb. 4:13). Clearly, "creation" was a title for believers in the early church, so common was this idea.

The creation record in Genesis 2 is not about a different creation from that in Genesis 1; it is a more detailed account of how the Angels went about fulfilling the command they were given on the sixth day. The process of bringing all the animals to Adam, him naming them, becoming disappointed with them, wishing for a true

partner need not therefore be compressed into 24 hours. It could have taken a period of time. Yet the command to make man, male and female, was given on the sixth day. However, this may have taken far longer than 24 hours to complete. Indeed, the real intention of God to create man in His image was not finished even then; for as Paul shows here, the creation of man in God's image ultimately was fulfilled in the resurrection of God's Son.

Col. 1:15-20 is another poetic fragment which is misunderstood by those seeking to justify the false idea of a personal pre-existence of the Lord; it has been identified as a Jewish hymn which Paul modified (see on Phil. 2:6). We must remember that Paul was inspired by God to answer the claims of false teachers; and he was doing so by using and re-interpreting the terms which they used. This is typical of those passages which can give the impression that Jesus actually created the earth.

If this were true, then so many other passages are contradicted which teach that Jesus did not exist before his birth. The record in Genesis clearly teaches that God was the creator. Either Jesus or God were the creator; if we say that Jesus was the creator while Genesis says that God was, we are saying that Jesus was directly equal to God. In this case it is impossible to explain the many verses which show the differences between God and Jesus (see *Bible Basics* Study 8.2 for examples of these).

The Lord Jesus was the “firstborn”, which implies a beginning. There is no proof that Jesus was God’s “firstborn” before the creation of the literal earth. Passages like 2 Sam. 7:14 and Ps. 89:27 predicted that a literal descendant of David would become God’s firstborn. He was clearly not in existence at the time those passages were written, and therefore not at the time of the Genesis creation either. Jesus became “the Son of God with power” by his resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). God “has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you” (Acts 13:32,33). Thus Jesus became God’s firstborn by his resurrection. Note too that a son standing at his father’s right hand is associated with being the firstborn (Gen. 48:13-16), and Christ was exalted to God’s right hand after his resurrection (Acts 2:32 R.V.mg.; Heb. 1:3).

It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus is described as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), a phrase which is parallel to “the firstborn of every creature” or creation (Col. 1:15 R.V.). He therefore speaks of himself as “the first begotten of the dead... the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). Jesus was the first of a new creation of immortal men and women, whose resurrection and full birth as the immortal sons of God has been made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus (Eph. 2:10; 4:23,24; 2 Cor. 5:17). “In Christ shall all (true believers) be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:22,23). This is just the same idea as in Col. 1. Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortality, he was the first of the new creation, and the true believers will follow his pattern at his return.

The creation spoken about in Col. 1 therefore refers to the new creation, rather than that of Genesis. Through the work of Jesus “were all things created...thrones...dominions” etc. Paul does not say that Jesus created all things and then give examples of rivers, mountains, birds etc. The elements of this new creation refer to those rewards which we will have in God’s Kingdom. “Thrones... dominions”

etc. refer to how the raised believers will be “kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10). These things were made possible by the work of Jesus. “In him were all things created in the heavens” (Col. 1:16 R.V.). In Eph. 2:6 we read of the believers who are in Christ as sitting in “heavenly places”. If any man is in Christ by baptism, he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). By being in Christ we are saved by His death (Col. 1:22). The literal planet could not be created by being in Christ. Thus these verses are teaching that the exalted spiritual position which we can now have, as well as that which we will experience in the future, has all been made possible by Christ. The “heavens and earth” contain “all things that needed reconciliation by the blood of (Christ’s) cross” (Col. 1:16,20), showing that the “all things...in heaven” refer to the believers who now sit in “heavenly places...in Christ Jesus”, rather than to all physical things around us.

If Jesus were the creator of the universe, it is strange how He should say: “…from the beginning of the creation God made them…” (Mk. 10:6). This surely sounds as if He understood God to be the creator, not He Himself. And if He literally created everything in Heaven, this would include God.

That "by him" is a poor translation is readily testified by reliable scholars. Take J.H. Moulton: "for *because of him* [Jesus]..." (1); or the *Expositor's Greek Commentary*: "*en auto*: This does not mean "by Him"" (2).

Many of Paul's more difficult passages are understandable once it is appreciated that he is alluding to existing Jewish and Gentile literature which was familiar to his readers. He does this in order to deconstruct it and give the Lord Jesus His rightful place of exaltation. There are a number of connections between Col. 1:15-20 and Jewish Wisdom theology concerning Adam and the mystical "heavenly man". The terms "image of God" and "firstborn" refer to Adam; it's as if Paul is showing that Jesus should be afforded the place of all exaltation, and not the mystical "Adam" or "Heavenly Adam" which Judaism then believed in (3). Another possibility, not necessarily mutually exclusive, is that Paul is alluding to and even quoting a "pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer hymn" (4)- and seeking to demonstrate that Jesus is the true redeemer. We may apply the words of a well known song or character to someone we know, in order to show the similarities and bring out the contrasts; but the correspondence isn't 100%. And so with the manner in which Paul quotes Gentile or Jewish literature and terminology about Jesus- not every word must be literalistically pressed into relevance to Him. It's like the idea of types- Joseph was a type of Christ, but not *everything* about Joseph was true of Christ. We need to be aware that Paul didn't sit down to right theology sitting in an ivory tower university, or because he just felt like delving into these matters for the pure intellectual buzz of it. His letters are all missionary documents, born out of real life situations in his work of preaching and then pastorally caring for his immature converts. He was dealing with attacks upon his tender babes in Christ by Jewish and Gentile false teachers; there was no written New Testament, and the Christian message was in competition with the 'scriptures' of the surrounding religions. So it's hardly surprising that Paul so often alludes to their terminology and literature in order to deconstruct it.

It should be noted, as a general point, that God the Father *alone, exclusively,* is described as the creator in many passages (e.g. Is. 44:24; Is. 45:12; Is. 48:13; Is. 66:2). These passages simply leave no room for the Son to have also created the literal

planet.

It could also be argued that the hymn to Jesus here in Colossians 1 is speaking of how God views Jesus. “He is “firstborn of all creation”- not in time, but in the Father’s mind” (5). To God, Jesus was the beginning, in everything He was *en pasin autos proteuon*- in all things He held first place (Col. 1:18). But where and how? In the Father’s mind. It was God who created the world. But for God, in the context of creation, Jesus His Son was pre-eminent.
James Dunn comments on Col. 1:20: “Christ is being identified here not with a pre-existent being but with the creative power and action of God…There is no indication that Jesus thought or spoke of himself as having pre-existed with God prior to his birth" (6).

Notes
(1) J.H. Moulton, *Grammar Of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) Vol. 3 p. 253.
(2) W.R. Nicoll, ed., *Expositor's Greek Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) p. 504.
(3) This case is made at length in H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) pp. 78-86.
(4) See E. Käsemann, "A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy" in *Essays On New Testament Themes* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp. 149-168.
(5) Thomas Weinandy*, In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1993) p. 138.
(6) James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 254.

1:16 *For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible*- See on :15. The theme of the believers being "in Christ" is so major in Colossians and Paul generally that we should have no problem in seeing here a reference to the new creation. But all this has meaning in practice- we who are in Christ are to have Him [and not mere abstract ideas] as the whole basis of our existence.

Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things have been created on account of him and for him- “Thrones… powers” is a Jewish rabbinic term which expressed their idea of “the various gradations of angelic spirits”. But it’s doubtful he believed in this himself. Paul at times quotes from or alludes to popular Jewish ideas with which he may not have necessarily agreed. The lack of quotation marks in New Testament Greek means that it’s hard for us at this distance to discern when he does this – but it seems to me that it’s going on a lot in his writings. Thus he uses the phrase “your whole spirit, soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23), a popular Jewish expression for ‘the whole person’ – but it’s clear from the rest of Paul’s writings that he didn’t see the body and soul as so separate.

1:17 *And he is superior to all things, and in him all things consist*- See on :15. The "all things" are those reconciled to God in Christ (:20), and therefore refer to persons rather than the physical creation, which is not morally alienated nor in need of reconciliation with God.

1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*- See on :11,15. A phrase which is parallel to “the firstborn of

every creature" or creation (Col. 1:15 R.V.). He therefore speaks of himself as "the first begotten of the dead... the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). Jesus was the first of a new creation of immortal men and women, whose resurrection and full birth as the immortal sons of God has been made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus (Eph. 2:10; 4:23,24; 2 Cor. 5:17). "In Christ shall all (true believers) be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:22,23). This is just the same idea as in Col. 1. Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortality, he was the first of the new creation, and the true believers will follow his pattern at his return.

So that in all things he might have the pre-eminence- The concept of being "in" Christ is so frequent here in Colossians 1 that we must surely interpret the "all things" as a reference to the believers; because of His work, we are to give Him the pre-eminence in our thinking and hearts. And a real person, the Lord Jesus, can more meaningfully have such pre-eminence far more than abstract ideas or even theology as theology.

1:19 *For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell- All* the fullness of God dwelt in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9); "and of his fullness have *all* we received" (Jn. 1:16). God's fullness, the full extent of His character, dwelt in Christ, and through His Name which speaks fully of that character, that fullness of Christ is reckoned to us. And so, in line with all this, Eph. 3:19 makes the amazing statement. And it is amazing. We can *now* "be filled with *all* the fullness of God". Let's underline that, really underline it, in our hearts. We can be *filled* with *all* the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God's character. See on Eph. 1:23. We are counted righteous, counted as if we have the Lord's moral perfection; but as Romans 8 explains, the Spirit is given in order to help us become in reality what we are counted as being by status. The language of 'filling' is used about being filled with the Spirit in our inner person (Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 4:10; 5:18). It is the filling by the Spirit which reveals to us the fullness of God.

1:20 *And through him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross- yes, to reconcile all things through him, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens*- God has reconciled all of us into Himself through the work of Jesus; reconciliation with God is therefore related, inextricably, to reconciliation with each other. The fact that believers in Christ remain so bitterly unreconciled is a sober, sober issue. For it would appear that without reconciliation to each other, we are not reconciled to God. All we can do is to ensure that any unreconciled issues between us and our brethren are not ultimately our fault.

1:21 *And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works*- Note how the "works" were done "in your mind"; a similar parallel is in Tit. 1:15,16. Paul had fully absorbed the Lord's teaching that the thought is the action. We live in a virtual world, lived looking at screens. At no other time in history has this perspective been more vital; that sin is in the mind, the thoughts are the works. The parallel Eph. 4:18 speaks of being alienated "from the life of God". His Spirit, His living, His life and personality, can be given into our minds through the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Refusing that is to be alienated from God. The work of reconciling us with God is therefore fundamentally performed in the mind; for that is where the essential alienation is located. Our thought processes and worldviews are alien from Him; and the work of reconciling that alienation in our minds, in our evil spirit, is performed by the *holy* spirit of God.

1:22 *Yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish*- Yet by our preaching we "may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:22,28). The connection is clear: because we are being presented perfect in Christ through belief and baptism, we preach the opportunity of this experience to others. Likewise the Law often stressed that on account of Israel's experience of being redeemed from Egypt, they were to witness a similar grace to their neighbours and to their brethren. See on Jude 24.

And unreproveable before Him- AV "in His sight". In His view, the way He looks upon us, we will be without sin, faultless before the presence of His glory at the last day (Jude 24); we will be "made meet" or appropriate to receive the inheritance of the saints (:12). We will be "made" like this. It will be the result of imputed righteousness. Thus the Lord will praise the faithful for all the good deeds they did, which they will be ignorant of (Mt. 25:37). But there is also a mechanism through which the Lord works to achieve this; for we will be "*made*" like this (:12). Thus :28 speaks in very similar terms of how at that last day, Paul hoped to "present every man perfect in Christ". How Christ counts us in status- as complete because we are "in Him"- He also tries to work out in reality by actually changing our minds and hearts through His work. And one of the ways he chooses to do that is through people like Paul. Our efforts for others' spiritual development will have His every blessing and enablement. Hence Paul moves forward to describe in :24,25 how he suffers with Christ in order to build up the body of believers into the body and person of Christ in actuality.

1:23- see on Lk. 6:48; Acts 2:9.

If indeed you continue in the faith- We are to continue in the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16), continue in grace (Acts 13:43), rather than continuing in sin (Rom. 6:1). The idea is not simply that we shall doggedly hold to a set of theology we accepted at baptism; but more essentially, that we shall continue in faith in the wonderful grace those teachings reflect, that little me, I myself… shall really and truly live for ever in God's Kingdom. For the immediate context here is about being presented faultless in His eyes at the last day (:22); and we are to continue believing that wonderful truth.

Grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to all creation under heaven. Of which I Paul was made a servant- Paul says that the certain hope of salvation is what must ground us in life. "Hope" means a certain assurance. The fact it had been preached to all creation doesn't mean that it is no more to be preached. And "all creation" in the context of this chapter refers to every member of the new creation; for not all of the natural creation had heard the Gospel. And "all creation" is a strange way to refer to "all people". The idea is that all the current believers at the time of writing, those in whom the work of the new creation had happened, were in that status because of having heard the very same gospel which Paul was preaching. The Colossians had also heard it- they too needed to allow the work of the new creation through that gospel to work in them.

1:24 *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh*- It has been perceptively commented: "The work of Christ in one sense is complete, but in another sense it is not complete until all men have known it and been reconciled to God by it. He is dependent on men and women to take it out and to make it known. He who accepts this task of bringing the message of the work of Christ to men may well be said to complete the sufferings of Christ". Every leaflet we distribute, every conversation we start, every banknote we put to the Lord's work... through all this we are extending the victory of the Lord in ways which

would otherwise never occur. Thus Paul can say that in his work of preaching and upbuilding, he was filling up the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24). By the cross, all things were reconciled, but this is only made operative in practice *if* men "continue in the faith", which Paul suffered in order to enable (Col. 1:20-23). This is the context in which Paul speaks of fulfilling the cross. Thus Paul speaks of filling up "the afflictions of Christ" in his life (Col. 1:24), but uses the very same word to describe the "afflictions" [s.w.] which he suffered for his brethren (Eph. 3:13). The sufferings of the Lord become powerful and continue to bring forth fruit in human lives- through our response to them.

We too are asked to fill up the Lord's sufferings in our lives. The idea is that by the end of our lives, we have fellowshipped His sufferings, and finally our death becomes His death, so that His resurrection shall become ours. This perhaps is why old age for believers often entails particular physical or mental affliction which enables us to fellowship aspects of His sufferings which previously we had not fellowshipped. This imparts meaning to the final part of our lives, whereas in secular terms we would be viewed as having daily experiences which have little significance attached to them.

For His body's sake, which is the church- The way in practice we fellowship the Lord's personal sufferings is through our engagement with the sufferings of others in the church. Paul saw himself as filling up what was lacking in his share in the sufferings of Christ's body. He uses the idea of Christ's body in a double sense- the sufferings of Christ's body on the cross are being replicated in him in the course of his ministry to the body of Christ in the sense of the church. It could also be that Paul has the idea that Christ is suffering now, the cross is in a sense ongoing, and he is suffering with Christ right now for our redemption. All we suffer for the sake of the believers and the preaching of the Gospel in order to develop the body of Christ is in fact a sharing in the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus. The "afflictions" of Christ are inevitable. We were "appointed" to such afflictions (1 Thess. 3:3). The parable of the sower suggests that tribulation [s.w. "afflictions"] come inevitably to the believer in Christ (Mt. 13:21). We *must* pass through much affliction or tribulation [s.w.] to enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). We can therefore glory in such tribulation (Rom. 5:3). We experience "affliction" as Paul did in concern for our brethren (2 Cor. 2:4), in ostracism (Heb. 10:33) as well as physical deprivation in the generosity of spirit required in the preaching of the Gospel and care for the body of Christ, in which context Paul uses the word many times. There's a logic to all this, as the same word is used about the "afflictions" to be suffered by the rejected at the judgment seat (Rom. 2:9; Rev. 2:22). 2 Thess. 1:4,6 speaks of *our* afflictions now and then uses the same word to describe the afflictions of the rejected in that day. We must suffer- one way or another. Paul consciously sought to experience what Christ did on the cross. He was warned by the Holy Spirit that "afflictions" awaited him if he went up to Jerusalem (Acts 20:23), but he chose to go up there, he made a determined decision within his own spirit to do so (Acts 19). High challenge as this is, we too should seek to consciously experience the sufferings of Jesus.

1:25 *Of which I was made a servant, according to the plan of God which was given me concerning you, to fulfil the word of God*- Knowing the Gospel somehow compels us to testify of it. "The word (*logos*) of God", a phrase which the NT mainly uses with reference to the Gospel rather than the whole Bible, is sometimes used as parallel to the idea of preaching the Gospel (Rev. 1:9; 6:9; 20:4 and especially here in Col. 1:25).

1:26 *The mystery of which has been hid for ages and generations; but now has it been manifested to His saints*- Paul is answering the incipient Gnostic claims to hold 'mysteries'. The idea that 'I know something you don't' is very attractive, and is surely one of the reasons why the likes of JWs and other small time Protestant sects with unusual interpretations are at least initially attractive to many simple folks. They claim, as did the Gnostics, that the true mysteries are only to be found within their private meetings. Paul is saying that the mystery is now openly revealed and being shouted from the housetops- quite simply, any who believe in Christ shall be saved.

1:27 *To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles- which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*- At baptism, the "new man" was created within us; the man Christ Jesus was formed in us, a new birth occurred, the real, essential Duncan or Dave or Deirdre or Danuta became [potentially at least] 'Jesus Christ', "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). This is how important this matter is. Perceiving the Christ-man within yourself is related to your "hope of glory"; this is the assurance of our future salvation, through which we can have all joy and peace through believing.

1:28 *We proclaim him, encouraging every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ*- As Christ will "present (us) holy and unblameable" (Col. 1:22), as a spotless bride (Eph. 5:27). The relationship between Christ and the ecclesia is to be mirrored within the ecclesia. See on Eph. 5:31.

1:29- see on Lk. 13:24.

For this purpose I labour, striving according to his power, which works in me mightily- As explained on :11, this power is boundless. And it works through us if we seek to save others and bring them within God's saving purpose. Never therefore need we fear lack of power, resources etc. in performing His mission. Paul can say that he has not yet become complete (Phil. 3:10-14) and yet he seeks to present each of his converts "complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28). He recognized that he too hadn't got to where he was seeking to take his converts.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1- see on Rom. 9:3.

For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh- This striving for others is in the power of the Lord's spirit, as explained in the preceding verse (1:29). His mental effort for those he had never met was and is inspirational. Paul's conflict or struggle was in prayer; for true prayer is a struggle, not a mental muttering of a few thoughts as we drift off to sleep at night, just as Jacob's struggle with the Angel is interpreted as a wrestling with God in prayer (Hos. 12:4). Paul's attitude in prayer spread to Epaphras, who did the same (Col. 4:12)- attitudes to prayer are catching, just as the disciples asked to be taught to pray after observing the Lord Jesus in prayer. But the idea of striving in prayer is continuing the figure of Col. 1:29, where Paul says he strives "according to His working which works in me mightily". This explains why at times we feel moved to pray for situations; we can of course refuse to allow God's work to work in us, but if we are in touch with Him, walking in step with the Spirit, then we will be open to His promptings to pray for situations.

Appreciating that prayer is so much "in the spirit", we can better grasp why prayer is portrayed as a struggle. Moab would pray in the time of his judgment; "but he shall not prevail" (Is. 16:12), as if the prayer process was a struggle. Jacob, by contrast, struggled with the Angel in prayer and prevailed (Hos. 12:2-4). The Romans were to strive together with Paul in prayer (Rom. 15:30); the Lord's prayers in Gethsemane were a resisting / struggling unto the point of sweating blood (Heb. 12:2). "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have [RV 'how greatly I strive / struggle'] for you... that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding" is parallel to "We do not cease to pray for you... that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 2:1 cp. 1:9,10). Paul's conflict / struggle for them was his prayer for them. Epaphras likewise was "always striving for you in his prayers" (Col. 4:12 RV).

2:2 *That their hearts may be comforted*- The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, can operate in human hearts- but we must allow this to happen. Hence throughout Ephesians and Colossians, Paul prays that the potential activity of the Spirit will be realized in his readership.

They being knit together in love- He who fears the Lord, "him shall he teach in the way that he [God] shall choose" (Ps. 25:12). The Father opens up new ways of understanding for us each, of His choosing and according to our individual needs, in response to our living a God-fearing life. If our hearts are knit together in brotherly love, the more we will understand- for true understanding is, in the end, to fathom the depths of God's love (Col. 2:2).

And to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God as it is in Christ- It is true that the deeper we understand, the easier some things are to cope with. But the understanding in view here is of the "mystery", which we saw in chapter 1 refers to the simple fact that those who truly believe in Christ's death and resurrection shall indeed be saved. This is what gives assurance; whereas correct theology of itself gives no assurance when faced with the inevitable demise and death which all men face.

2:3- see on Mt. 13:46.

In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge- "The wisdom of God was in the midst of him" (1 Kings 3:28 AVmg.) is alluded to here in Col. 2:3- clearly seeing Solomon as a type of Christ.

The idea of being hidden is an allusion to the Colossian heresy of incipient Gnosticism, the idea that truth is hidden in secret writings, known only to the chosen few. The true wisdom is indeed hidden, but hidden in Christ.

2:4 *This I say, so that no one deludes you with persuasive speech*- AV "beguile", s.w. LXX Josh. 9:22 of the Gibeonites deceiving Joshua with their words. The implication may be that even false teachers and infiltrators of the flock still have the possibility of salvation, for by all accounts the Gibeonites appear to have repented and to have become fully assimilated into God's people, serving Him with distinction above many Israelites. Clearly the community Paul wrote to were threatened by false teachers whose ideas were attractive- it was "enticing" (AV).

2:5 *For though I am absent in the flesh, I am still with you in the spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ*- Perhaps Paul had

some Spirit gift of knowledge which enabled him to know their spiritual position. A similar passage in 1 Cor. 5:4,5 seems to also imply a supernatural ability to be present with an ecclesia: "I truly, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him that has done this thing, I command you that in the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are gathered together (and my spirit is present with you when you do), with the power of our Lord Jesus...". But the ideas of flesh as opposed to spirit would more suggest that he was mentally, spiritually 'with' them.

2:6 *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord- walk in him-* Gk. *The* Christ... *the* Lord- all the emphasis upon Christ's greatness is in the context of warning us to let nothing whatsoever distract us from our focus upon Him as a person. In our generation those distractions may not be arguments of Gnostics and Judaizers- although there are those who fall to such- but rather the host of selfish, laziness-enabling, egocentric distractions of modern culture.

As we received Christ Jesus as Lord at baptism, so we *live* daily in Him; our baptism experience is lived out throughout daily life (Col. 2:6). Thus Paul spoke of how he died daily so that he might share in the Lord's resurrection life (1 Cor. 15:31). We always bear about in our body the spirit of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying, so that His life might be made manifest in our mortal flesh even now (the use of "mortal flesh" indicates that this is not a reference to the future resurrection). In this way the process of dying to the flesh works life in us (2 Cor. 4:10-12). See on Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 1:23.

2:7- see on Lk. 6:48.

Rooted and up built in him and established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving- Rooting, as of a tree, and being built up, as a building, are two metaphors which occur together in Eph. 3:17, where we are taught that we are to be rooted and grounded "in love", whereas here we are to be rooted and grounded in Christ personally. A Christ-focused life leads to love. The source of a loving life isn't therefore to be found in psychological gymnastics within our minds, but rather by a focus upon Him personally. And we all, surely, want the answer to the question: 'How can I be more loving?'.

2:8 - see on Mt. 24:4.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit- The Greek for “spoil” means literally to lead away as booty. There were clearly false teachers eager to lead off the Christian converts through deceitful philosophy; and their origin was clearly Jewish.

After the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ- “The tradition” is perhaps a reference to the Jewish Kabbala, 'the received tradition'; “the world” is the Jewish world.

2:9 *For in him, in a bodily form, dwells all the fullness of all that God stands for-* Colossians and Ephesians emphasize the reconciling of both Christians and Angels through the death of Christ, perhaps due to the cross taking away the Angel-coordinated Mosaic system which separated man from God and the Angels. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things (a phrase which elsewhere includes Angels- e. g. Heb. 2:8) unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven" (Col. 1:20). What are the things

in earth and Heaven if they are not Christians and Angels? In Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9)- the fulness of Gentiles, Jews and Angels. "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power (i.e. Angels- Col. 2:15)"- 2:10. As Christ is the head of the Angels, so if we are in the body of Christ, He is our head too, and we are therefore with the Angels in the same body. There is thus no need to worship them, nor the Mosaic ordinances they instituted. This seems to be a major theme in Col. 2 "Let no man beguile you of your reward in… worshipping of Angels... and not holding the Head (Christ), from which all the body (both Christians and Angels, whose head is Christ, v. 10,15) by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together (Angels and Christians!) increaseth (both of us growing in knowledge of God) with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the elements of the (Mosaic/ Angelic) world, are ye subject to (Mosaic/ Angelic) ordinances... ?" (v. 18-20). The evident similarities between Colossians and Ephesians invite us to interpret Ephesians 1 in the same way: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth (Angels and Christians, Jews and Gentiles)… in whom we also (as well as Angels- it is hard to understand why Paul, being a Jew, should speak like this about Gentiles also, as well as Jews, obtaining an inheritance) have obtained an inheritance… (God) raised (Christ) from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the Heavenly places, far above all principality and power (i.e. Angels- Col. 2:15), and might, and dominion (Angels- Jude 8,9), and every name that is named (Christ "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name" than Angels- Heb. 1:4), not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things (literally all things- including Angels) under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:10,11,20-23). The reference in Eph. 3:15 to "the whole family in Heaven and earth" probably refers to the Angelic and human parts of the family of God in Heaven and earth respectively being united by the sacrifice of Christ. Christ's parables of the lost coin and lost sheep lend support to this. The woman and the shepherd on one level represent Jesus searching for the lost saint, calling together the friends to rejoice on finding him (Lk. 15:9,29). These friends represent Angels, we are told (v. 10). However, those in the ecclesia are also members of God's household; Christ laid down His life for us His friends; "Ye are My friends... I have called you friends" (Jn. 15:13-15). The parables of Luke 15 were initially directed at the Pharisees, implying that they as the shepherds of the ecclesia should be mixing with the weak of the flock to win them back (Lk. 15:2-4; n. b. "which man of you..."). Thus Jesus also expected the woman, shepherd and friends to refer to members of the ecclesia on earth. Yet He also specifically says that they have reference to the Angelic household in Heaven. Thus both Angels and earthly believers are part of the same "family in Heaven and earth" of Eph. 3:15. See on Jude 6; Heb. 9:23.

Col. 2:8,9 reasons that because in Christ dwells all the fullness of God, so far is He exalted, that we therefore should not follow *men*. A man or woman who is truly awed by the height of the Lord's exaltation simply will not allow themselves to get caught up in personality cults based around individuals, even if they are within the brotherhood.

Many of the 'difficult passages' in the New Testament are only difficult because they are alluding to, and even quoting phrases from, popular contemporary ideas and writings and seeking to deconstruct them. This technique is found throughout the

Bible, especially with respect to false yet popular ideas about evil. To take an example: Valentinus taught in the second century that there was a *pleroma*, a "fullness of the Godhead", comprised of 30 aeons of time. Like most thinkers, he was drawing on ideas that had circulated a century before him, and so it's reasonable to think that the philosophical idea of a "fullness of the Godhead" was around in the first century. And Paul uses just this phrase when explaining how the entire fullness of the Godhead was to be found in the person of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9). No need for philosophy and wild guesses at the structure of God. The fullness of the Godhead was and is in the personality of Jesus. However, this isn't Paul's only allusion to this idea. The lowest of the 30 aeons, Sophia, "yielded to an ungovernable desire to apprehend [God's] nature". And Paul alludes to this in Phil. 2:6,7, saying that Jesus by contrast didn't even consider apprehending God's nature, but instead made Himself a servant of all. As more and more is known of the literature and ideas which were extant in the first century, it becomes the more evident that Paul's writings are full of allusions to it- allusions which seek to deconstruct these ideas, replacing them with the true; and by doing so, presenting the Truth of the Gospel in the terms and language of the day, just as we seek to.

The fullness of God dwells in the body of Christ- and Paul often uses this idea with reference to the body of baptized believers. Within us and amongst us, over time and space, there will have dwelt (by the time of Christ's return) all the fullness of God's moral perfection and characteristics; one may have His love and grace, another His judgment, etc. This is confirmed by 2:10.

2:10 *And in him you are made complete. He is the head of all principality and power*- “Complete” is Gk. 'made full'. As God dwelt fully in Christ, so He fully dwells in us, the entire body of Christ. However the principalities and powers were perceived, be their hierarchies of Angels or not, the Lord Jesus was the head.

2:11 *In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ*- Through baptism, we enter the "in Christ" status, and our flesh is as it were cut off, by status we are in Him and not in the flesh. This is repeated in Paul's argument in Romans 1-8, although there he stresses that our flesh still remains; but from God's perspective, it is cut off. It takes faith to believe this- faith in God's operation, that the circumcision operation was really performed by Him (2:12). Baptism is the means by which we become "in Christ" and in spiritual terms cease to be uncircumcised (2:13).

2:12 *Having been buried with him in baptism, by which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead*- AV "the operation of God". See on 2:11. Baptism is effective because we are to believe that God will now work in us to allow the life of the risen Lord to break forth in our mortal flesh. The faith required before baptism is therefore not merely an understanding of past events, but more importantly a belief that God's *energeia*, His energy, will operate in the transforming of our hearts and lives. The act of baptism alone doesn't save; it saves through our faith in God's operation to save us. Tit. 3:5 speaks of baptism as "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"; but we have to believe in that "working of God" as Paul here puts it in Colossians. Baptism is paralleled with circumcision, which was a cutting off of the flesh. Our flesh, the mind of the flesh, will be cut off by God, as an ongoing process, once we make the connection with Christ in baptism. The parallel in Ephesians is Eph. 1:19,20, which speak of how the same unbounded power which raised the dead body of Jesus from the dead will likewise work in the hearts of us who believe.

2:13 *And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses*- This change from the second to the first person, or, *vice versa*, is common in Paul's writings. He like a truly good teacher admits his own need for forgiveness, and wishes to share his personal experience with us his readers.

Baptism is to be associated with the ancient rite of circumcision. The Lord Jesus Himself as it were circumcises men at their baptism, cutting off the flesh of their past lives, and thereby inviting them to live in a manner appropriate to what He has done for them (Col. 2:11-13).

2:14 In the context of baptism and warning believers not to return to the Law, Paul argues "If ye be dead with Christ (in baptism) from the rudiments of the (Jewish) world, why, as though living in the (Jewish) world, (i.e. under the Law) are ye subject to (Mosaic) ordinances...?" (:20). The Law was "against us... contrary to us" (Col. 2:14) – hence it being called an adversary/Satan. The natural Jews under the Mosaic Law, as opposed to the Abrahamic covenant regarding Christ, are called "the children of the flesh" (Rom. 9:8). Similarly those under the Law are paralleled with the son of the bondwoman "born after the flesh" (Gal. 4:23). Paul reasons: "Are you now made perfect by the flesh?... received you the Spirit by the works of the Law?" (Gal. 3:2,3) – as if "by the flesh" is equivalent to "by the law". Now we can understand why Heb. 7:16–18 speaks of "The Law of a carnal commandment... The weakness and unprofitableness thereof". Not only is the word "carnal" used with distinctly fleshly overtones elsewhere, but the law being described as "weak" invites connection with phrases like "the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41). Rom. 8:3 therefore describes the Law as "weak through the flesh". See on Rom. 8:3.

Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances- Gk. 'to wash out', an allusion to baptism. The same word is used about the blotting out of our sins (Acts 3:19), of our tears (our lament for our sins, Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Our sins are blotted out in that the law itself has been blotted out. We are saved through being "in Christ", counted as Him- and not on the basis of any legal obedience to any law. This is Paul's argument in Romans; not simply the Law of Moses, but any legal code which is against us has now been taken away. 'Law' in the sense of 'legality', and not only the law of Moses, has been replaced by salvation by faith in grace. But the reality of salvation by such pure grace is not lawlessness and indulgence in sin, but rather being utterly bound by the principle or law of being "in Christ". Our response to such grace will make us in fact more self controlled and consciously obedient to Divine principles than any system of binding laws, resulting in our being judged according to our obedience or disobedience.

That was against us, which was contrary to us, Christ did away with it by nailing it to the cross- Legal terms, reminiscent of the argument in Romans, that the Law stands in court accusing and condemning us by our failure to obey it; but in Christ we are declared in the right. Paul says here that this Law has been taken away, or as he says in Romans, where is now our accuser? He has fled the court room, there is none to accuse us if we are in Christ. Hence "took it out of the way" means literally in Greek to take away from the midst, away from the foreground- from the middle of the courtroom.

2:15- see on Lk. 11:22.

Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it- S.w. Heb. 6:6 about the "open shame" of the crucified Christ. One reason for the cross was to publicly declare that all the laws

which we break, our sins, are once and for all publicly declared in all their shame- and rendered powerless, lead away in Christ's triumph (2 Cor. 2:14). Disarmed [NIV]- an allusion to 1 Sam. 17:51.

The binding of the strong man in the parable was done by the death of Christ. One of the spoils we have taken from his house is the fact we don't need to keep the Mosaic Law (Mt. 12:29 = Col. 2:15).

2:16 *Let no one therefore judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day*- But people do judge us. We can only not allow them to judge us by not letting their judgments affect us. This is a valuable principle; for the judgment of others seriously impacts upon our emotional and spiritual state. We are not to allow the judgments of others to do this, because we believe that there is only one final judge. Believing that God and His Son are our only judges is therefore of immense practical import. A similar situation is to be found in 1 Tim. 4:12 (cp. 1 Cor. 16:11), where Timothy is told to let nobody despise him. People did despise him- but he is told to disallow them from doing so by not taking it to heart, holding on to his value before God. And Paul tells Titus the same (Tit. 2:15). Likewise in 1 Jn. 3:7 we are told to let no man deceive us- although they will try, for as John notes, there are many deceivers in the world. Here in Col. 2:18, the same is taught- the Colossians were not to let anyone deceive them.

2:17 *They were a shadow of the things to come, but the real object is Christ*- Bible students have long recognized a 'prophetic perfect' tense in Hebrew, whereby the future is spoken of as having already happened. This not only reflects the utter certainty of God's words coming true, it also reflects God's way of looking at issues without time, in the sense that God is beyond time. Thus when He told Abraham that He *had made him (*not 'will make you') a great nation, this reflected the way that God already saw Abraham as a father of many. Things which don't yet exist for us do *actually* exist for God (Rom. 4:17). The Law was a *shadow* of Christ (Col. 2:17) even when Christ didn't physically exist. Yet a shadow implies the real existence of the object. The Law reflected God's knowledge of the Lord Jesus; to Him, the Lord did in that sense pre-exist, although we know that literally He didn't. Likewise Levi was seen by God as paying tithes whilst he was still as it were within Abraham's body (Heb. 7:9,10), and the dead believers are likened to spectators in a stadium, cheering us on as we race the race of this life (Heb. 12:1).

Paul’s statement that God has made public display for ridicule (*edeigmatisen en parrêsia*) of the “rulers and authorities” is alluding to a phrase which occurs in the Jewish writings about the supposed Satanic rulers of this present world. But Paul says that God displays them for what they are and thereby holds them up to ridicule (Col. 2:17), rather like Elijah mocking the non-existence of Baal. In Col 2:8,20 and Gal 4:3, 8–10, Paul says that believers are no longer subject to the “elements of the cosmos” (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*) – again, a term the Jews used to describe supposed sinful Angels ruling the cosmos. He’s deconstructing these ideas rather than supporting them.

2:18 *Let no one rob you of your prize by a false humility and worshiping of the angels, keeping on about all the things which he has supposedly seen in visions, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*- If we let ourselves act against our conscience, we are *now* condemned (Rom. 14:23). If we judge another, "thou condemnest [present tense] thyself" (Rom. 2:1). We must not let false teachers "judge against you" (Col.

2:18 AVmg.) in the sense that by following them we can let them as it were pass the verdict of condemnation upon us, here and now.

Seeking to cut off the flesh by steel willed obedience to laws is in fact fleshly. Likewise in 2:23 Paul argues that obedience to laws isn't any benefit in cutting off the flesh; this is done by God in Christ through our baptism into Him and being counted as Him.

2:19 *And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God*- The Lord Jesus, as the Head, *ministers* nourishment to the body (Col. 2:19). But how? The same word is used in the parallel Eph. 4:16: every joint of the body *supplies* (s.w.) the rest of the body with nourishment. The Lord's work of ministering to us is articulated through us His servants. This is why faith can die in individuals and ecclesias, simply because brethren and sisters are not ministering strength to others. We should seriously consider our words, spoken and written, our motivation, whether or not we challenge a brother or sister over something, the direction of our conversations... for we can obstruct the grace and nourishment of Christ by our raising of that which pulls down rather than builds up. Likewise Col. 2:19 says that God gives increase to the body; but Eph. 4:16 uses the same Greek in saying how the body makes increase of itself in love. It occurs again in Eph. 2:21: "all the building fitly framed together *groweth* unto an holy temple". This is all so weighty in its implication. Our duty is not merely to retain a correct understanding of certain propositional truths, and ourselves live a reasonable life. The welfare of all others in the body has been delegated to us. Their salvation and perhaps their eternal rejection lays in our hands, to some extent. See on Eph. 4:16.

2:20 *If you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances?*- The aorist tense of "you died" refers to a one time event, surely our baptisms into Christ's death. Likewise 3:1 refers to our one time rising with Christ in baptism. They were 'subjecting themselves' to the Jewish ordinances, the legalities of Judaism, "as though" they were living in the [Jewish] world. Submission to Judaism was inappropriate for those who had died with Christ in baptism. The salvation by faith through grace experienced in Him meant that they had died not only to sin, but to the law which brought about sin.

2:21 *Handle not, nor taste, nor touch*- These legal concerns were about external contamination. But the focus of Colossians has been that the gift of the Spirit affects the human spirit, the mind, the heart. This is the focus of true Christianity. Contamination of the heart cannot occur through eating or touching ritually unclean things. "Touch" in Greek can mean simply 'association', having 'to do with' someone. In this case, Paul is categorically condemning the whole concept of 'guilt by association' which has been the root cause of so much division between believers. Not handling [touching] nor tasting is alluding to Eve's perception that she was not to touch nor taste the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:3). Eve had put a fence around the command not to eat of the fruit; she had added 'neither shall you touch it'. And it had not saved her from sin; indeed, her primitive legalism was not mixed with faith in God's grace, and it led her to spiritual catastrophe. The Judaist legalism and fences around the law were leading them in just the same way.

2:22 *(All things that perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?*- The idea may simply be that all external things perish, food is touched, eaten and then perishes; whereas the work of the Spirit is in the heart and is permanent. The

food laws concerned things which perished permanently; avoiding them was just a temporary way of avoiding legal infringements, whereas the work of the Spirit had permanent effect upon the heart. And it is the Spirit which will be experienced eternally in God's Kingdom. And in any case, the ordinances of Judaism in view here were "of men", and not therefore the law of God. This is a pointed attack on the Jewish idea that the teachings of the Rabbis effectively became Divine law.

2:23 *Which things have indeed a false appearance of wisdom in worship and humility and severity to the body, but are not of any real value against stopping the indulgence of the flesh*- Paul sees the "real value" of any teaching in spiritual terms. The legalism associated with worrying about food legislation was of no value against stopping us indulge the flesh. What is required is the Spirit, working internally; rather than regulations about external defilement. The "worship" in view is that of Angels (:18). Fasting was not demanded by the Mosaic law, apart from at the day of atonement; but fasting was a major part of Judaism. But all this would not stop the flesh but rather encourage it; what was required was the ministry of God's spirit within the human spirit.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above*- Chapter 2 has spoken of baptism as death and resurrection with Christ. If this has happened, then we follow where He went after resurrection, which was to Heaven. Not literally, for heaven going after death is not taught in the Bible; but in our thoughts being with Him there in the Heavens. The structure of Paul's letters shows very clearly the link between doctrine and practice. Colossians 1 and 2 are pure theology, the precise, analytical Paul at his most flowing, intellectually devastating and persuasive; but "then..." (3:1) we are lead on to another two chapters of the practical implications of this. This theology / doctrinal treatise and the pivotal, crucial then... therefore... is likewise the turning point of Romans (12:1), Galatians (6:1-10), Ephesians (4:1) and Philippians (4:1). His theology, his doctrine, always ends in an ethical demand (see too 1 Thess. 5 and 2 Thess. 3). To use pompous words, our orthodoxy (right doctrine) must lead to orthopraxy (right behaviour).

Where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God- Hence the significance of Stephen seeing the Lord *standing* at the right hand of God in urgent mediation and emotion for him in his sufferings.

3:2 *Set your mind on the things that are above*- The same word is used in bidding us to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ" (Phil. 2:5); indeed, Paul uses the word seven times in Philippians. It is Christ who is "above" in that He has ascended to Heaven (:1); so the "things" in view are those of Christ, rather than spiritual, heavenly things generally.

Not on the things that are upon the earth- Paul is repeating the great theme of Philippians, to set our mind on Christ rather than be of those who "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). The appeals in Philippians to be of "one mind" refer to the need to all be focused upon the same mind- Christ. That is the basis of unity, rather than being uniform in all matters of doctrinal interpretation or living.

3:3 *For you died*- Continuing the baptism allusions. When we were baptized, we died to the natural life, and therefore the only life we have is the life which we are given by reason of our association with the resurrected Lord Jesus. And therefore our spiritual life must be the central thing in our existence- not a hobby. As I dried myself off after my baptism, I opened my Bible at 'random', and came with marvellous appropriacy to Prov. 23:26: "My son, give me thine heart". And Paul taught the same: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "The love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that (Christ) has died for all (believers); therefore all have died. And He died for all (of us), that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised... therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old (life) has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:14-17 RSV). "I was co-crucified with Christ (Gk.): nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me" (Gal. 2:20). And "The love of Christ constrains us", it shuts us up with no other real way to move, as the Greek implies.

And your life is hid with Christ- The idea is of treasure in a totally secure place; for Christ is in "the bosom of the Father" (Jn. 1:18). Our most valuable treasure is our life, who we are, our personality, which is what shall eternally endure. The "life" in view is surely our eternal life. In this we see the supreme, eternal importance of the development of spiritual personality; for it is that which shall last eternally.

3:4- see on 1 Cor. 15:20.

When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested in glory- 1 Jn. 3:2 uses the same word in saying that "what we shall be" has not yet been "manifested". The manifesting of the Lord Jesus at the second coming is therefore our manifestation, because Christ is our life. But we are also individuals; *our* life and eternal being is involved. So our unique eternal personality is in fact an aspect of Him. The fullness of His personality has been shared out amongst all those in Him; one wired more towards His grace, another more towards His justice, e.g. In another figure, we are each unique parts of the body which is Christ.

If we believe we really will be there, then we will look more earnestly for the day to come. We can never be truly enthusiastic about the Lord's return if we are unsure about our ultimate acceptance at His hand. Because we are sure that "When Christ… shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication…" etc. (Col. 3:4,5). We don't control ourselves because we think this will make us good enough to be accepted, but rather because we believe that we have already been accepted. By grace alone.

3:5 *Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you: Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness*- Gk. 'make a corpse of'. We are alive and yet we are dead, as walking corpses. Putting to death is paralleled with "also put away..." in :8; the idea there is of undressing, of casting away clothes. We are naked corpses, that is the picture being developed. Our real life and being is centered around Heavenly things. The same word is only used elsewhere of Abraham whose body was dead, i.e.

sexually impotent (Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:12). The examples now given in the rest of this verse are all sexual. We are invited to see ourselves as Abraham, whose focus was upon the stars above, the promises of Heavenly things. Paul clearly saw that there was a real temptation for his readers to fall into sexual lust; and at the end of chapter 2 he has warned that claiming to abide by Jewish legal regulations was actually a temptation towards lust. The reasoning seems to be that legal obedience tempts a person to think that other areas of sin are therefore quite acceptable. And this would explain the link between Christian legalism and sexual immorality which has so often become apparent.

Paul saw Mt. 5:29, 30 in a sexual context (= Col. 3:5); which fits the context of Mt. 5:28.
The Colossians still had to "put to death" things like fornication, even though they had put them to death in baptism (Col. 3:5 = Rom. 6:6). Yet they are described as having formerly lived in those things, as if now, they don't do them (Col. 3:7). Yet clearly they did still do those things. Again, Paul is saying that they don't do those things by status, in God's eyes, therefore they shouldn't do them in practice.

Which is idolatry- Paul is writing to those attracted by Judaism, for whom avoiding idolatry was an obsession. But he is warning that the real idolatry is not falling down before statues, but the life of the flesh and the hidden lust of the mind.

3:6 *For which things' sake comes the anger of God upon the children of disobedience*- The idea of disobedience suggests that the class in view are those who know God's requirements, those responsible to judgment. The similar language of Rom. 1:18 refers to this category of persons. And we can assume there were some in Colosse, as in other New Testament churches, who were justifying serious sexual immorality as perfectly allowable for believers in Christ.

3:7 *Things in which you also once walked, when you lived in these things*- The parallel Eph. 2:2 says that "in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, according to the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience". That 'spirit' is here defined as that of sexual abandon and lack of internal mental control. This arises from within the flesh; and not as a result of some cosmic being controlling us.

3:8 *But now you are to also put away*- See on 3:5 *Put to death.* The commandment to "put away" these behaviours suggests that they were all ongoing amongst the Colossian converts. The same word is used of how Christian converts elsewhere needed to "put off" such carnal behaviour and immorality (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22; 1 Pet. 2:1). Clearly the early churches were full of quite serious immorality, bad language, blasphemy and even violence. The historical accounts of how some very self-sacrificial behaviour attracted the positive notice of outsiders doesn't take away from this; and this sad scenario is all witnessed by the New Testament itself. We need to give this internal evidence its due weight. It's clear that Paul preached and then baptized whoever said 'yes' without unduly analysing their motives or morality. Inevitably with so many quick baptisms, the communities which developed would have been characterized by the same spiritual immaturities which were in their native societies.

The “also” connects with the list of five forms of sexual sins in :5. Paul now gives another list of five sins which are more internal than external. He may be continuing the theme developed at the end of chapter 2, of needing to focus on the internal and spiritual more than the external.

Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth- The idea is that the five gross sexual sins of :5 are no worse than the five more common failures now listed.

3:9 *Lie not one to another*- The parallel Eph. 4:24,25 explains the significance of "to each other"*:* "Put on the new man... Therefore, putting away falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another". The function of the one body will be hindered by lying to each other within it.

Seeing you have put off the old man with his doings- This is the language of Rom. 6:6 about baptism. It could fairly be said that Colossians is explaining to baptized believers the implications of their baptisms.

3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*- Because in status we have 'put on the new man', "put on, therefore... mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind", i.e. bring forth in yourself the characteristics of Jesus, seeing you have 'put Him on' in baptism (Col. 3:10,12). Clothe your personality with Him, submerge yourself within Him, seeing you 'put on' Christ in baptism. We are to live out in practice how the Lord sees us by status.

The Lord Jesus is set up in so many ways as the example for us to follow- in a way that some cosmic being descending from outer space never could have been. In the same way as Jesus was the image of the invisible God in His character (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4), so we are bidden put on the image of God (Col. 3:10), being transformed into His image progressively over time (2 Cor. 3:18), through "the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2), being conformed to the image of Jesus our Saviour (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49). Thus the process of our redemption, through the perfect character of Jesus, becomes in turn a personal pattern for each of us who have been saved by that process. And it was only through the successful completion of that work of redemption that Jesus was "made" Lord of all (Rom. 1:4; Acts 2:36). This is a different picture to the Gnostic-Trinitarian idea of a pre-existent Lord of all descending to earth which was apparently troubling the Colossians. Further, their theory gets somewhat confused when they claim that the Angelic appearances on earth in Old Testament times [e.g. the Angel with Israel in the wilderness] were actually appearances of Jesus on earth. If this is so, then when did Jesus come to earth to save men? Did He make several visits...? Why couldn't each of these visits have been enough for human salvation? The idea that the Lord Jesus was an Old Testament Angel is simply unsustainable in Scripture and needs to be rejected, along with all Gnostic-influenced views of Him. We know from Acts 14:11 that there was a strong tendency in the first century to believe that the gods could come to earth in the likeness of men; and Trinitarianism simply reflects the fact that weak Christians in the early centuries sought to accommodate Christianity to their existing beliefs.

3:11 *Where there cannot be Gentile and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision,*

barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman- but Christ is all and in all- In the "new man" whom we have "put on", i.e. Christ, "there cannot be Greek and Jew" etc (Col. 3:11 RV). But we have to do something in order to bring this about- mere baptism isn't enough. Paul continues: "Put on therefore... a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience" (Col. 3:12). If we are "in Christ", there "cannot be" division in that body- if there is, from our perspective, then surely we are proclaiming ourselves to be not of that body. But in order to actualize being "in Christ", we have to therefore show kindness, humility, patience etc. in order that there will not be division. We have to live out in practice the status which we have been given at baptism, of being "in" the undivided, indivisible Christ. "Christ is [created in] all [who believe] and in all [places of the world]" (Col. 3:11 Bullinger). It is the common experience of this new creation which binds us together as one body and spiritual nation world-wide.

3:12 *Therefore, as God's elect*- The language of Old Testament Israel, and also of the Messiah. The new Israel are characterized and identified by their spiritual attributes, as the children of Abraham by the spirit, rather than fleshly identity. We again note that the false teaching plaguing Colosse and its surrounds was connected with a return to Judaism. But the main reference is I believe to us being as Christ, the elect.

And beloved- A title of Christ, whose titles and personality is now counted to all of us in Him (Mt. 12:18; and the clear parallel in Eph. 1:6 is that He "has made us accepted [by being] in the beloved").

Put on- We cannot just sit down and acquire the listed characteristics. But insofar as we are in Christ, we have clothed ourselves with Him, and these characteristics of His personality are counted to us by grace. We have "put on [s.w.] the new man", Christ (:10), who according to Isaiah's servant songs was "the elect". The faith that that is indeed so leads us to naturally be the persons we are counted to be by status.

Sensitivity, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering- These five characteristics are the antidote for the lists of five sins in :5 and :8.

3:13 *Forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as the Lord forgave you, so also forgive*- He forgives us on account of our status in Christ, forgiving therefore without demanding specific repentance for every sin. And we are to operate a similar policy with others in Christ. This is the force of the little word "As...". Forgiveness without requiring repentance frees us from so much legalism and bearing of records of wrongs against others. Every "complaint" needs to be gone into, and a judgment reached as to whether the event really happened, or happened as the aggrieved party says it did; and whether there has been real repentance. And there is no ultimate ombudsman or judge on earth who can reach the ultimate truth of the situations. Every judge and jury, within or outside the church, formal or informal, will decide differently. In many cases, mitigating or unconsidered factors will keep on coming out of the woodwork. All this is a recipe for interpersonal strife and division. To forgive without demanding repentance, including forgiving perceived issues, is the way to peace and harmony, both within ourselves and within the believing community.

3:14- see on 1 Cor. 13:11.

And above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection- Moses'

spiritual pinnacle was characterized by arriving at a profound depth of love. Love is likewise seen by Paul as "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14), the sign of ultimate maturity. He has already begun in Colossians 1 by saying that true faith and hope for eternity will bring forth love. The Greek for "bond" is a medical term, referring to the ligaments of the human body. Paul has just used it concerning the anatomy of the body of Christ, the church, in 2:19. The completeness of the body is brought about by love, and the context of that "love" is in the command in the preceding verse :13 to forgive as we have been forgiven, i.e. without demanding repentance. But this is the state of "perfection" or spiritual maturity. Those who insist upon repentance before forgiveness are not therefore mature, and the body of Christ will only be completely functional if this policy of forgiveness without repentance is universally accepted and applied.

3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts- to this you were also called in one body; and be thankful-* We are called to the hope of the Kingdom "in one body" (Col. 3:15); all who receive the call of the true Gospel are in the same one body. There is one body, based around sharing the one faith, one hope, understanding of the one Father and Son, having participated in the one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6). So whoever believes the doctrines of the basic Gospel and has been baptized and walks in Christ, we have a duty (and should have a desire) to fellowship. The need for unity amongst us is so very often stressed (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5,6; Phil. 2:2; Eph. 4:31,32; Col. 3;12-15).

3:16- see on 1 Pet. 2:5.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. In all wisdom teach and encourage one another- This may well be an allusion to the tradition of learning the Gospel of Mark. How can it richly dwell in us if we do not daily meditate upon those inspired records?

With Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs- singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord- There are connections between praise and forgiveness of sin. Col. 3:16 speaks of communal hymn singing as a means of "admonishing" each other- and the Greek translated "admonish" here means just that (cp. Tit. 3:10). The connection between praise and confession / forgiveness makes this appropriate. It may be that Paul is writing with his eye on Dt. 32; the Song of Moses spoke of Israel's weakness and proneness to apostasy. Yet they were bidden sing this to each other, in order to inculcate the culture of forgiveness without repentance- see on :13 and :14. Would anything like that get into a Christian hymn book today?

3:17 *And whatever you do, in word or in action, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him-* The doing and acting in view is in the policy of forgiving without repentance, on account of a believer's status in Christ; see on :13 and :14. We do this because we are in Christ, we are acting in His Name, and do so giving thanks to God for our blanket forgiveness which we experience in Him, whereby all our sins are blotted out because of our status in Christ (2:13).

3:18 *Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord-* As all in Christ are to be subject to each other (Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5). These commands about family life are added in the context of the preceding argument about love and unconditional forgiveness. The Christian family and home is to be the living and

supreme example and microcosm of the principles governing church life. This is why church leaders are to be judged more than anything else by the state and function of their own families.

3:19 *Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them*- I have argued that these commands about family life are exemplifications of the preceding comments about unconditional forgiveness and treating each other as Christ has treated us. The parallel in Eph. 4:31,32 supports that: "Let all bitterness and wrath... be put away from you... be kind to each other, sensitive, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ also forgave you". Bitterness arises from unforgiveness. Likewise the command in :21 about not provoking others to wrath (AV) must be read in this same context; wrath, according to Eph. 4:31,32, arises from unforgiveness.

3:20 *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord*- Implying there were baptized young people in the ecclesias. The early critics of Christianity mocked it as a religion of children and women. Those not counted as persons in ancient society found their meaning and acceptance in Christ.

3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, in order that they are not discouraged*- See on :19 *Be not bitter*. These commandments are regarding believing families. The discouragement in view was presumably in the context of the children growing up encouraged by their fathers to believe and be baptized. But endless provocation of children in domestic life will only discourage them from that path.

3:22 *Servants, obey in all things those that are your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord*- The Greek *kurios* is used here for “masters” rather than the more natural *despotes* because the idea is being developed that service to human masters can be accepted as service towards the Master- the Lord Jesus.

3:23 *Whatever you do, work heartily, as if to the Lord and not to men*- This is in the context of commands to slaves (:22). It would have been so liberating for those in dead end daily situations, similar to those trapped in minimum wage employment today, to realize that their service can be done "to the Lord". He realizes the limitations of human situations in employment, and is willing to accept the toil of the daily grind as done to Him- if we are willing to give it to Him.

3:24 *Knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ*- The comfort is to first century slaves, and those in the slavery of minimum wage dead end employment in our age, to not look so much to the pittance of salary or reward at the end of each day or month- but to realize that the reward of working as unto the Lord is in fact the inheritance of the Kingdom.

3:25 *But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality*- The context is about slaves and masters, and the reference may well be to believing masters who abused their slaves.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Masters, give to your servants what is just and equal. Knowing you also have a master in heaven*- Our relationships with others should be governed by our sense of relationship with the Lord Jesus. If we are but His slaves, then we will deport ourselves appropriately in any secular position of authority which may be our lot. The even handed attitude of the Lord Jesus to us, without favouritism, was to be reflected by masters not having favourites amongst their slave; and certainly not giving them unjust compensation for their services. For the Lord's attitude to us is ultimately "just and equal". Indeed, Paul's thought is repeatedly that we are the unjust, but are justified by faith in His grace. Our Master died for us, "the just for unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18). And even if we have to deal with unjust servants, we are to remember that God sends His rain on both the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45). This command follows on from the comment in the previous verse that there is "no respect of persons" with the Lord Jesus, and that believing masters who abused their slaves would be judged for this (3:25).

4:2 *Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving*- This is the very language of the earliest church, who are repeatedly set up as our example (Acts 1:14; 2:42,46). The difficulty of prayer is to persevere in it, not making requests as a passing shot, but continuing in prayer. And any requests are to be framed within constant thanksgiving for what the Lord has given us already, not least in His Son. The same word is used about continuing in prayer in Acts 6:4 and Rom. 12:12. "Vigilant" means 'keeping awake', and is used of the disciples in Gethsemane failing to do this as asked (Mt. 26:38,40,41). We can read it quite literally- do not drift asleep whilst praying. For who of us is not concerned about our tendency to do that. The appeal is for mental focus, not allowing prayer to slip into mere ritual, a repetition of the same themes and phrases. And "thanksgiving", deep gratitude for what we have been given already, which will help us in this alertness.

4:3 *Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for preaching the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for the sake of which I am also in chains*- This prayer was indeed answered, because Phil. 1:13 ["So that my bonds made Christ manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest"]; 4:22 ["All the saints greet you, especially they that are of Caesar's household"] report that Paul's witness in chains led to the conversion of people right within Caesar's household. Paul's witness (presumably via the soldiers he was chained to) had led to conversions within the extended family and slaves of Caesar's palace; although according to Romans 16 there were already some believers there. Through all the hard things that happened to Paul, the Gospel had entered the very elitest centre of the Roman empire. Josephus even suggests that the Empress Poppaea may have been favourably inclined to Christianity. This is an encouragement for all time that even the worst experiences and situations have a role to play in the extension of the Lord's saving way amongst men. And Paul realized that, hence "especially they...". Onesimus likewise was converted in chains (Philemon 10). It has been suggested that if Paul were constantly chained to a succession of Roman soldiers, he would have preached to them all; and thus the Gospel was spread throughout the guard. And from Phil. 4:22 we know that there were believers amongst "Caesar's household". Paul's apparently dead end situation therefore led to the Gospel penetrating the very highest of places within the Roman empire, in a manner which

would have been impossible had he not been imprisoned in Rome. The Greek *praitorion* is mainly used of how the Lord Jesus was held in the Praetorium, in chains as Paul was. Paul quickly perceived that in essence he was continuing the Lord's witness by fellowshipping His sufferings, and we can make the same connections between our chains in life and the Lord's sufferings. And yet despite understanding this on one level, he was clearly frustrated by his chains.

Opening doors is the language of release from prison (Acts 5:23; 16:26). So although in prison, Paul felt that his chains would as it were be loosed, he would no longer feel so limited, if he could spread the Gospel. I pray each day to meet the right people, or as Paul put it, for a door to be opened for preaching. Paul had earlier written of how a great door had been opened to him to preach the Gospel (1 Cor. 16:9). He may well have prayed for this, for the allusion is to how prayer is a knocking which opens doors (Mt. 7:7). If we want such open doors, they will be given to us. For to pray for that is surely to pray according to God's will. But all the same, Paul asks others to pray for him in this matter; and his success in prison is a parade example of how this prayer will be answered. We could read Paul's words here as asking for strength to be bolder in preaching. But it's likely he is asking that he be released from prison so that he can preach "as I ought to". But he wasn't, and his basic desire to preach was the request which was heard. He wasn't released, but he had huge success in spreading the Gospel where he was, despite his apparent limitations. We too may feel that we "ought" to be able to go here and there on the surface of this planet to do "missionary work"; when in fact we may be given great success despite our equivalents of Paul's "chain" and frustrating imprisonment. Perhaps "as I should / ought" implies some frustration with the Lord, as if to say 'I ought to be out there preaching, but you are restraining me'. Hence his comment that he is "in chains" when he "ought" to be preaching. The parallel in Eph. 6:19 has Paul asking for prayers "that utterance may be given unto me" to preach the Gospel. The idea of the Greek there is "permission and power to defend one's self in a court of justice". He clearly senses the injustice of the situation and wants justice and freedom from prison, as "ought" to happen, so that he could preach again. But he had to learn that he was overlooking how he had bound others, and how the Lord was bound in order to make the witness of the cross. And he did in fact make a very powerful witness himself whilst in bonds. The whole thing about Paul's chains is an essay in the way that submission to the frustrating 'ties that bind' is in fact the path to true freedom. And yet despite 'getting it' theoretically in the way he wrote about his chains and imprisonment, the reality of the daily frsutration seemed to get the better of him on a personal level. In his final days, Paul 'got it'. He understood that although he was bound, the word of God was not bound (2 Tim. 2:9). Through preaching that word, he had acted outside of his chains, he had breached the apparent limitations from the ties that bound him.

Paul's frequent reference to "chains" perhaps overlooked the fact that the Lord was 'bound' and led to His crucifixion [s.w. Mt. 27:2; Jn. 18:12,24], and yet that led to the greatest witness of all time. The same word is used of how Paul had "bound" Christians (Acts 9:2,14,21; 22:5- quite an emphasis). This is not mere poetic justice, but rather because the Lord seeks to help us understand how we have made others feel; because we are going to spend eternity with them. This is one way in which He brings about the unity of the Spirit, even if those we are thus 'united' with by experience are far from us, or even dead.

Paul had used the word for "chains" to describe how he was "bound / chained" in the Spirit (Acts 20:22) and was prepared to accept whatever the Spirit led him to. He fully recognized the Spirit said in every town he passed through that chains were

awaiting him (Acts 20:23). He said that he was "ready not to be bound only, but also to die" (Acts 21:13). And yet it is one thing to say this; and quite another to accept the apparent frustration this brings. "Remember my bonds" (Col. 4:18) reflects the pain he felt about them; "... except these chains" reflects his frustration to Agrippa (Acts 26:29), especially as the Romans themselves twice commented that he was unworthy of 'chains' (Acts 23:29; 26:31 "This man does nothing worthy of death nor of chains"). He was in chains, therefore, because the Spirit wanted him to be in chains; he speaks of his "chains in Christ" (Phil. 1:13), "a prisoner of Christ... the chains of the Gospel" (Philemon 9,13), and that for the Hope of Israel he was bound with a chain (Acts 28:20)- not for any legitimate human reason. But he was frustrated by them, although he at these times did get the point about them.

4:4- see on Mt. 26:35.
Pray that I may speak boldly, as I should- As noted on Eph. 6:20, Paul himself admits a tendency not to preach, to hold back from giving his all to fulfil that commission he had received to testify of the Gospel of God's grace (1 Cor. 9:16). He asks his brethren to pray that he would be able to "make it manifest" more than he did (Col. 4:4 cp. Eph. 6:20). As noted on :3, this prayer was powerfully answered in the conversion of slaves and others within Caesar's household. "Speak boldly" is literally 'to manifest'. Paul earlier told the Romans that the Gospel is now made manifest [s.w.] to all nations (Rom. 16:26, also 2 Cor. 2:14; Tit. 1:3). But this is dependent upon our efforts to make it manifest, and even Paul felt that he was failing in this and needed prayer to achieve what was potentially possible. The Gospel has been made manifest to us (Col. 1:26 s.w.) and we therefore are to manifest it to others.

4:5 *Walk in wisdom toward those that are without, redeeming the time*- In a preaching context, Paul tells us to "redeem the time", or "be buying up the opportunity" (Col. 4:5 RVmg.); we are to urgently snap up every opportunity to preach. And walking wisely towards those "without" is a way of witnessing to them. Closer analysis of "redeeming the time" reveals that this is in fact a quotation from the LXX of Dan. 2:8, where Nebuchadnezzar tells the wise men that they want to 'redeem the time, because you know that [the decree for their execution] is gone from me'. There are other allusions in Col. 4 to Daniel: captivity, earnest prayer, thanksgiving, making manifest wisdom to the world as we ought to, walking in wisdom in the eyes of the world. Daniel and his friends urgently devoted every moment of their lives to prayer in order to redeem time, so that they would be delivered; and Paul took as it were a snapshot of their frantic urgency, and applies it to each of us, also living in Babylon. "The days are evil", the world around us is insidious- and therefore we must redeem the time from it (Eph. 5:16). Or it could be that 'the evil days' refers to the great and special day of evil, at the second coming (Eph. 6:13, in context; Ps. 37:29). In view of the coming of that day and the judgment it will bring, we ought to have a deep sense of the future we might miss, and the urgency of our present position; and devote ourselves therefore to redeeming the time. The sure coming of that day is an exhortation to the believer, "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles... [for we] shall give account to him that is ready to judge" (1 Pet. 4:2-5). Peter's message is that there's no need to spend time living as the world does, tickling the desires of our nature- for we already spent enough of our time doing that. We are men and women living under judgment, and therefore should devote our lives to the service of God's will.

4:6 *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one*- "Always" demands consistency; it is easy to talk nicely at times, but to live and speak like this as the atmosphere of our language demands much more. Our experience of grace should empower this consistency, our word choice and intonation will reflect the grace we have received. Living in this atmosphere or spirit of thinking will mean that we somehow naturally find the right words to speak, rather than struggling to respond rightly every time we encounter a provocative conversation. "Each one" presumably refers to "those without" of :5. But it equally applies to our words to our brethren. The command to have salt and therefore peace with each other (Mk. 9:50) is fulfilled, Paul saw, by watching our words (= Col. 4:6). Salt was a symbol of covenant relationship with God (Lev. 2:13); yet in the NT this salt stands for love, peace and kind speaking the one to the other (Mk. 9:50; Col. 4:6). This is the result of true membership in covenant relationship; a true and abiding love for all others in covenant.

4:7 *All my affairs shall Tychicus make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord*- In an age where communication was very limited, "the messengers of the churches" travelled around the known world taking messages and news (2 Cor. 8:23). We should be making the same effort to be bound together with others within the Lord's body, and surely the age of easy communication has arisen in order to allow us to do just that. Let us not abuse it but use it for the purpose the Lord intended.

4:8 *Whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts*- The sole reason Tychicus was sent all the way from Rome to Colosse was to carry news of how Paul was faring in prison; see on :7. Paul assumed that the Colossians were desperately worried about his state in prison, and "for this very purpose" sent Tychicus to comfort them.

4:9 *Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you, they shall make known to you all things that are done here*- As the Lord sent out the disciples in pairs, so it would seem that Tychicus and Onesimus were sent together. Onesimus was "one of you", originally from Colosse and known to them. "All things that are done here" presumably refers to the kind of regime Paul was experiencing in prison, as well as the real state of things under Nero's terror against the Christians. Paul has to emphasize that Onesimus is faithful, because he would have been known only as the runaway slave. He is again called "the beloved brother" in Philemon 16. Paul would therefore have been writing the letter to Philemon at the same time as he was writing to the Colossians. As noted on Phil. 1:1, a fair case can be made that the prison epistles were all written quite close to each other, when Paul was no longer dwelling in his own hired house in Rome but was suffering the results of Nero's persecution of the Christians. In this case we note all the more his focus upon the spiritual wellbeing of others, when he was himself in such a time of crisis.

4:10 *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)*- Aristarchus is called Paul's fellow worker when he writes about this time in Philemon 24. The prisoners saw themselves as actively working for the Lord despite their apparently reduced freedoms. It's all a great encouragement to us, that no matter that

the ties that bind, we can actively labour for the Lord. "Mark" is likely the "Marcus" of Philemon 24; another hint that the letters of Philemon and Colossians were written about the same time and may well have been carried together to Colosse by Onesimus. If Mark was the relative of Barnabas, we can better understand why Barnabas found a patience with him which Paul apparently didn't. Paul was aware that he had fallen out with Barnabas over Mark, who had 'departed from' Paul and returned to the Jerusalem church- all language which suggests a spiritual division between them, perhaps because Mark couldn't cope with the mass appeal to the Gentiles which Paul was making. But now towards the end of his life, Paul urges them to forget all that and accept him amongst them. For Mark now is with Paul, apparently also his fellow prisoner. All tensions between brethren over interpretation and acceptance of third parties are all somewhat irrelevant once both of them are sitting together in prison for Christ. We too need to focus as far as possible on what we have in common, which is so much, indeed, "all things".

4:11 *And Jesus who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers to the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort to me-* Paul graciously speaks of some brethren "who are of the circumcision [party]" as his "fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God", noting that they are "men that have been a comfort unto me" (Col. 4:11 RV). The circumcision party understood things very differently to Paul- he is ever arguing against their position, showing that circumcision profits nothing. And yet these brethren whom he here refers to were still acceptable to him as fellow workers, and he even took "comfort" from their fellowship. I find that a beautiful example of how tolerance can be practiced; despite the fact Paul was right and they were wrong, the simply reality that they were mistaken on this point, he could still work with them and be encouraged by them. He didn't reason: 'If you don't agree with me on this point, well, we're not working together, that's it, goodbye, I can take nothing positive from you by way of fellowship or encouragement'. In fact we could read the AV translation as implying that although Paul had many fellow workers, out of them all, the ones who were a personal comfort to him were these brethren who were of the circumcision party: "Aristarchus... Justus, who are of the circumcision, these only are my fellow workers... which have been a comfort unto me". Justus was in common use among Jews and proselytes, as “denoting obedience to the law". Yet Paul the apostle of grace and the end of the Law found great comfort in him, and worked together with him "to the Kingdom". The Kingdom of God is not now literally established upon earth, but we as believers are under God's kingship. We are therefore His Kingdom. Paul and his brethren in prison were workers within and towards the Kingdom. There is nothing better than when man has an end in view for his labour; and that end for us is glorious, nothing less than men and women entering God's Kingdom at the last day.

4:12- see on Col. 2:1.
Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God- Perhaps Paul had watched Epaphras on his knees in the same prison cell, 'wrestling' as Jacob did in prayer, for the perfecting and assurance of his home church back in Colosse; for he too "is one of you". Prayer is no bedtime lullaby; it is a real wrestling, not just on occasion, but "always". Faith is a certain hope that really, we shall be saved and live eternally in God's Kingdom. He prayed that they would 'get it', and be fully assured that this was indeed God's will for them. For our salvation is so often

linked with the will of God. Epaphras was following Paul's example, who constantly prayed that they would be filled [s.w. "fully assured"] with the knowledge of God's will (1:9). If these brethren were sharing the same prison accommodation, we can understand how attitudes to prayer would be so contagious. Knowing God's will doesn't have to mean that we know the will of God for us in every situation. It is part of the journey of faith and trust that we do not. But His will is for our salvation in His Son; this we can know and experience.

4:13 *For I bear witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and for those in Hierapolis*- On :11 we noted that Paul considered these brethren, along with himself, to be 'working' for the Kingdom's cause whilst incarcerated. In :12 he observes how Epaphras was always striving in prayer "for you". I suggest therefore that the hard work [AV "great zeal"] in view refers to the work of prayer. And he also prayed not only for Colosse but for those he knew in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

4:14 *Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you*- Luke's loyalty to Paul had led him to accompany Paul on the journey to Rome, including the shipwreck; and perhaps he remained in Rome as Paul's personal physician. Luke was with Paul at the very end of his life (2 Tim. 4:11). We could therefore conclude that Colossians was written at around that same time. I have argued the same for Philippians (see on Phil. 1:1). In this case, Paul ended his days with desperate appealing to others to see the reality of the great hope he had; his focus was outward, not upon himself, but upon the spiritual welfare of others. However, 2 Tim. 4:10 contrasts the faithful Luke with the less faithful Demas, who left Paul, "having loved this present world". Colossians would therefore have been written slightly earlier than 2 Timothy. But the fact both Luke and Demas are mentioned together suggests the time gap was not that great.

It could be argued that Paul gives greetings from Jewish brethren, and concludes his list of them in :11: "...and Jesus who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers to the kingdom of God". He then in :12-14 lists Gentile brethren. If this is correct, then Luke was a Gentile. And his Gospel and Acts of the Apostles do indeed sound written [albeit under inspiration] from a Gentile perspective, ofte pausing to explain Jewish things as if he expected non-Jews to be reading or hearing his work. He addresses his Gospel to "Theophilus", 'lover of God', the kind of name a Gentile proselyte would take.

4:15 *Greet the brothers that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house*- This could mean that the church in Laodicea met in the home of Nymphas. For Laodicea is the context both before and after this mention of Nymphas [some manuscripts offer Nympha, a female name, and read "her house"]. We tend to assume that the size of 'churches' today was the same in the first century; but there is no archaeological evidence for dedicated Christian meeting places in the first century, although there is ample for the existence of house churches. The perversions which the Lord later criticizes in the church at Laodicea would likely have all occurred in the lounge or side rooms of a large house. Nymphas may well have been "the angel of the church" to whom the Lord's letter to Laodicea was addressed (Rev. 3:14).

4:16 *And when this letter has been read among you, take steps to have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and you also read the letter from Laodicea*- The letter *from* rather than *to* Laodicea may refer to a circular letter which was being passed around the churches, and was to come from Laodicea to Colosse. The letter in view

may well be Ephesians (see on Eph. 1:1). The wish for letters to one church to be read to another indicates that we are wrong to think these letters are merely Paul writing to one specific church, and that the principles have no relevance to us. They clearly do, for even originally the letters were to be read to other churches for their instruction.

4:17- see on Acts 12:25.
And say to Archippus: Take heed to the service which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it- Archippus was part of the house church of Philemon (Philemon 2; possibly the son or relative of Philemon). His ministry ["service"] was perhaps to minister there whilst Epaphras and others from there were away in Rome. This would suggest that the Colossian church met in the home of Philemon. if we are "in Christ", then we receive a ministry; receiving the ministry is predicated upon being in Christ, and therefore every baptized believe into Christ has a ministry, something to do; but we must "take heed" that we "fulfil it". To "receive" Christ (s.w. 2:6) is to also receive a unique role in His body, a ministry, a path of service.

4:18 *I Paul write this salutation with my own hand. Remember my bonds*- As he signed the letter, Paul would have been aware of this chain. There is here the stamp of circumstantial evidence that what we read in the Bible is authentic; for signing a letter would lead to reflection on the chain.

Grace be with you- The *charis* or gift of the Spirit was what Paul so wished to be experienced by all believers. And he often prays for this. We cannot therefore read this as a standard ending to a letter, which in any case would more likely have read "I wish you peace". Paul really felt that his prayerful wishes for them would have effect in practice.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 1 THESSALONIANS

1 THESSALONIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the

wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace*- Paul and Silas were only "three Sabbath days" in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). As many would have been working during the week, and Paul would not have been the only teacher in the synagogue, those baptized there would have had only a few hours instruction in the Gospel. It's not surprising that Paul had to now write to them about apparently basic things such as the Lord's coming and the resurrection. They were really "in God" and in Christ- Paul didn't want them to think that they had merely shown passing interest in some itinerant preacher. It was all for real.

1:2 *We give thanks to God always for you all*- The Old Testament as well as New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables, and we have an example here: *Pantote Peri Panton* (1 Thess. 1:2); *Polymeros kai polytropos* (Heb. 1:1); *hautee protee entolee* (Mk. 12:30); *aphtharton amianton amaranton* (1 Pet. 1:3,4).

Making mention of you in our prayers- This means more than just 'mentioning'. To mention before God is a Hebraism referring to actually having real effect upon God's view of the person or situation, just as might make positive mention of someone to a superior. Whilst the Lord Jesus is our only mediator, it is also that because we in Him, we can have influence upon God in regard to others; He is so open to our prayers.

1:3 *Remembering without ceasing before our God and Father your work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*- "Remembering" is a similar word to "making mention" in :2 (see note there). Paul brought to God's attention, as it were, their faith, hope and love. And we must ask ourselves, as to how much of our prayer time is taken up with telling God the good things about others? Paul says he did this "without ceasing". Quite a challenge to our prayer life, which so easily tends towards selfishness. "Labour of love" is literally 'toil', and is elsewhere translated "trouble" or "weariness". Loving others results in just this- weariness and trouble. But that is what love is about in practice. "Hope" refers not to a hoping for the best, but a solid expectation- in this case, of salvation, because we are in Christ. That hope was 'patient' or enduring; our tendency is to be persuaded of our salvation for a moment and then drift into the mire of mediocrity in that we lose that intensity of vision and expectation. But patient or enduring hope means life lived in the constant belief that we shall be saved. Paul commends them for this- and yet has to explain to them later that those of them who had recently died were not lost, but would be resurrected at the Lord's return. The Thessalonians therefore had a basic faith, that there was hope in Christ, and they endured in that faith; but their understanding of what that hope was remained clearly very hazy. But all the same, Paul commended them in his prayers before God for believing and having the sure hope. So whilst faith must have content, we believe in something, it is also true that basic faith in Jesus is acceptable even if we have details wrong as regards how it shall all work out in practice.

Note how many times Paul gives thanks for the spiritual progress he sees in others, even though we can be sure he saw clearly enough the spiritual immaturity which there still must have been in his converts. So many times he thanks God in his prayers for what he has seen in others (Rom. 1:8-10; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; 9:12-15; Eph. 1:3-23; Phil. 1:3-6; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 1:2,3; 2:13-16; 3:9; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; 2 Tim. 1:3-7; Philemon 4-7). Now it follows that if we are to *pray* like Paul, we must have the heart of love for people that was in him. So often we dwell upon the negative, the scandals, the failures of others. And we can't thank God for those things. Paul's pattern of prayer was of positive praise. And we can only share that if we have a mind that is positively perceptive of signs of response to grace in others.

Their "work of faith" recalls how James argues that there is no essential difference between faith and works. 'Faith' is not just credulity or a vague feeling of hope, but an active, driving force. There is "the work of faith" (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11); faith is something which ought to be 'done', the Lord taught (Mt. 23:23). Knowledge and faith are paralleled in John's thought (Jn. 8:32 cp. 14:1; and 6:69 cp. 11:27)- in stark contrast to this world's emphasis upon works rather than faith. Hence Isaiah's appeals to *know* and *believe* Yahweh (43:10); and the Lord's parallel of 'little faith' with little understanding (Mt. 16:7,8). *Pistis*, one of the NT words for 'faith', is translated in the LXX as both 'faith' (e.g. Dt. 32:20; Prov. 12:22) and 'truth' (Prov. 12:17; 14:22; Jer. 5:1).

Indeed, another word used in the LXX is 119 times translated 'truth' and 26 times 'faith'. There *is* a connection between true knowledge of the Gospel and faith. And this faith is the basis for our works. We don't just learn the propositions of the one faith before baptism, and forget them. The triumphant spiritual life *lives them out*.

We note that their "hope" is praised here, but they were seriously deficient in understanding what that hope was in detail, apparently not understanding much about the resurrection. Yet Paul perceived their faith in Christ and firm expectation ["hope"] of salvation in Him, and praises them for it- even if they were astray or ignorant in their understanding of how it would work out in practice. See on 4:13. We can only conclude that not understanding the details of our future hope does not mean we do not have a valid faith in Christ, nor does it hinder the validity of a baptism. But like Paul, we are to seek to fill in the gaps which believers have in their knowledge of these things.

1:4 *Knowing, brothers beloved of God, your first calling*- Paul was sure they had been called because he had preached the Gospel to them (:5). The call is therefore in the Gospel. Those who hear the Gospel are called; those who have been invited to Christ cannot ever claim they were not invited or not called. Paul doesn't want them to be in any doubt about their calling- he wanted them to 'know' it. And yet Paul is so positive about these rather weak Thessalonians when talking to God about them; see on :3. The Lord's mediation for us is similar.

1:5- see on Gal. 1:6.

How that our preaching of the gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit- As noted on :4, this preaching of the Gospel was the proof that they had indeed been called to the Kingdom; and they should not stop 'knowing' that they were called. The word they had heard had been backed up by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no record of any miracles being performed to back up Paul's preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). The confirmation of belief was in the gift of the power of the Spirit in the hearts of all believers after baptism. It was and is not simply accepting a word preached; that word is confirmed by the action of the Spirit. The "power" given can refer to miracles, but there is no record of them in Acts 17; I suggest the reference is therefore to the power of the Spirit within us; the parable of the talents uses the same word, translated "ability", regarding the gifts given to each believer (Mt. 25:15). It is the gift of the power of the Spirit which enables us to abound in joy, hope and peace- all internal attributes (Rom. 15:13). This is the "power" (s.w.) with which we are strengthened by the gift of "the Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). This is why Paul assures them that he can thank God for their faith, love and patience (:3); because they were given these things by the work of the Spirit.

And in much assurance- See on Jn. 15:26. As noted above, this could also refer to the gift of the Spirit in their hearts which was an assurance of their future salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The riches of full assurance (Col. 2:2) are the same riches given by the gift of the Spirit in our hearts (Eph. 3:16-18). But we can be given the Spirit gift, and yet not be spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). We must allow the work of the Spirit within us, and believe it.

There was a confidence exuding from the early preachers that they had arrived at Truth. They 'had the Truth' in that what they knew and had experienced was enough for salvation. Unlike the surrounding philosophies and religions, they knew whom they had believed; they weren't going somewhere in vague hope, they had arrived. They had something concrete to offer others. They preached from a basis of personal hope and conviction and experience, quite unlike the more 'political' methods other religions used to recruit members. The philosophers and teachers of the 1st century had little conviction about the value or truth of their position. But the Truth came "not only in word but also in power... and with full conviction (Gk. *plerophoria*)" (1 Thess. 1:5). This conviction was not mere dogmatism and self-belief; and likewise our witness must carry with it a "full conviction" that contrasts with the uncertainty about faith, hope etc. which many professing 'believers' of other faiths reveal when they are probed in any depth about their positions. Paul preached the seriousness of the issues which there are in the Gospel; and yet people flocked back to hear more (Acts 13:41). The preaching of truth involves the message of something being exclusive, and compellingly so. In the first century, "no pagan cult was exclusive of any other and the only restriction on initiation into many cults was the expense".

Even as you know what manner of men we have shown ourselves toward you, for your sake- Paul realized he was "a Christ appointed model" (RR); see on 1 Tim. 1:15. And so he framed his life in such a way as it could be usefully imitated, showing himself a pattern "for your sake". There is a fine line between this and posturing / hypocrisy. Paul was only with them for "three Sabbath days" (Acts 17:2), he had only a few contact hours with many of them. The greatest Christian instruction he could give them was himself. And they imitated him (:6). As many would have been illiterate, the word of the Gospel and of Jesus had to be made flesh, modelled, so that they could follow the pattern. This is not the same as the endless 'Let me tell you about myself' sermons which clutter Christianity today. To be a Christian is to be Christ centered, and Paul realized this; for he goes on to say that their imitation of him was therefore also of the Lord Jesus (:6). He wrote the same to the Corinthians: "Be followers of me even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He was to imitated only insofar as he was an image of the Lord.

1:6 *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord*- See on :5. The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking. Not only does he do it himself, but

he encourages others to do it. He doesn't use the word 'modelling'; he uses the word 'mimicking', Greek *mimicos*, normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul. "You became *followers* of us and of the Lord.... you know how you ought to *follow* us... an ensample unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication is that in the gap between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).

We all have more influence on each other than we may think. Quite naturally, the Thessalonians imitated the ecclesias of Judaea and also Paul personally (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14). And in turn, they became models to all the believers in Macedonia (1 Thess. 1:7). Leadership is essentially a process of influence, rather than a brother standing up and lecturing others. But the Lord used images such as salt, yeast and light to describe *all* who are in Him. They speak of indirect, constant, transforming influence rather than a frontal assault on the unspirituality of others.

Paul explains to the Thessalonians that he has consciously lived life before them in order to provide them with a template to copy; and their copying of that template in turn became a pattern to those within their circle of contact to emulate. In this we see the power of example, especially in the preaching of the Gospel: "You know what kind of men we were among you *for your sake* (i.e. Paul consciously lived as an example to them). And you became followers of us... so that *you* became examples to all in Macedonia... so that *we* do not need to say anything [because those who had copied Paul's example were effectively his voice to others]... for *they* [the converts of the Thessalonians, not Paul] themselves declare concerning *us* what manner of entry we had to *you* [i.e. the converts of the Thessalonians were a reflection of Paul's conversion of the Thessalonians]... you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea" (1 Thess. 1:6-9; 2:14). This last comment suggests that in imitating Paul, the Thessalonians were imitating the ecclesias in Judaea- perhaps indicating that it was those ecclesias who had initially influenced Paul and been his pattern, and now he was a pattern to the Thessalonians, and they in turn were a pattern to their converts in Macedonia.

Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit- At the point of conversion and baptism, they received joy on account of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 5:5 speaks of love too being shed forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. The outpouring of the Spirit is not only at baptism; we continue to be given it if we are open to it. Hence at Acts 13:52 "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit", and Paul prays that the Roman believers would be "filled with joy... through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). Life in Christ now is about "joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). One of the fruits brought forth by the Spirit in us is joy (Gal. 5:22).

1:7 *In this way you became an example to all in Macedonia and in Achaia that believe*- See on :6. The example of the early Christians, especially their deportment under

persecution and even death, was what converted others. The Thessalonians were convinced that what Paul taught them was not the word of men but the word of God, because of who Paul was: his life, his self-sacrifice, his caring, convinced them (1 Thess. 2:1-14). Paul speaks of how they had become examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia; and yet he also notes in the same context how the Gospel has been spread throughout those very same regions, Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7,8). Their example was associated with the acceptance of the message. Their faith had “gone forth” and so thereby had the word of the Lord “sounded forth” (:8 RV).

1:8- see on Acts 2:46.

For from you has sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith toward God has gone forth; so that we do not need to say anything about you- See on :7. Their following of Paul (:5,6) appears to specifically be a reference to their obedience to the great preaching commission: as if Paul is saying: 'Well done for realizing that the great commission which some of us received specifically, does in fact apply to you too!': "You became imitators of us... *for* not only has the word of the Lord *sounded forth* from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has *gone forth everywhere*". We see from this verse the network of communication which there was amongst the early churches. We read in Col. 4:8 of Tychicus being sent specifically from Rome to Colosse 'just' to share news of how Paul was faring in prison; and there were a whole group of "messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23). Communication was so important within a community which knew itself to be the body of Christ on earth, existent in order to build one another up. And yet with all our ease of communication, so little real communication goes on within the body of Christ relative to the ease of it. Communication then was a real sacrifice, and yet messengers scurried around the Mediterranean basin, in an age when most people never travelled more than 50 km. from their birthplace. And so the faith of those in Thessalonica, who had heard Paul preaching Christ for only three Sabbath days, spread far and wide.

1:9 *For others report about what kind of reception you gave us and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God*- See on :8. The record in Acts 17 says that Paul preached for three Sabbath days in the synagogue; and yet this verse envisages the Thessalonians as having been previously idol worshippers, and 2:14 states that the readership were Gentiles. Perhaps Paul preached to Gentiles too, although Acts 17 doesn't record it states that in addition to some Jews, a large group of "religious Gentiles" also responded. We would assume from Acts 17:4 that these were proselytes, or at best the religiously curious who also attended synagogue services. In this case we find great encouragement in our witness; for it can be discouraging to keep meeting people who are religious on a hobbyist level, but who seem unable to come to firm faith in the one true God. These were, it seems, the types Paul converted at Thessalonica,

attending the synagogue as well as worshipping idols. Confronted with the truth of the Lord Jesus, they realized that the days of having religion as a hobby were over; this was the truth, and they believed it. They perceived that they were called to actually serve this living God; that He was not just an idea, a theology which they could approve, but a real, live Being who called them not only to intellectually assent to Him, but to actually serve Him. The Lord's parable spoke of all believers being given unique talents, and leaving, as it were, the baptismal waters to go out and use them for Him. This call to service, rather than mere academic assent, is lacking in much of our witness.

There is an intended irony here, in that "atheist!" was the term for those like Jews and Christians who denied the existence of the gods. The irony is brought out again in Acts 14:11 where the people consider Paul and Barnabas to be gods. And the same point is made by Paul's comment that "you turned... from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). Although we see in Acts 14 man's penchant to believe in 'gods' coming out. Total atheism is unnatural and forced, man wants to believe; and we need to remember this when witnessing to those who appear hardened in their atheism. Underneath, they want to believe.

1:10- see on Mt. 3:7.

And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come- On one hand we are serving God in practice (:9), on the other, we are waiting for the Lord's return. The usage of "Jesus" without any title, such as "Lord" or "Christ", is unusual. "Jesus" was a very common Jewish name at the time. Yet Paul baldly uses it, in purposeful juxtaposition with the fact He is God's Son, raised from the dead, who shall return. Yet Paul along with that emphasizes His utter humanity, having a name as common as Dave or Steve in the Anglo Saxon world. "The wrath to come" may refer to the time of trouble of the last days which Paul clearly expected to come upon that generation; they should not fear it, because it was to be the sign the Lord's return was imminent. He may well be alluding to the prediction that God's true Israel would be delivered by "Michael" from the time of trouble of the last days (Dan. 12:1). Paul considered both Jewish and Gentile Christians to be part of that new people of God.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Brothers, you know our visit with you, that it has not been found vain*- "Our visit" is literally as AV "our entering in", and is the same word used by Paul for the 'entering in' by the Lord Jesus when He began His ministry (Acts 13:24). Paul clearly saw his ministry as a manifestation and replica of the Lord's. His audiences met Christ insofar as they met him. Therefore Paul's personal example could hardly be distinguished from the gospel he taught (1 Thess. 2:1-12)- he was his message, just as the Lord was His word made flesh. This is why 'authority' and respect are things

which are earned naturally in a community by those who have converted the community. It is hard to impose these things from outside the conversion experience.

1 Thessalonians continually uses the idea of being brothers / sisters (1:4; 2:1,9,14,17; 3:7; 4:1; 5:1,4,12,14,25). The Thessalonians had broken with surrounding society on the basis of Paul's brief "visit" to their town, and Paul wanted them to see their new society and family as being each other. They had rejected the cult of empire (Acts 17:7 "they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus"), and the family unit was seen as a microcosm of the empire. Pulling out of the cult of empire meant family rejection and being labelled as sociopathic destroyers of family, which was seen as the worst crime. And so the new converts were to regroup and resocialize as a new family unit. This needs to be increasingly felt by us as believers today; if we are separated from the world as we should be, then we will also naturally feel this same cohesion. The Roman father was seen as having the duty to teach his children the ways of the Roman empire / Kingdom. But Paul says that he is now their teaching father (:11)- in the ways of the new Kingdom. He "dealt with each one of you" like this (:11), implying the group he had converted was small enough for him to have taught each one of them individually. But his contact time with each of them would have been minimal; because he had to work "night and day" to support himself during the "three sabbath days" he was with them, and also those who were with him. They also worked; and they probably only had time together on the three Sabbath days he was there. Again we see the huge impact of brief quality time with others, getting to the point of things quickly, brushing aside the peripheral to focus on the essence.

2:2 *As you know*- Paul was only with them for three Sabbath days, and yet in his teaching of them he told them what had happened to him in Philippi just days before. The marks of the beatings and the imprint of the chains would still have been on his body. He would have been a living, visible example of what it meant to suffer with Christ, and of the kind of commitment which following Him required. And Acts 17:4 says that a large number of people responded to his preaching.

1 Thessalonians constantly alludes to what Paul taught them whilst with them, and to how he had behaved amongst them in the brief ["three Sabbath days"] period when he had been amongst them (1 Thess. 1:5; 2:1,2,5,9,11; 3:3; 4:2,6,11; 5:1,2). This letter is therefore a follow up, reminding them of things which they would have only very briefly heard. We see here the power of words and even brief contact with an audience; the power of brief encounter with persons who have a real message which they are living. People can change as a result of brief meetings with us; but we need to follow up on that contact. Those brief meetings result in us becoming like Paul was to the Thessalonians- a nursing mother (:7) and father (:11). We become like this not because of any charisma we ourselves possess, but simply because of the power of the message we preach.

Paul repeatedly asks his converts to mimic him, as he does the Lord. Here in 1 Thess. 2 he likewise presents himself as their pattern. Simply because we tend to learn more from a 'word made flesh', from living examples and mentors, than from a purely academic learning. And even in brief contact, we can model God's word, and the Lord Jesus, to others. We likely have had brief encounters with individuals who changed our lives; and we can do the same for others. This is where the work of evangelism opens up for us a totally different way of being, with huge possibilities in terms of achievment and relationships. Those with no relationships / family or a failed family, now have the opportunity to enjoy relationships which shall last for ever. Those who lament their lack of significance, who feel mere cogs in a machine or constantly under

the control of others or systems too powerful for them... now have meaning. Ultimate meaning, in that they changed others and became their spiritual parents.

The emotional level in Paul's reasoning here can only be described as very high. Those brief periods together elicited real emotional attachment, quite beyond what is experiened in this postmodern world: "affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (:8). Despite such a brief period together, Paul felt such joy [again, rarely experienced in the postmodern world] about them. And he knew that if they were finally saved into eternity, then they would be an eternal dimension in his eternal joy: "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For you are our glory and our joy" (:19,20). He would eternally be happy for them; just as he was now happy for them. He had all the 'in love' emotions of longing for another visit: "having been taken away from you for a short time in presence but not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire". But "taken away from" is literally 'orphaned'. He felt as a child feels upon suddenly losing their parents, so alone. Although the term "applies also to parents bereft of their offspring", and is found inscribed on tombs of children, describing how the parents are so missing their lost child. And yet that intensity of emotion was for him tempered by the knowledge it was only to be for "a short time"; and that truly they lived on in his heart. Perhaps he is here hinting at what he will make explicit in chapter 4- that even were they to die, he and they would be eternally united at the resurrection. Again the emotion continues: "How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the gratitude that we feel before our God because of you?" (1 Thess 3.9). And all this was despite the fact they were theologically immature [witness their misunderstanding of the resurrection in chapter 4], and their moral, spiritual immaturity hinted at in several places in the letter- warnings against sexual impurity and adultery within the church in 4:6,7, complaint that some were not working and just wanting support from the church in 4:10-12 and 2 Thess. 3:7-9.

Previously in Philippi we suffered and were spitefully treated- These are the very words used about the sufferings of the Lord (Mt. 16:21; 17:12 etc.); and of His shameful or spiteful treatment on the cross (Lk. 18:32). Hence Paul could speak of filling up the measure of Christ's sufferings through what he suffered whilst preaching Christ's Gospel (Col. 1:24). Paul was explaining and exhibiting what death and suffering with Him really meant; and people lined up to be baptized in response. They became followers of Paul and of the Lord (1:6). I suggested on 1:9 that the converts in Thessalonica were religiously curious Gentiles who attended the synagogue. But it was seeing the radical height of the call in Christ which made them snap out of the religiously curious mindset and be willing to sacrifice themselves for the Lord. The height of a demand motivates us to snap out of the mediocre secular mindset and give all for Him. Terrorist groups often find recruits among the uncommitted, religiously curious, secular types- who see in the rhetoric of total commitment something appealing. That rhetoric of total devotion unto death is found in the Lord Jesus, and Paul was a parade example of human response to it. The same word for "suffered" will be used in :14 and 2 Thess. 1:5 of how in turn, the Thessalonians "suffered"- with Christ, with Paul, and as an invitation to others to likewise sign up to the life of suffering and death with Him, that we might live with Him.

But even amid much opposition we were bold in our God to tell you about the gospel of God- Thessalonians tends to speak more about God rather than about the

Lord Jesus. This was because they had been persuaded to quit their many gods and accept the one true God (1:9).

2:3- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

For our appeal is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit- Paul didn't state bald facts and leave it to his audience to make their minds up, which seems to be the tendency of preaching in our age. He *appealed* for their response. He has to remind the Thessalonians that he isn't preaching because he wants to take money and have relationships with women (1 Thess. 2:3-12). There were some wealthy women in Thessalonica who accepted the Gospel (Acts 17:4 Western Text), and no doubt gossip spread from this. See on 1 Tim. 5:19. It goes with the territory that any preacher of the Gospel is going to suffer gossip and slander, no matter how wisely they deport themselves.

2:4 *But even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak*- We were "put in trust with the Gospel", literally 'en-faithed' with it, God gave it to us in faith that we would preach it (1 Thess. 2:4). The parable of the talents has an element of unreality to it, in that the rich owner gives all his wealth to his slaves and then goes away, leaving them to trade with it and increase his overall wealth. The storyline demands that we see him as having taken a big leap of faith in men and women who were not at all used to operating on their own initiative.

Not as pleasing men but God, who tests our hearts- If we know God's judgments- and this is an ongoing process- then our self-examination will become closer and closer to the real picture of us which God has. It is apparent that God *now* tries our hearts (Job 7:18; Ps. 11:4; 17:3; 26:2; 139:23), e.g. weighing up our motives in preaching (1 Thess. 2:4).

2:5 *For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness*- Usually, itinerant preacher rocked up in a town, taught their ideas, and demanded payment or donation, using flattering words of gratitude. Paul was only two or three weeks in Thessalonica, but he was teaching what he knew to be desperately and urgently and ultimately true. His teaching was no cloak or covering over a covetous desire for money or adulation (:6). It is this desire for money and glory from men which has wrecked Christian leadership and the wider church.

2:6 *Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ*- Paul turned up in Thessalonica and preached. But he didn't claim any authority to do so, listing his qualifications, explaining that he was an apostle of Christ etc. He simply preached the message. It's rather like the teenage Mormon 'elder' who comes to your door telling you all his qualifications. All that stands for nothing. The message is all important. Paul knew his motives well enough to be able to say that he did not seek glory neither from his converts nor from his audiences generally.

2:7 *But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherishes her own children*- Paul taught from the podium of the synagogue for three Sabbath days in Thessalonica. But he was somehow "in the midst of you", treating them as his babies. This is a challenge for all platform speakers. He was amongst them as a nurse with her *own* children. This is a touching figure- a wet nurse giving that extra special attention to her *own* child (as 2:11 RV a father with his *own* children); and like children, they mimicked him (1 Thess. 1:6 Gk.). This was quite different to Paul's background culture, where "boldness and abusive scolding were considered essential

by many of the wandering philosophers if their teaching was to have any impact". Many a Pentecostal pastor likewise scolds his flock for their lack of faith; but the leaders of our groups shouldn't be like this. There should be gentleness, an appeal for love's sake, rather than shouting and criticism. Paul dealt with his converts "as a father with his own children", encouraging, comforting, 'dealing with each one [individually]' and urging them to live a life worthy of God's grace (1 Thess. 2:11,12 RV). Note in this context how Paul says that he cares for them as for his own babies, as both the father and mother, and yet reminds them that "We were babes among you" (1 Thess. 2:7 RVmg.). His appeal to them was on the basis of the fact that although their parent, he was also essentially like them. Only as their spiritual father could he ask the Corinthians whether they wanted him to come to them with a whip or with a loving appeal. He *could* exercise the discipline of a father, out of his affectionate concern for them; but he chose, wherever possible, a better way. He normally uses the father: child image to show his closeness to them, rather than to impose his authority upon them. And so it should be with the true spiritual father or mother in our groups today. He asks them to copy him; his method of shaping the community was to present himself as the pattern. This was especially necessary amongst largely illiterate converts- one could not direct them merely to independent study of the text of Scripture. Paul even likens himself to a woman breast feeding a child (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 1 Thess. 2:7). And yet such wet nursing was considered to be an occupation for the very lowest of women in the Roman world; it was common for even a respectable slave woman to pass her baby over to such a woman to breast feed. But no, Paul himself, as their leader and converter, as it were breast fed them himself. This very nicely shows the link between unashamed, self-abasing humility and true leadership. And again, the Spirit chose 'shepherd' as an image of ecclesial leadership, when the surrounding Rabbis despised shepherds as dishonest. It's just the same as the Lord Jesus describing Himself as the humble King- a very contradiction in the terms of the contemporary culture. There is an intended juxtaposition in Zech. 9:9: "thy King cometh... lowly, and riding upon an ass".

2:8 *So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us*- As explained on :7, this affection or 'yearning' (Gk.) was because he really considered them to be his own children, for whom he would die. It is one thing to impart the Gospel to someone. It is another to give your soul to them, because you truly love them. I suspect we have all been guilty of merely imparting the gospel, without the heart that bled within Paul. They are two quite different things. Imparting knowledge, inviting to meetings, distributing books… is not the same as giving your soul. The AV of this passage says that Paul was "*willing* to have imparted unto you… our own souls". There may be a connection back to Rom. 9:3 (see note there), where in the spirit of Moses, Paul says that he is theoretically willing to give his eternal place in the Kingdom for the sake of his hearers' conversion- even though he had learnt from Moses' example that God will not accept such a substitutionary offer. To give your life, to impart a Gospel… is one thing. But to so feel for others that you would let them go to the Kingdom rather than you… this is love. No wonder Paul was so compelling a converter. There was such an upwelling of thankful love and reflected grace behind his words of preaching. The Thessalonians became so "dear to us" over just two or three weeks, and we wonder exactly how many contact hours they had with Paul during that period, given the demands of family and secular life, and Paul's need to work night and day to support himself (:9). But he fell in love with them, and treats them as his beloved babies; despite their weaknesses of understanding and

behaviour. For he had to warn them: “Abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3), and he had to teach them that when a believer dies, that is not the end, he will be resurrected at the last day (1 Thess. 4:13). 1 Thess. 5:14 clearly states that there were amongst them the “disorderly… fainthearted… the weak”. But moral and doctrinal weakness need not get in the way of a yearning love for our brethren because they all the same are committed to the Lord Jesus. Paul's example with the Thessalonians is a great example of this.

2:9- see on Phil. 4:16.

For, brothers, you remember our labour and distress, working night and day, so that we would not burden any of you while we preached the gospel of God to you- Paul was only there with them for three Sabbath days. But he didn't have the cash in hand to support himself and his team for that time; he had to somehow work, presumably doing manual work on a casual basis. He would have had no time to set up a tentmaking business in three weeks; at best he could have only worked for a tentmaker on a casual basis. So he worked nights too, so desperate was he for cash. This makes his love for the Thessalonians the more remarkable, for he twice mentions that there were lazy people amongst them who didn't work (5:14; 2 Thess.3:11). And he had only recently been thrown into prison and badly beaten in Philippi, so his health and ability to do manual work was limited. His example is even the more commendable because he knew that he would have been quite justified in asking for basic support. He reminds them again of this in 2 Thess. 3:8,9: "Neither did we eat bread for nothing at anyone's hand; but we ate our bread as the result of our own labour and toil, working night and day, that we might not financially burden any of you. Not because we do not have the right to do so, but to make ourselves an example to you- that you should imitate us". All this also suggests that the number of contact hours he had with the Thessalonians was limited. He worked by night perhaps so he could teach folks by day; but they too had to work, and so they learned the Gospel in a very short time. The power of the most basic ideas of the Gospel, even if one has only a few hours to explain them, is enough to radically turn around the religiously curious into those on fire for Christ, willing to sacrifice all. And it was during the course of his daily work that he won many converts: “You remember, brothers, our work and toil. *It was while* we were labouring night and day… that we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thess. 2:9 Gk.). People would have been stunned and deeply impressed by this man, as with lash marks on his back he carried water or shifted fruit or building material around the town to support himself... and it was whilst doing this that he preached and people believed. Celsus claimed that Christianity was attractive “only to the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children… [the Christian evangelists] were wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels [who enticed] … children and stupid women [to come along to] … the wooldresser’s shop, or to the cobbler’s or the washerwoman’s shop, that they may learn perfection”. This could almost be a quotation from 1 Cor. 1, where Paul describes the converts as just such people. And yet from out of their ordinary life situations, the witness went forth. Not from specially built halls, but from the workplace. And so it has ever been. This is why Pliny could observe that Christianity “penetrated not only the cities but even the villages and farms”. It was individuals converting individuals.

2:10- see on Phil. 1:10.

You are witnesses and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe- "Toward [AV "among"] you that believe"

carries the sense that they now believed, because of Paul's example. It was Paul's behaviour during the two weeks he was with them which left such an impression. All itinerant preachers demanded money; but Paul was to be seen doing manual casual work around the town in order just to get food and lodging (:9), bearing in his body the signs of a recent traumatic lashing and beating. No wonder his own example led people to Jesus. Ideas alone are only meaningful and compelling, especially to the illiterate, when they are made flesh in practice. And this was just what Paul did. See on :9.

2:11- see on 1 Thess. 2:7.

As you know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, encouraging you and testifying- Paul did not just preach to a group, baptize them as a group, and relate to them as a teacher to a class of pupils. He dealt with each of them individually. The language here is appropriate to practical exhortation and encouragement in a way of life, rather than theological instruction. Despite his few contact hours with each of them, he stressed the way of life more than theology (hence the need to teach them in chapter 4 that the dead in Christ are not lost but shall be resurrected at the last day). The Gospel of the Kingdom as taught by the Lord was likewise largely focused upon the way of life in Him rather than theological truths.

2:12 *To the end you should walk worthily of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory*- See on 2:2 for the emphasis on God rather than the Lord Jesus. Note the present tense of "calls you"; God is constantly calling us to the Kingdom through the word of the Gospel, and therefore that word dynamically works in us who believe. The basic Gospel of the Kingdom works in us throughout our lives, calling us daily, beckoning us onwards to the Kingdom. Walking / living appropriately given our calling to eternity, appropriate to the fact the Lord died for us, is a major theme with Paul (s.w. Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4;1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10). This explains Paul's huge teaching emphasis upon practical issues in his short time amongst them (see on :11).

The emphasis is upon *God's* own Kingdom and glory, as opposed to the kingdom of Ceasar, the Roman empire. For the opposition at Thessalonica had been because "they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

2:13 *And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when you received from us the word of the message of God, you accepted it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works powerfully in you that believe*- It is the Spirit which works powerfully within believers (1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:16-20 s.w.). But it would be a mistaken equation to therefore state that the word of God as in the Bible equals the work of the Spirit, as if we can squeeze the Spirit out of the pages of the Bible by extensive study of it. Such study has been impossible for the majority of believers over time, seeing they were illiterate and didn't have Bibles. And the Spirit of God is repeatedly described as a gift, given into our hearts by grace. The "word of God" rarely refers to the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation; and here we are reading of the *logos* of God rather than the *rhema.* It is the Lord Jesus who is "received" and "accepted", as the essential *logos* of God. The Lord Jesus is He who "works powerfully" in human hearts through His Spirit. But this working is not independent of the word of the Gospel; if we neglect that word, He will never force us. His work in us is related to our willingness for Him to work in us, and such

willingness will be reflected in our continued memory and [in our generation] reading of His word. That basic Gospel message continued to work powerfully within them. Spiritual growth is not so much from discovering new things about the Bible (which can become a mere form of intellectual titillation), but from being persuaded over and over of the wonder and practical implication of the basic Gospel truths.

2:14- see on 1 Thess. 1:6-9.

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea. For you also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews- This is a fairly clear statement that most of the Thessalonians were Gentiles, although they had been converted whilst involved with synagogue attendance (see on 1:9). What did Gentiles in Thessalonica know about the Jewish churches in Judea? Only what Paul had taught them. And it was he who had persecuted those very churches (Acts 9:31). Yet Paul was only three weeks at most with the Thessalonians. His teaching of them had involved personal testimony of his own shameful past, and how brave and committed those Judean Christians had been under his own persecution and torture of them. Paul would have been radically different from any other itinerant preacher; this man who worked day and night to support himself and his team (see on :9), with wheal marks on his back from a recent flogging and imprisonment in Philippi... who admitted to torturing and murdering Jewish Christians, but had changed because he had met the Lord Jesus, and was now urging Gentiles to convert to the Hope of Israel. His stories of those churches he had persecuted gripped the minds of his hearers, and they vowed to follow those brave believers. And somehow there was a credibility in Paul's accounts, a sense that really he was not making this up. They "suffered", using the same word as used for Paul's sufferings and those of the Lord (see on :2). Paul and the invisible Lord he imitated became their template.

2:15 *Who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and do not please God, and oppose all mankind*- Considering Paul had met the Thessalonian converts in the synagogue, his strong anti-Jewish rhetoric was purposeful. He saw the threat of Judaism and the Judaist campaign against his work as the biggest single problem facing the church. "The prophets" refers to the New Testament prophets, and therefore to martyrdoms which aren't recorded in Acts, which mainly focuses upon the work of Paul and Peter alone. As noted on :2, Paul continually draws a parallel between the Lord's sufferings and his own, and theirs. This principle is true for us; all our sufferings are a sharing in His final suffering, so that His life might be ours too, both now and at the last day (2 Cor. 4:11). They "drove us out" refers to how the Jews in Thessalonica had driven Paul out of town and persuaded the town authorities to ban Paul from ever returning (see :18). And contrary to the Judaist claim to be 'God pleasers', they were the very opposite. Judaism would have objected to the claim that they "oppose all mankind", but they did so in that they sought to stop Paul preaching to the Gentiles (:16). This is an example of how the implications of human behaviour are perceived and judged by God.

2:16- see on Mt. 19:14.

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved- Paul had preached in the synagogue at Thessalonica, and from this he had met Gentiles who attended the synagogue who were impressed with his message. But the Jews had forbidden him to preach; and like Peter, he had refused to be obedient. We also see here the huge and eternal significance of preaching; by speaking to men we can lead them to salvation.

The reference may be to the persecution of the Jerusalem church 'in the eighth year of Claudius' (AD 48/49), recorded by Malalas of Antioch.

By doing so they fill up the full measure of their sins. But God's wrath comes upon them at last- The Jews forbad or hindered the apostles from preaching to the Gentiles "to fill up their sins… for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16). This is quoting from the LXX of Gen. 15:16 about the Amorites. See on Jn. 12:31. The religious Jews are being painted as nothing less than the worst of the Gentiles in God's eyes. This was an argument Stephen had used multiple times in his speech of Acts 7 which Paul would have heard and been convicted by. And he now repeats that same basic argument.

Not only did the Jews crucify God's Son, but the book of Acts makes it clear that it was Jewish opposition which was the main adversary to Paul's spreading of the Gospel and establishment of the early church (Acts 13:50,51; 14:2,5,619; 17:5–9,13,14; 18:6,12–17; 21:27–36; 23:12–25). Paul speaks of the Jewish opposition as having "killed both the Lord Jesus and the [first century Christian] prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins" (1 Thess. 2:13–16). These are strong words, and must be given their full weight in our assessment of the degree to which the Jews were indeed a great 'Satan' to the cause of Christ in the first century. And Paul refers to them like this in :18.

AV "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" means that the wrath of God has come upon them. And yet even at the point when Divine wrath "has come", He even then still desperately waits a bit longer for human repentance. For Paul was writing this some years before AD70, when God's wrath fell upon Israel.

2:17 *But we, brothers, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence but not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire*- Often he speaks of his urgent desire to see the face of his brethren (Rom. 1:11; 15:24; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:17; 3:6,10; Heb. 13:23). It has been pointed out by F.F. Bruce that Paul's later letters reveal a marked *and progressive* fondness for Greek words compounded from *syn*-, i.e. together / with (e.g. *synergos*, co-worker; synaichmalatos, co-prisoner). Priscilla, Aquilla, Timothy, Titus, Marcus, Archippus, Luke, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Demas, Epaphroditus, Clement, Philemon, Euodias, Syntyche (the last two being weak in terms of spiritual behaviour) ...all of these are described by Paul with a *syn*- compound word. It seems that as he matured, Paul *needed his brethren*, he realized he wasn't so alone and strong-willed as he had once been, he saw the Christ in his brethren. Perhaps Paul's endeavours to see them again refer to how he sought to have his ban from entering Thessalonica reversed; see on :15 and :18.

2:18 *Because we wanted to come to you, I Paul time and again; but Satan hindered us*- As noted on :16, it was the Jewish satan / adversary / opposition which stopped Paul returning to Thessalonica. According to Acts 17, it was the Jews who got Paul driven out of town, which may mean they persuaded the local Roman administration to issue a ban forbidding Paul to ever return there (:15). All efforts to appeal against it had been rejected by Jewish pressure upon the Roman administration there.

2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming?* - Nearly all references to Paul's "joy" are in the context of his joy at the prospect of others' spiritual development and salvation (Acts 13:52; Rom. 5:11; 15:32; 2 Cor. 2:3; 7:4,6,13; Phil. 1:14,18; 2:2,17; 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19,20;

3:9; 2 Tim. 1:4; Philemon 7,20). See on Eph. 1:4. Paul could say that his great joy at the judgment would be to see his dear brethren enter the Kingdom (1 Thess. 2:19,20; Phil. 4:1; 2 Cor. 1:14); not just joy for his own personal acceptance. In this moment, "he that soweth and he that reapeth [will] rejoice together" (Jn. 4:36)- the letter writers, speakers, writers, travellers... Hence Paul "held forth the word of life" to his converts at Philippi, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ (through their acceptance) that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain". This explains the intensity of his efforts to strengthen his brethren: "As though God did beseech you by us: we *pray* you... be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). And later he could write from prison "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:10). Thus even in this life John could write: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth... I wish *above all things* that thou mayest (spiritually) prosper" (3 Jn. 2-4).

Paul's "crown", the nature of his eternal reward, was tied up in whether or not his converts made it there. He appeals to the Philippians to "stand fast" exactly because they were his "crown" (Phil. 4:1). His certainty at the end that he would receive the crown (2 Tim. 4:8) is perhaps a statement that he rejoiced that at least some of his converts would indeed be saved. Our focus likewise must be upon the moment when we shall stand before our Lord Jesus. The joy and crown will be tied up in the acceptance there of others for whom we have laboured. This is not to teach salvation by works; but the quality and nature of our eternity is clearly predicated upon what we do for others. Sitting in splendid isolation, insisting upon our understanding of some curious theological point as an excuse for non engagement with the rest of the Lord's body... is not going to enable us to share too much joy for others in that day.

2:20 *For you are our glory and our joy*- Paul has stated that their acceptance in the last day before the Lord Jesus will be his glory and joy (:19). We noted on 1:3 how in prayer before the Lord, he recounted the good things about his Thessalonian brethren; he gloried in them right now in this life, before the throne of grace in prayer. And our attitude in prayer now before the Lord will be our attitude at the last day. In that day too, Paul will be glorying in his brethren, and eternally (:19). All this is a powerful template for us to live by.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Wherefore when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone*- The "wherefore" references Paul's explanation at the end of chapter 2 as to how his salvation is tied up in theirs; they would be part of his eternal crown. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, it seems Epaphroditus was a great comfort to him; he didn't want to send him to Philippi, but he "supposed it necessary" (Phil. 2:25). Likewise, it was only when he "could no longer forbear" (1 Thess. 3:1,5) that he sent Timothy away from him when he was living at Athens, to strengthen the Thessalonians. Paul came to really need his brethren. We recall how Paul almost pathetically begs Timothy to come to him in Rom (2 Tim. 4); he so valued the company of others. So the sending of Timothy was a huge sacrifice for Paul, but he did so because he so loved the Philippians and was concerned at the state of their faith; for the nature of his eternity was tied up with their salvation.

Loneliness isn't at all a bad thing. Paul tells the Thessalonians how desperately he wanted to physically be with them, but God stopped him "time and again"; and so he concluded in the end that it was better for him to be left at Athens alone and send

his close companion to them (1 Thess. 2:17-3:1). But looking back, we realize that that aloneness in Athens had actually been for his spiritual good, even though he so longed to be with his brethren. And here those who so bemoan [understandably] their spiritual isolation as they live out their Christian lives in ones or twos can take comfort. It was whilst left alone in Athens that Paul's conscience was stirred within him and he began an incredibly successful preaching campaign (Acts 17:16-22). The image of that wonderful man standing alone on Mars Hill taking Christ to the masses there for the very first time is inspirational; but he only stood up there and did it because he had been left in Athens alone by a loving Father. His loneliness led to his spirit / conscience being stirred within him by the need of the humanity around him. His loneliness made him see how unique was his relationship with God Almighty and His Son.

3:2 *And sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith*- See on :1. Paul was ever concerned with 'establishing' converts in their faith (s.w. Rom. 1:1; 16:25). he was far from just notching up baptisms. This was a particular concern at Thessalonica, for they had only had Paul with them two or three weeks to teach them the Gospel. Paul uses this same word for "establish" another three times, but always about the Father and Son establishing the Thessalonians (3:13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3). Our efforts to establish others will have God working with them; we are Him to others. Especially in a situation like this, when it was impossible for Paul to personally visit and establish them (see on 2:15,18). God is the One who builds up even when we personally cannot. "Comfort" is the word used about what Paul did to them whilst with them (2:11), what he seeks to do through his letter (4:1,10; 5:14); and especially significant is the way that Paul uses the word in teaching them to comfort one another (4:18; 5:11). This is the sign of maturity of converts; when instead of relying upon visits and letters for upbuilding, they build themselves up.

3:3 *That no one be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that for this we are appointed*- "No one" reflects Paul's concern for every single member of the flock; see on 2:11 "each one of you". "Afflictions" is the same word used in the parable of the sower for the "tribulation" which inevitably comes to every believer, but which causes some to fall away (Mt. 13:21). It is however the same word used about the tribulations of the last days (Mt. 24:9,21) which Paul believed were coming upon them in the first century.

3:4 *For truly, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction. Even as it came to pass and you know*- Paul made a point of telling his converts that tribulation / affliction was bound to come (s.w. Acts 14:22 "We must through much tribulation [s.w.] enter into the Kingdom"). I noted on 2:11 that Paul spent his few contact hours which he had teaching the Thessalonians in focusing more upon practical issues than theological ones- hence the apparent serious gap in their knowledge about the resurrection in chapter 4. The persecution of Paul and driving him out of Thessalonica didn't calm down after he left- his converts were clearly targeted.

3:5 *For this cause I also, when I could no longer endure it, sent Timothy*- "No longer endure it" is a repetition of :1. Paul was so anxious about their faith because the nature of his eternity was tied up with whether they would endure in faith (see on 2:19,20). To send Timothy was a major sacrifice- see on :1,2. Notice how there was no distinction between Paul's will (*"When I could endure it no longer, I also sent...*" 1 Thess. 3:5), and that of his fellow workers (*"When we could endure it no longer... we sent..."* 1 Thess. 3:1,2). He assigned to his brethren his own feelings and decisions.

That I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you and our labour should be in vain- Despite having had these questions about the state of their faith, he had always been positive about their faith and endurance, even telling God about it (1:2,3). This means that despite his doubts about them and valid concerns, he believed in their status in Christ and felt towards them accordingly. This is no simplistic positivism, but a studied outworking of faith in what it means for a person to be in Christ. The source of the opposition at Thessalonica was the Jews, as 2:14-16 and Acts 17 makes clear. They were the tempters, the satan of 2:18. He personifies the entire Judaist opposition and Jewish plot against his work as a singular adversary. We note he likens the Judaizers tempting the Corinthians to the tempting serpent in Eden (2 Cor. 11:3). To go off to Judaism would cost them their salvation; and Paul's labour would have been in vain. But he has stated in 2:1 that his work with them so far had not been in vain.

3:6- see on 1 Thess. 2:17.

But now Timothy has come to us from you and brought us the good news of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also you- Paul seems to equate their good attitude towards him with having kept the faith. He was indeed so tied up personally with his own message that this was understandable. But he writes this in the context of concern about the Judaizers (:5). Their approach was clearly to defame Paul and shake faith in him personally. Paul must have endured defamation and slander more than most, and yet his positive, proactive approach continued. He didn't let it bring him down, as lesser men have often done.

3:7 *For this cause, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we were comforted through hearing of your faith*- Paul wrote to the Thessalonians how their faith was a comfort to him in his "distress". And yet he goes straight on to say that he plans to visit them in order to "perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (:10). I find this so wonderful. Their faith was imperfect- and yet Paul all the same rejoices in what faith they do have, and can speak of "all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God" (1 Thess. 3:9). Yet we are all too easily discouraged by the immaturities we notice in others' faith; instead, in a world where the majority don't truly believe, we need to focus on the positive in our brethren and rejoice in it, rather than holding them to some ideal standard which we claim to have in our own mind or understanding or perception. For when compared against the spirituality of our Lord, we are ourselves so miserably imperfect.

3:8 *For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord*- Paul could say that he lived, if his brethren held fast; his life was bound up with theirs (1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:3), just as his eternity was (see on 2:19,20). He was willing to be offered as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of the Philippians (Phil. 2:17). Time and again he rejoices in the joy and hope of others (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:l3; Col. 1:4); they were his joy and hope and future crown of reward in the Kingdom (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19,20). For them to be accepted at the day of judgment would be his crown, i.e. his reward and expectation which he looked forward to. It was for their salvation, not his own, that he would rejoice at the Lord's return (2 Cor. 1:14). His spiritual life was bound up in that of others; others who were many times his spiritual inferior. See on 2 Tim. 2:10.

3:9- see on Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 2:19,20.

For what thanksgiving can we render again to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sakes before our God- We noted on 2:19,20 that their acceptance in the Kingdom would be his eternal joy as they stood "before God" at the

last day. But in prayer likewise "before God" he rejoiced in their faith (1:2,3). We are to live now the kind of life we shall eternally live; in this sense we "have eternal life". And so Paul rejoiced that if the Lord were to return, or they were to die, at that moment... they would be saved. He didn't allow the understandable worry about the possibility of living longer and falling away to cloud his present joy. He lived not as a naive short termist thinker, but as rejoicing in what Peter terms "the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12), the reality which is gloriously true at this moment.

3:10- see on 2 Cor. 8:7; 1 Thess. 2:17.

Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and may perfect whatever is lacking in your faith?- We note the need Paul felt to be personally present with them in order to give them spiritual strengthening; he writes likewise to the Romans (Rom. 1:11). The need of his physical presence may have been because the laying on of hands transmitted some spiritual gift. But I prefer to think that this was not really what he had in view; rather, as noted on 2:9,10 and elsewhere, Paul presented himself to illiterate people as the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, and asked them to follow him insofar as he followed the Lord. This is why in his brief contact with the Thessalonians, he had explained to them his own past and shown them by example what a life in Christ looks like. And this meant that his personal presence with them was significant, and would assist in maturing, developing and completing their faith. As noted on :6, Paul rejoiced in their faith, even though there were things lacking in it.

Paul's description of praying "night and day" (1 Thess. 3:9,10) alludes to the sacrifices, prepared and offered "night and day" (Ex. 30:7,8; Ps. 55:16,17). There was clearly an element of preparation before offering the prayer, as there was before offering a sacrifice. Note how Prov. 15:8 likewise parallels sacrifice with prayer. Prayer ought to be a humbling experience, perhaps alluded to by the incense, representing prayer, needing to be "beaten small". Preparation of prayer involves humility. David takes words of supplication to himself, which as King he must often have heard from desperate citizens, and uses it in his own prayers to God: "Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call... A Psalm of David" (Ps. 20:9). In this one sees a conscious humility in how David formulated his prayers.

3:11 *Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you*- "God Himself" is involved in our lives, and can confirm us in our deepest desires. The same word is in 2 Thess. 3:5: "The Lord direct your hearts...". Clearly Paul believed that God can work on the human heart, directing hearts and in this case directing our path in life. There is no evidence, however, that Paul did re-visit Corinth.

3:12- see on 2 Cor. 12:15.

And the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men- As noted on :11, Paul recognized that the Father and Son can work directly on the human heart. Increasing and abounding in love is an attitude of the heart or spirit, and here Paul prays that they will be "made" to have this; the work of the Father and Son on human spirits is surely by their Spirit working directly in the hearts of believers. Paul talks of an “account” of good works that is ‘increased’ by each good work- an account not kept by us, but by the Father (Phil. 4:17). And if we ‘increase’ in such acts of love, we increasingly have a heart unshaken by the prospect of judgment to come (1 Thess. 3:13).

Even as we also toward you- Paul envisaged the love between the Thessalonians and himself as being a love which was ever increasing, thanks to God making it like

that. All human relationships seem to begin with an in-loveness which fades and even ends. The unique spiritual gift of ever abounding love is that the recipients of that gift go on increasing in love. And this will be our experience eternally; an ever increasing love between each other. This is why it is so serious if believers in this life will not love one another, placing barriers and stone walls between each other so that love has no chance to grow.

3:13- see on Mt. 24:28.

So that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints- It is the experience of the gift of the Spirit making us ever growing in love (:12) which will mean we can appear before God, the Lord Jesus and the Angels, or before our own brethren, with hearts which have been 'established' or set fast. This is the same word used of the work of establishing we do to others (:2). There is thereby a wonderful connection established between how the Thessalonians will be at the day of judgment, and the efforts made for them now by Timothy. And this is true of our work for others. No longer, then, is church attendance and interaction with other believers to be treated as mere attendance at the same social club. We are working for the establishment of others now, in a way which will help them become now who they shall be before God at the last day.

The context has been of love toward others, and so I suggest the "saints" before whom we shall have an established heart at the day of judgment refer to our brethren. "Saints" usually refer to human believers rather than Angels. If we have not dealt in love toward them now, how can we have an established, stable heart before God as we appear before them in the day of judgment? There is ample reason to think that the "saints" in this context of judgment day refer to the believers. The Lord Jesus comes to judgment with His saints with Him (1 Thess. 3:13; Zech. 14:5; Jude 14). It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us during our time in this cloud. The cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; the Lord Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Mt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: "Thither cause thy mighty ones to *come down*" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. The bride as it were *comes down* out of Heaven as a prepared bride. "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The apparent confusion between our gathering to judgment in Jerusalem and the judgment of the nations there at the same time is explicable if we accept that the meaning of time will be collapsed around the second coming.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Finally, brothers, we urge and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God*- “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward

another... to the end He may establish your hearts" (1 Thess. 3:12,13) gives an insight into the upward spiral of development which the Lord wishes us to partake in. The theme continues here in chapter 4: "abound more and more… increase more and more" (4:1,10). "As you received from us" lends further weight to the argument that Paul's limited contact hours with them were spent teaching them practical things about how they "ought to walk", rather than theological issues- hence the gap in their knowledge about the resurrection which Paul addresses later in this chapter.

4:2 *For you know what instruction we gave you through the Lord Jesus*- The abounding love which is the context here (3:12,13), leading to an established heart before both the Lord and our brethren at judgment day, means that we will not commit fornication (:3). Paul's brief time with the Corinthians had been an instruction of them as it were by the Lord Jesus, whom Paul manifested. "Instruction" translates a specific term generally used in the contemporary literature for military orders. Paul set them up as soldiers in spiritual warfare, and gave them specific commands about moral issues. All this was part of the teaching of the basic Gospel.

4:3 *For this is the will of God, that you live sanctified lives. Therefore abstain from fornication*- The Greek for "sanctification" here was a term used for consecration unto an idol. But that consecration often involved the use of the cult prostitutes as a sign of consecration to the cult. Consecration to the one true God and His Son was through living a moral life, and specifically denied such fornication / *porneia* / use of prostitutes. It was a radically new approach to religion. Despite Paul's praise of their faith and spirituality, the Thessalonians like the Corinthians appear to have been tempted to still visit the idol shrines and use the prostitutes there. Remember that most of the Thessalonian converts had been religiously curious Gentiles who attended the synagogue, which is where they encountered Paul (see on 1:9). It could well be that they continued this syncretism, by not abstaining from the *porneia* of the idol cults. Paul has praised them for turning away from the idols (1:9); but he is not unaware that some of them had not done so completely. Again we see his positivism regarding his converts, and his great valuing of their status in Christ.

The will of God is not always done on earth automatically; it's not determining of human behaviour in absolute terms; otherwise the will of God would exclude human freewill. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3 AV); but the Thessalonians still had the freedom to commit fornication. The will of God here refers to the wish / desire of God. But the fulfilment of God's will is of course up to the freewill of the individual. Which is why we pray for God's will to be done in our lives; not in the sense of 'OK well get on and do what You are going to do anyway', but rather of seeking for strength to personally do God's wish in our lives. And as we mature, our will and the Father's become closer. We ask what *we* will and it is done; and therefore and thereby we ask for the Father's will to be done.

There was evidently a problem with immorality in the Thessalonica ecclesia (1 Thess. 4:3-6). And yet the ecclesia was so eager for the second coming that some were throwing in their jobs, so certain were they that it was imminent. Clearly the moral implications of the soon coming of the Lord had not been felt. And this is why in every chapter of those epistles, Paul pounds away about the Lord's return- a fact which they knew and enthused about, just as we can, and yet would not face up to its real implications. If Christ is coming soon, we must quit the things which plagued Thessalonica- immorality, laziness, irresponsibility etc.

4:4 *Let each one of you take a wife for himself in sanctification and honour*- This command suggests that some of them, perhaps the younger ones, were using the

temple prostitutes (see on :3). A wife / woman "for himself" suggests they needed to stop having relations with multiple women and have just one woman, their wife. And yet we recall the warm praise which Paul has heaped upon the Thessalonians, for their faith and spirituality, even saying this before God (1:2,3). Yet he did this being fully aware of their weakness. In 2 Thess. 1:3 he states that the love of each and every one of them was growing and he rejoiced in this; and yet in 2 Thess. 3 he clearly is aware that all was far from well with the spiritual state of some of them. The AV gives "possess his vessel" for "take a wife", and the reference in that case would be to knowing how to use our bodies. This would then make better sense of :5.

4:5 *Not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who do not know God*- As noted on :4, Paul was aware that the church as a whole, and not just some of them, needed warning about not living "in the passion of list". We would probably have praised the faithful amongst them, and then singled out the weaker members and made it clear that we are addressing them, and not the faithful. But we see no such division in Paul's writing here. The Gentile Thessalonians had turned from idols to the one true God (1:9); but by 'knowing God' Paul refers to relationship with Him. If we "know God" we will not live "in the passion of lust". To know God is not therefore a question of academic knowledge of theology alone.

We noted on :4 that the context here could be regarding how a man takes a wife, or how he possesses his body. If the reference is to taking a wife, then marriage is not to be entered on the sole basis of wanting to legitimize sex, for that would be taking a wife "in the passion of lust". If the context is as AV of 'possessing his vessel' or body, then the idea would be that our body should be possessed by the outcome of knowing God, i.e. His Spirit, and not in the spirit of the passion of carnal lusts. It is walking by the Spirit which empowers us to not obey the lusts [s.w.] of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The same word translated "lust" is used in Rom. 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the *lusts* thereof".

Col. 3:5 uses the same Greek word for "passion" and adds: "Which is idolatry". I suggested on :3 that the specific *porneia* in view was the usage of idol prostitutes.

4:6 *Let no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified*- This appears to be a direct and sober warning against using another brother's wife. The context before and after is clearly in this context. I noted on :3 that the immediate reference may be to cult prostitution, and perhaps the particular scenario in view was in that context. Again we note that Paul is backing up what he has verbally taught them during his brief presence with them- he had warned them and testified about these things. And yet later in this chapter we find a gap in their knowledge about the death state and resurrection. Clearly his focus when with them had been on teaching the life in Christ rather than theology.

4:7 *For God called us not to uncleanness but to sanctification*- Perhaps the argument was that the usage of prostitutes was part of God's call; and Paul is saying that His call is to a holy life, quite the opposite. Religion and sex have always got mixed up, unashamedly so in pagan religions. This was the problem at Corinth and there probably was a tendency in all the Gentile churches to import into Christianity the religious practices to which they had been accustomed. This call to holiness and not to uncleanness is described in :8 as a "teaching" Paul had given them during his brief time with the Thessalonians.

Paul had the same calling as we do (Rom. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:7); in him above all there is set a pattern for all those who would hereafter believe. This may not entail

itinerant missionary work as it did for Paul, but all the same, the same essential commitment to Gospel preaching must be at the core of the life of every convert.

4:8 *Therefore he that rejects this teaching rejects not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you*- The "therefore" implies that to reject God's calling is to reject God. This is why most hard core atheists whom I know were actually exposed to God's calling and refused it. The Holy Spirit is given at baptism, the internal potential power to overcome the flesh and be transformed "in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16-20), but the Spirit is progressively poured out into the hearts of those open to it. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5), and Paul several times prays that converts will receive the Spirit in this ongoing sense (Eph. 3 in particular). The result is that we are filled with the Spirit in order to sanctify us; to live in uncleanness rather than sanctification is therefore to grieve the Spirit, to go against God's sanctifying intention for us.

4:9 *But concerning love of the brothers, you have no need that anyone write to you. For you yourselves are taught of God to love one another*- "But concerning" suggests Paul is going through a list of issues, perhaps brought to his attention as a result of Timothy's visit to them and his report back to Paul. Perhaps the Thessalonians had asked Paul to write to them about brotherly love; his response is that no letter from anyone can teach that better than the teaching they have from God to love one another. God's ongoing involvement in our lives is therefore to be seen as His constant teaching of us "to love". Peter uses similar ideas as found in this section when he comments that we have been sanctified [:7] through the Spirit [:8] unto "love of the brothers" (1 Pet. 1:22 s.w.).

4:10 *For indeed you do it toward all the brothers that are in all Macedonia. But, brothers, we encourage you to abound more and more*- Paul's desire for their love to increase came true, for he says in 2 Thess. 1:3 that their love for each other is abounding. This is a feature of the love which is formed by the Spirit- it abounds, it increases, it is not stable nor does it decline or fragment into familiarity and mere sentimental fondness for a person or persons whom we have known a long time. True love keeps on growing, and we shall eternally experience this. Love is something 'done'; they 'did' love to the Macedonian brothers, perhaps in reaching out to their "great trial of affliction and deep poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2).

4:11- see on 1 Cor. 1:26-28.

May you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you- "That ye *study* (be ambitious) to be *quiet*" (AV) presents a powerful opposition of ideas; to have heroic ambition to be quiet; to be self-controlled, living a blameless spiritual life in everyday things (:12; this is what the idiom of "walk" refers to). In 2 Thess. 3:12,13, Paul returns to this idea: He tells them once again to live a *quiet* life, and says in that context: "Be not weary in (such) well doing". Yet he asks them in 1 Thess. 4:11 to be ambitious to be quiet. By encouraging them to keep on being "quiet" he is encouraging them not to be weary in living a life of such ambition. And this is not the only reference to ambition in Thessalonians. Paul praises them for the brotherly love which they undoubtedly had. But he doesn't just say 'Keep it up!'. He exhorts them to increase in it, more and more (1 Thess. 4:10).

Paul's "command" to "work with your own hands" was backed up by his own example in the three weeks he was amongst them (see on 1:9). There was a congruence between his teaching and example; a word made flesh. "Mind your own business" may seem superfluous, but in illiterate urban society, with people living and

working on top of each other, gossip and over involvement in the lives of others was a problem major enough to split a church. They were to aspire, or be ambitious, not to be like that. And we can take the exhortation too. For the world of social media today is little different in essence.

4:12 *That you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing*- Paul perceived very clear boundaries between those in Christ, and all others "who are outside". The commands of :11 were in order to make a witness to those "outside", just as Paul had lived amongst them as he did so conscious that he was setting an example: ""You know what kind of men we were among you *for your sake*". "Properly" can also mean "honestly" (AV), and this would connect with them 'having lack of nothing'. The temptation in that kind of society would be to do what everyone else did, and practice petty dishonesty so that they could make ends meet. But by being honest, they would under God's providence "lack nothing". But the Greek can equally mean "that you may need no man". In :11 he has urged them to work with their own hands, and in this case, his argument would be that they then would have no need of asking support from others. Paul returns to this issue in 2 Thess. 3, where he openly states that some of them were asking for help but refused to work. Paul's great love for this group is the more notable, seeing that he speaks so highly of them all as a group, and having worked night and day, despite having been beaten in Philippi just beforehand, in order to get enough to eat during the three weeks he was with them.

4:13 *Brothers, we would not have you ignorant concerning those that fall asleep, lest you grieve like those who have no hope*- The following section addresses the question of what happens to believers who die, and it concludes by urging them therefore to be of good comfort (:18). Several times in these letters, Paul reminds them of practical issues about the life in Christ which he says he had already taught them whilst with them (2:11,12; 3:4; 4:1,2,8,11; 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:5; 3:10). If he had taught them about these issues concerning resurrection, we would rather expect him to point that out to them, and perhaps rebuke them for having forgotten. But he doesn't, which implies his brief contact time with them during his three week stay with them had been taken up with teaching them practical things rather than theology about death and resurrection. Yet he praises them before God for their hope in Christ (1:3). But they were seriously deficient in understanding what that hope was in detail, apparently not understanding much about the resurrection. Yet Paul perceived their faith in Christ and firm expectation ["hope"] of salvation in Him, and praises them for it- even if they were astray or ignorant in their understanding of how it would work out in practice. We can only conclude that not understanding the details of our future hope does not mean we do not have a valid faith in Christ, nor does it hinder the validity of a baptism. But like Paul, we are to seek to fill in the gaps which believers have in their knowledge of these things.

4:14 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again*- As noted on :13 and elsewhere, Paul had only taught the Thessalonians very basic theology; most of his teaching during his three weeks with them had been about practical issues of the Christian life. He is now drawing out an implication of the basic belief that "Jesus died and rose again". 1 Cor. 15:1-4 likewise defines the Gospel Paul preached as being this thing- the death and resurrection of the Lord. The flow of the argument here is that if we believe the Lord died and rose for us- then "just as surely" those who believe that will also be resurrected with Him. Of course, belief in the Lord's death and resurrection is more than a mere passing assent, but we see here the Gospel summarized. Personal salvation flows out of a belief in the Lord's resurrection. We

could assume that those who had "fallen asleep in Jesus" were on the same level of understanding as those who are here addressed, the other members of the church. They too perhaps had no clear understanding of the nature of things at the Lord's return, and yet they are assured of resurrection to salvation. The only other time we read the phrase "died and rose again" about the Lord is in Rom. 14:9 "Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living". 1 Thessalonians was Paul's first letter, so I suggest Romans develops the thought. The Lord's death and resurrection means that he is right now the living Lord of those who died in Him. They are still in Him. His Lordship is for all time, whether we die before His return or not, He remains our Lord. I will discuss on :16 how this idea is present here too. "The dead in Christ" strictly means not 'the dead who *were* in Christ [in their lifetimes]', but 'the dead who are now in Christ'. They are still in Him right now. Likewise in 1 Cor. 15:20, the Lord's resurrection makes Him right now "the firstfruits of them that slept". The tenses are precise and important in Greek. Not 'will become the firstfruits of those who sleep but will then be raised'. He has already become the firstfruits of the future body of resurrected ones; but "of them that *slept*" means that we are to view all dead believers as already awake. They of course are dead, asleep; but from God's perspective, the Lord's resurrection means that death is not really death and to God, they "live unto Him" and are alive.

Just as surely those that have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring up with him- We can read this as meaning that those baptized into the Lord will share a resurrection like His. "Bring up with him" would therefore refer to the resurrection. The Lord's resurrection is the basis for ours. Despite the emotion and hardness of death itself, our belief in resurrection is rooted in our faith that our Lord died and rose. When comforting those who had lost loved ones in the Lord, Paul doesn't simply remind them of the doctrine of the resurrection at the Lord's coming. His focus instead is on the fact that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4:14). The reality of the resurrection must mean something to us in the times of death which we face in life. Jesus and the New Testament writers seem to me to have a startling disregard of death.

But "bring up with him" can also mean just as well "bring with him". It could be that the idea is that the Lord Jesus will "bring with Him" from Heaven "them also which sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14) when the Heavenly Jerusalem (the believers) comes down from Heaven at Christ's return (Rev. 21:1). However, we know that the Lord Jesus will bring the Angels with Him. Being the guardians of those who have died, in this sense those people come with Christ from Heaven, although of course literally and personally they cannot seeing they "sleep in Jesus" in the dust of the earth. See on Dan. 5:23. Or perhaps there is in view the Lord's triumphant arrival in Jerusalem to save Israel with the resurrected believers with Him.

"Bring with Him" are the same three words used in Lk. 23:32 [again concerning the Lord] for the "criminals *led out with him* to be executed". The connection may be teaching us that if we suffer with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we are brought with Him to death, dying in Him, with Him and for Him- then we shall be brought out with Him in resurrection.

4:15- see on 1 Cor. 7:11.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are still living at the coming of the Lord- By or in the word of the Lord Jesus may mean that here Paul is repeating the teaching of the Lord in the Gospels. 1 Thess. 4 and 5 are shot through with allusions to the Olivet prophecy. A few of the more obvious are listed:

1 Thess.	Olivet Prophecy
4:15 "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord" Jesus	Jesus on Olivet
4:16	Mt. 24:30,31
5:1	Lk. 21:24
5:2	Mt. 24:43
5:3	Mt. 24:43,48,51
5:5 " Children of light"	Wise virgins with lamps (Mt. 25)
5:6	Mt. 24:13,25,42,49
5:9	Mt. 24:51

1 Thess. 4:15-18 begins with "For..." . This is explaining 1 Thess. 4:14, which states that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (up) with him". This will thus be true both spiritually, in that they will share His victory over death, and, literally, in that they will come with their judge to judgment. John 14:3 may also become easier to handle with this understanding: "I will come again, and take you to be with me" (N.I.V.). Initially, this may mean a literal ascent into the sky, followed by a return to earth to be with Christ eternally in the Kingdom. "That where I am, there ye may be also" may be the Spirit's basis for 1 Thess. 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord". The idea of literally travelling through the sky to the judgment seat was plainly taught by our Lord in His explanation of how "one shall be taken (literally disappear) and the other left" at His coming; "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Lk. 17:36,37). The point of this allusion is to show that as the eagle travels through the air with a natural homing instinct, without fear or worry as to correct direction, so there should be no apprehension in the mind of the believer concerning the mechanics of how he will be taken away to meet his Lord.

"And are still living" translates a Greek word which really means 'to survive'. The sense is that there will be a great falling away, either by apostacy or from physical death at the hands of persecutors; and those alive at the Lord's return are thererefore 'survivors'. "Alive and remain" (AV) shows that 'remaining / surviving' is different from merely being "alive". Being alive and surviving suggests that the "we" in view here is specifically those in Christ, alive at the Lord's return, who have spiritually survived the tribulation. For Paul writes here all through about those who shall "ever be with the Lord", the faithful.

Shall in no way precede those that have fallen asleep- This is emphasized because there was clearly some kind of misunderstanding that those who had died were somehow not going to have a reward; or that those alive at the Lord's return would have some kind of precedence over those who had died.

4:16 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven*- Alluding to how "this same Jesus" shall return as He was seen ascending into Heaven (Acts 1:11). We note the continuity between the Jesus of history and the Lord who shall return to the earth.

With a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first- The Greek for "shout" really means a shout of command. The command in view is for the dead in Christ to rise; we recall the Lord's loud shout to bring forth Lazarus from the dead. The shout of command is also for the responsible to come to judgment. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins suggests that initially, we have a choice as to whether to obey that command. And that will

decide our eternity. If we "open unto Him immediately" we will be saved. "The archangel" is defined in Jude 9 as Michael. The connection is clearly to the prophecy of Dan. 12:1-3, which speaks of the revelation of "Michael" as being at the time the dead are resurrected. "The trumpet of God" is also associated with the Angels at the Lord's return in Mt. 24:31: "He shall send his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet"; see on :14. 1 Cor. 15:52 likewise: "The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised". Perhaps there shall be a literal trumpet sound as the first concrete sign of the Lord's return; but the allusion is to the trumpet blasts which called the camp of God to move onwards in the wilderness, which announced the day of Atonement of Year of Jubilee, and which brought down the walls of Jericho so that God's people could possess the promised land.

"The dead in Christ" strictly means not 'the dead who *were* in Christ [in their lifetimes]', but 'the dead who are now in Christ'. In terms of consciousness and function, they are dead. But "all live unto Him", their spirit, who they were, is with God. As the Lord Jesus is alive now, so are all those who died in Him. They lived "in Christ" and He in them, and so at death they remain in Him. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9). See on :14. It seems redundant to say He is Lord of both dead and living unless in fact He is in some sense Lord of the dead.

4:17 *Then we that are alive-* Paul is speaking of the faithful believers in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 rather than all the responsible. He comforts them that the dead believers really will be rewarded with immortality, and that they can take comfort from the fact that they would live for ever (1 Thess. 4:13,14,18). Paul is therefore assuming their acceptability at judgment. "You are all the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) as opposed to the unworthy within the ecclesia, who were in darkness. This suggests that Paul wrote as though his readership were all faithful and assured of eternal life.

If we believe that we are counted righteous, we must likewise assume that all those properly baptized are equally righteous, and will be saved along with us. We cannot condemn each other; therefore we must assume each other will be saved. If we have a positive attitude to our own salvation, we will likewise perceive our whole community. And the reverse is true; if we cannot believe that God sees *us* positively, we will tend towards a negative outlook upon ourselves. My sense is that many of us fail in this area. Paul had many reasons to think negatively of his converts; and yet he writes to the Thessalonians as if ‘we all’, all his readership, would be saved (1 Thess. 4:17). And likewise to dodgy Corinth, he writes as if they would all be accepted at the Lord’s return (1 Cor. 15:52); he saw them *all* as innocent Eve in danger of being beguiled (2 Cor. 11:3).

That are left, shall together with them be snatched away in the clouds in the air- *Hama*, "together", means 'at the same time'. There appears to have been a concern amongst the Thessalonians about the fate of dead believers. The assurance here is that there will be no different treatment; the resurrected, along with those who remain alive at the Lord's coming, will at the same time be snatched away. "With them" connects with "ever with the Lord". To be with the Lord is to be with our resurrected brethren. For they are His body. Eternity with Him means eternity with our brethren. We must treat them like that now.

Jesus will return to earth for judgement with His Angels, as we are told in His parables concerning the judgement. In the parable of the wheat and tares the point is made that the Angels do not just come to gather the harvest, but also to separate the wheat from the tares. Thus it would seem that the actual process of judgement will be

largely associated with the Angels. We are told in 1 Thess. 4:17 that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air". The clouds must be the clouds of Angels with which Jesus returns, and may even represent the figurative "air" in which we meet Him first of all, as if He is manifested through the Angels which He sends to gather us to judgement (although it is quite possible to take the 'air' literally too).

To meet the Lord, and so shall we ever be with the Lord- The simple picture of salvation is that we will eternally "be with Jesus". And that has just been stated in :14. We will be 'brought with Jesus' and shall remain with Him for ever. It is all about personal relationship, rather than eternity spent in some optimal physical environment. Indeed, very little is said in the New Testament about the physical environment of eternity. It's all about relationship. The connections between the parable of the virgins and 1 Thess. 4 are strengthened by the same Greek word being translated "meet" in Mt. 25:6 concerning the wise virgins going out to "meet" Christ and also in 1 Thess. 4:17: "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up... in the clouds to *meet* the Lord in the air". The picture is therefore presented of the righteous obeying the call of their own volition, and then being confirmed in this by being 'snatched away' to meet Christ in the (literal) air. We will then travel with Christ "in the clouds" (literally) to judgment in Jerusalem. In no way, of course, does this suggestion give countenance to the preposterous Pentecostal doctrine of being 'raptured' into heaven itself. Every alternative interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:17 seems to run into trouble with the phrase "meet the Lord *in the air*". 1 Thessalonians is not a letter given to figurative language, but rather to the literal facts of the second coming. Further, the 1 Thess. 4:16-18 passage is described by Paul as him speaking “by the word of the Lord” Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15). If 1 Cor. 7 is any guide to how Paul uses this phrase, he would appear to be saying that in this passage he is merely repeating what the Lord Himself said during His ministry. This deals a death blow to some Pentecostal fantasies about the passage.

Those wise virgins who go forth to meet Christ immediately are those who will be "caught up together" with the faithful believers who will have been resurrected. This will be when the Angels "gather together *his elect*" (Mt. 24:31). They then "meet the Lord in the air" literally, perhaps connecting with Rev. 11:12: "They (the faithful, persecuted saints of the last days) heard a great voice from heaven (cp. "the voice" of 1 Thess. 4:16) saying unto them, Come up (cp. " caught up...") hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud (cp. " caught up... in clouds”); and their enemies beheld them". It may well be that Rev. 11:12 is speaking of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days, who will be snatched away along with us. This cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will then go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us during our time in this cloud. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Mt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: "Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. v 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The sequence of events here suggested

chimes in with the thought so often expressed by generations of believers - that our initial reaction to the knowledge that our Lord is back will effectively be our judgment, although this will be formally confirmed at the judgment seat before which all the responsible must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

The chronology we have suggested can now be summarized:-

- Persecution of believers.
- The Lord is revealed; the resurrection.
- An Angel invites each of the responsible to go and meet Christ.
- The unworthy delay, whilst the worthy go immediately.
- The worthy are snatched away into the air, forming a cloud of glory which is visible to all. They are physically with Jesus.
- Along with Him they come to Jerusalem.
- The unworthy are then gathered there.
- There is a tribunal-style judgment. The sheep and goats are together before the judgment seat. They are then finally separated by Christ's judgment, and receive their rewards.
- The wicked are destroyed along with the nations then surrounding Jerusalem.

The time scale for all this is unimportant- it could well be just a few seconds, if the meaning of time is to be collapsed, although there presumably must be a period of time for the cloud of witnesses to be beheld, and for the unworthy to desperately try to slap themselves into spiritual shape. The tremendous encouragement offered by the scenario here presented should not be missed: we will come with our judge, possibly already reflecting His glory, to the judgment. This in itself should give us a sense of humble certainty as we come before His tribunal. So much will depend on our reaction to the Angel's coming- our faith in acceptance, our degree of concern for the things of this life - all will be revealed in that instant.

4:18 *Therefore, comfort one another with these words*- The implication could be that they were indeed grieving as others who had no hope; see on :13 for the implications of this. The same word for "comfort" is used of how Paul comforted the Thessalonians whilst with them (2:11), how Timothy comforted them on his follow up visit (3:2), and how Paul comforted them in his letter (4:1,10). But the sign of true maturity amongst converts is when they can comfort each other (as also in 5:11), without needing letters and personal visits. This kind of spiritual autonomy amongst converts should be the aim of all missionary endeavour.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *But concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need that something be written to you*- It would seem that after the mention of the return of Timothy from his follow up visit to Thessalonica in 3:6, Paul spends the rest of the letter answering various questions they had given to Timothy, or issues which he had brought to Paul's attention. The question 'When will Christ return?' is absolutely typical of the questions asked by new converts, and adds some verisimilitude to the inspired record. They had asked Paul to write to them about this, and Paul says there is no need for him to write anything, because the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night, unexpectedly (:2), and whether we die before His coming or not is immaterial because the Lord died and rose again for us, that we might be resurrected like Him (:10); and our focus should be on building each other up rather than trying to

guess the date of the Lord's return (:11). These perspectives need attention in our days, with so much interest in "the times and the seasons".

5:2 *For yourselves know perfectly well*- See on :1. This assumption of prior knowledge suggests that this too was one of the things Paul had taught them whilst with them, lending weight to the impression that he focused upon the practical issues of the basic Gospel rather than any deeper theology such as the issues about resurrection discussed in the previous section; see on 4:13.

That the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night- The Lord comes as a thief to the unready (:4; Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39; Rev. 3:3). The argument is: You don't need to know the day nor the hour; just watch, be aware of the Lord and eager for His return at all times. This would explain why Paul writes as if the Lord's return was imminent when it wasn't in reality. We are to live, as part of the Christian faith, in expectation of His coming at any moment, regardless of any other indicators in prophetic fulfilment which might encourage us that His coming is near. We are to be watchful exactly because we do not and cannot know the exact date of the Lord's return: "Watch therefore; for you know not what hour your Lord does come" (Mt. 24:42).

The context is shot through with allusions to the parable of the virgins. The sleeping virgins represent the unworthy amongst the believers who will live just prior to the second coming. Paul's allusion to this fills out the details: the coming of Christ to this category of 'believers' will be like a thief in the sense that their privacy and spiritual house will be invaded by the reality of the second coming. This will be due to their attitude of 'peace and safety', which they will actively promulgate - 'Everything's great within the household, we're going from strength to strength spiritually, there's no need to fear failure in any form!'. That "they shall *say*, Peace and safety" (:3) suggests that this is an attitude which they publicly disseminate amongst the brotherhood. Bearing in mind the many prophecies and indications that there will be a massive spiritual collapse within the latter-day ecclesia, it is reasonable to assume that the faithful minority will speak out against this - to be met by a barrage of 'peace and safety' reasoning. Those who will stand ready for their Lord will be in the light, in the day, self-aware, spiritually sensitive and realistic, and therefore *not* saying "Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3-8). Christ's coming as a thief to the unworthy is therefore in the sense of His coming being unexpected by them, rather than being as a thief to the world.

5:3 *When people are saying: Peace and safety, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no way escape*- See on :2, where I suggest that the cry of 'peace and safety' is amongst the unprepared within the brotherhood. It could also refer to a brief respite in the troubles of the last days, perhaps offering a possible explanation of how the final invader comes down upon Israel that is living without bars and gates and at peace, "dwelling safely" (Ez. 38:11). Prophecy after prophecy describes a time of global cataclysm around the time of the second coming, even though this may be mixed with a fair degree of material prosperity. In no way will it be a time of "peace and safety" for the world; and their ever-increasing escapism shows that they don't exactly see it like that either. Biblically speaking, their hearts are failing them for fear, apprehensive concerning whatever is going to happen to their planet earth (Lk. 21:26, see modern versions). So I am inclined to see this as referring to a situation amongst the brotherhood.

Paul begins chapter 5 by saying that we do not need to know exact times and seasons (i.e. dates) of the second coming, because the most obvious sign is that it would come when some in the ecclesia were unaware- it would come upon them as a

thief. Likewise Jesus said that a sign more important that famines etc. was the tribulation of the household. The unworthy saints of the last days who are not watching will find the second coming take them like a thief (Mt. 24:43). 1 Thess.5:3 says that those who think there is "peace and safety" within the ecclesia will also find the second coming to be thief-like. Thus a lack of spiritual watching is the equivalent of the "peace and safety" cry. The attitude that all within the house (the ecclesia) is well and there is no real danger of tribulation will result in a lack of watching. What sense can we make of Lk. 21:36 if we deny the possibility of a persecution period: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" ...? "Pray *always* that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that *shall* come to pass...". Whilst it is possible that we will be *saved out of* the tribulation, to dogmatically say that we will not experience it, coupled with an attitude which refuses to admit the doctrinal and behavioural problems within the ecclesia, will result in us being lulled into a sense of peace and safety. This "peace and safety" atmosphere within the ecclesia matches that in Israel just prior to the Babylonian invasion: "Them that are at ease (A.V.mg. "secure") in Zion" (Am.6:1, cp. Lk.6:24) trusted in their riches and regular observance of a few religious rituals. But surely we "are all the children of light", and therefore "are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (:5,4). "By peace (prosperity) he shall destroy many" (Dan. 8:25) is the language of 1 Thess.5:1-3 regarding peace, safety and materialism destroying the saints of the last days. If this connection is valid, it shows that the little horn of Daniel will exert its influence within the ecclesia.

Ezekiel (8:8-15; 9:8; 11:3), Jeremiah, Micah and perhaps even the Lord Jesus (Is. 59:16; Lk. 13:8) over-estimated the spirituality of God's people in the run up to the 'day' of Divine judgment in their time. The "peace and safety" cry within the latter day ecclesia is part of an extended set of allusions back to the parables of Mt. 24 and 25, concerning the apostate, drunken servant who thinks everything is fine being suddenly destroyed by his Lord's coming. This kind of believer had been foreseen by Moses in Dt. 29:19; the type who hears the curses for disobedience, but blesses (forgives) himself in his heart, "saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst". As natural Israel will be awoken from their drunkenness by the final Arab invasion (Joel 1:1,2), so spiritual Israel will be awakened by the holocaust to come. The false prophets who lived on the eve of the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions told Israel that everything was "peace and safety" within the ecclesia of their time (Jer. 5:12; 6:14; 14:13; Ez. 13:10; Mic. 3:5). It seems that the latter day ecclesia will likewise have a faithful remnant who clearly perceive the apostasy, although they are surprised at it, seeing in it the clearest sign of their Lord's return; and an apostate majority, backed up by the elders of the ecclesia, who will claim with some aggression that this is all utter nonsense, and there is peace and spiritual safety within the ecclesia.

The day of the Lord will result in the wicked being "in pain as of a woman that travails" (Is. 13:8; 1 Thess. 5:3). The Lord seems to have alluded to this when He spoke of how the faithful just before His coming would be like a woman in travail, with the subsequent joy on delivery matching the elation of acceptance at Christ's return (Jn. 16:21). So, it's travail- or travail, especially in the last days. If we choose the way of the flesh, it will be travail for nothing, bringing forth in vain (this is seen as a characteristic of all worldly life in Is. 65:23). We either cut off the flesh now (in spiritual circumcision), or God will cut us off. This point was made when the rite of circumcision was first given: "The uncircumcised [un-cut off] man... shall be cut off" (Gen. 17:14).

5:4 *But you, brothers, are not in darkness, that this day should overtake you as a thief*- it is therefore 'walking in the light' which means that we are not in darkness; we will not be caught off guard by the Lord's coming, as by a thief in the night, if our general walk is "in the light" (Eph. 5:8; 1 Jn. 1:7). If we live as if in the light of His presence, His actual presence will not surprise us as a thief.

5:5 *For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness*- "Sons of light" was the language of Judaism for the hyper righteous within Israel. Remember that the Gentile Thessalonians had been synagogue attendees whom Paul had persuaded. He was saying that they, in Christ, were the true "sons of light". "The day" surely refers to the Kingdom; we recall Rom. 13:12,13 (see note there): "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the day". We are to live the Kingdom life now; in this sense, we "have eternal life", and that we are to live now as we shall eternally live. We are "the sons of the day" in that we are "the children of the Kingdom", another phrase understood by Judaism to refer to the righteous Jews- whom the Lord said would be cast out into the darkness of condemnation (Mt. 8:12). "Darkness" is so often associated with the condemnation of the last day; we are not to live the life of the condemned, but of those who shall eternally live the Kingdom life.

5:6 *So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober*- The allusion would be to the foolish girls who slept (Mt. 25:5 s.w.). This would explain the otherwise strange phrase "as do the rest / the others". Those "others" would be the foolish girls, and Paul is writing as to the wise girls. The allusion is also to the Lord's command to the weak believers in Gethsemane to not sleep, but watch- which they failed to do (see on Mt. 26:41). This conforms that "the rest" refers not to the world generally but to the failed believers.

5:7- see on Mt. 3:7.

For they that sleep, sleep in the night- There are many links between 1 Thess. 4,5 and Mat. 24,25; see on 4:14. The wise virgins slumbered and were sleeping at the time of the Lord's return. Paul matches this by saying that the *unworthy* will be slumbering and we ought to be awake and watching at the time of the Lord's return. And yet, the parable teaches that those slumbering wise girls will be accepted. This is a glaring paradox within the Lord's own teaching- for had He not taught that the faithful servants will be awake and watching when their Lord returns? Yet the paradox is there to flag a major message- that even though the last generation of believers may well not be ready and watching as they should be, their humble recognition of the very likelihood of their oil running out would be their saving grace. And within 1 Thess. 5:6-10 this same paradox is brought out: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us *watch* and be sober. For they that *sleep sleep* in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we *wake [s.w. watch]* or *sleep*, we should live together with him". The same Greek words are italicized. The contrast is between those who watch and those who sleep. And yet Christ died to save both those who watch / are awake, and those who sleep, as the 'wise' virgins slept when they ought not to have done. Both those who watch and those who sleep [after the humble pattern of the wise virgins] will be saved due to the fact that Christ died to save sinners, to save the sleepy as well as the more lively- if they are truly and humbly in Him. Likewise the Lord's parables generally include two types- the self-righteous

rejected, and the accepted, who have something spiritually the matter with them. They either enter the Kingdom with splinters in their spiritual vision / perception, or are totally blinded by planks in their vision and will be rejected.

And they that are drunk, are drunk in the night- The allusion is to the parable of the believer who thinks the Lord delays His coming and starts drinking (Mt. 24:49; Lk. 12:45) rather than caring for his brethren. Lk. 21:34 uses the same word to say that believers must beware lest the Lord's coming is a shock for them (cp. "a thief in the night") due to their being drunk. This scenario could well arise if there is a brief respite in the traumas of the last days, all seems to be resolved politically, and there is an upsurge of global wealth.

5:8 *But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation*- "We are of the day" means that we are living the Kingdom life now- see on :5. This means that we shall be "sober", aware, perceptive and watching for the things of the Lord. Peter three times uses the word in appealing for us to be "sober" in the light of the Lord's imminent return (1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). The armour listed here is defensive- against the temptation to be unready for the Lord's return. The Thessalonian converts had once been synagogue attendees, and would have appreciated that it was only the High Priest who put on the breastplate. No ordinary Israelite would ever have had the ambition to dream of wearing it. But as often, Paul calls the believers to the heights of spiritual ambition. They were not mere spectators at a show, but participants, the priestly tribe, called to do even the work of the High Priest on earth. The helmet guards the head, the mind, the thinking, which Paul presents as the essence of Christianity. If really we are persuaded that we shall eternally live the spiritual life, we shall not give in to petty temptation now. But we must clothe ourselves with that as a helmet, just as we must of our own volition clothe ourselves with Christ in baptism. "Hope", *elpis*, doesn't mean 'hoping for the best', but rather a solid confidence that we shall be saved. This shall guard our thinking, and keep us ready and eager for the Lord's return.

5:9 *For God has not destined us to suffer His wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*- As noted on :8, the certain hope of salvation will keep us eagerly watching for His return, far more so than any understanding of prophetic interpretation. Paul therefore underlines this point here in :9; we were in fact predestined to salvation, and not to condemnation. He wants us to be saved; hence we have the sure Hope, and believing that if the Lord were to return now, we shall surely be saved... will make us ever eagerly watchful for His coming.

5:10 *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him*- As explained on :8 and :9, we will be eagerly watching for the Lord's return if we surely believe that it means salvation for us; and Paul yet further underlines this by saying that the Lord died so that we should be saved. As explained on :7, the "sleep" here can be interpreted in line with the rest of the chapter, where it refers to spiritual sleep rather than the sleep of death. The paradox of those who should not be asleep being saved is an allusion to the fact that even the wise girls of the parable also fell asleep, but were saved by grace. And yet the passage could just as well be saying that whether we are dead or alive at the Lord's return is no big issues; because we shall be resurrected and live with the Lord, and this was the whole purpose of His death for us. See on :1. In 4:14,17 the same language has been used for those who fall asleep in death before the Lord comes, and the issue of what shall happen to those who are alive at His coming is discussed there.

5:11- see on :1.

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, even as you already do- As explained on :8 and :9, we should encourage each other with the fact that if the Lord returns right now, we really shall be saved. And we must ask how often we specifically state this to each other. As noted on 4:18, this ability to build each other up was a sign of maturity, rather than relying upon visits and letters to encourage them. The words for 'encourage' and 'build up' are also found in the record of how these things are done to believers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). But that Spirit power is partly mediated to the members of the body of Christ through the other members (Eph. 4:16); our efforts to build each other up are a channel for the Spirit, and will be blessed.

5:12 *But brothers, we urge you to recognize those that labour among you, who are over you in the Lord and who encourage you*- Although the work of encouragement was to be done by each member (:11), there were spiritual leaders in the group, who should be recognized and respected on the basis that they were labouring for the upbuilding of the community. This is the basis of respect and recognition; not the mere possession of office. It would seem from "But brothers..." that there was a tendency for them not to respect their elders.

5:13 *Esteem these exceedingly high in love, for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves*- As noted on :12, they should be respected for the sake of their work of upbuilding others, and not just because they demand respect or hold an office. "Be at peace among yourselves" suggests (as on :12) that the tendency not to respect elders leads to frictions amongst the group. And that is why those communities who do not have an eldership system are noted for the endless arguments amongst themselves.

5:14 *And we exhort you, brothers, warn the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all*- Despite knowing there were such within the church, Paul wrote so highly of them and spoke so positively of them before God (1:2,3). He saw them as "in Christ" and shared the Lord's view of imputed righteousness towards them. They were all exhorted to do the work of warning, encouraging and supporting; unless "brothers" refers specifically to the eldership. But the context is of Paul addressing the entire church membership, and he uses "brothers" specifically about them rather than about the eldership (:12,13). Being a member of the body of Christ means we are to take responsibility for others, and not resign it all to the eldership. The 'warning' of the disorderly was presumably with the consequence of temporary exclusion from the local congregation; for that is the consequence advised by Paul for "the disorderly" in 2 Thess. 3. The fainthearted were presumably those who struggled to believe the great truths explained in :8 and :9, that we really can be sure that we shall be saved if the Lord returns right now. See on :11. The allusion is to Is. 35:3,4, where in the context of a vision of the Kingdom, the weak minded are urged to believe it as wonderfully true for them. Being "longsuffering" may allude to the parable of Mt. 18:26,29, where those indebted to us beg for "longsuffering", and we are to frankly forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. This idea is continued in :15.

5:15 *See that no one repays anyone evil with evil, but always follow after that which is good one toward another and toward all*- This follows on from the appeal at the end of :14 to be forgiving toward all. Forgiveness is "that which is good", and again they are told to practice this "toward all". To not forgive is therefore to repay evil with evil. The response to evil done is therefore to forgive, and there is no assumption here that we are to forgive only if repentance is shown. Paul uses the same

words when commenting that Alexander had done him much evil, but the Lord would repay that evil (2 Tim. 4:14). The commands not to repay evil for evil are therefore because it is not for *us* to do this, but for the Lord (Rom. 12:17; 1 Pet. 3:9). Instead of repaying evil for evil, we are to bless or forgive (1 Pet. 3:9). But that is not to say that the person shall not have the evil repayed at the last day. But for us to do so in this life would be a form of playing God.

5:16 *Rejoice always*- A life of joy cannot be experienced if we are unforgiving and bent on repaying evil (:15). The insistent stress by Paul on the need to live lives worthy of our beliefs is really powerful. He knew that this was the main drawing power for the community. It has often been pointed out that sections of his letters seem to have strong links between them. Consider:

1 Thess. 5	Rom. 12
:12,13a	Respect elders
:3-8	Don't think too highly of yourselves
:13b	Peace among yourselves
:18	Peace with all men
:14	Care for weak and unruly (14:1); Receive the weak
:15	Not evil for evil, but good to all men
:17	Not evil for evil, but good to all men
:16	Rejoice always
:12	Rejoice in hope
:17	Pray unceasingly
:17	Continue in prayer
:19	Don't quench the Spirit
:11	Fervent in spirit
:20	Don't despise prophecy
:6	Prophecy
:21	Test all things, hold fast to good
:9	Cleave to good
:22	Avoid evil
:9	Hate evil

The conclusion from this could be that there was in fact a common document to which Paul is referring- a kind of practical guide to true Christian living that was expected of converts. If this is the case, then the early community would have been committed to being joyful, prayerful, tolerant, peaceful, loving, humble, Bible based, as a fundamental principle. These were what accepting Christ in baptism would have required.

5:17- see on Jude 20.

Pray without ceasing- The allusion is to the unceasing sacrifices of the tabernacle, which could be understood as speaking of our prayers. When Paul wrote of praying "night and day", it could be that he refers to his twice daily prayer times. For he was hardly praying 24/7. The idea is that we should live in an atmosphere of prayer, and not give up on an issue after a short time.

5:18 *In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you*- God specifically wants us to be thankful, just as any parent seeks the virtue of gratitude in their children. Paul was again a word made flesh, for he has written earlier of his own constant thankfulness (1:2; 3:9,10). The Thessalonians were "appointed" to tribulation (3:3), but the will of God was just as much for their final salvation and for their gratitude, therefore, for all things in life; knowing that they are all somehow working towards that great salvation which is God's ultimate will.

5:19 *Do not quench the Spirit*- Verses 19-24 seem to mostly speak of the activity of the Spirit which was and is so central to the life of all believers and churches. All are given the gift of the Spirit on baptism, but this will not help us unless we allow it. Hence the Corinthians were given the gift but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). We can in this sense "quench the Spirit". I noted earlier that chapters 4 and 5 are full of connections back to Matthew 24 and 25, especially the parable of the foolish virgins. We may have another link here, in that "quench" is the same word used in "our lamps are gone out", 'quenched' (Mt. 25:8). They had no oil- the Spirit. They were "not spiritual". Eph. 4:30 [see note there] puts it another way in appealing for us not to grieve the Spirit, not to frustrate God's intention to transform us mentally now and physically at the Lord's return.

5:20 *Do not despise prophecies*- The gift of the Spirit is as real today as it was then, but in the first century there was the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit which was required for those times. The gift of prophecy was required in order to communicate God's word to the new community; for the New Testament was not then written or at least not in circulation in its current form. The Thessalonians had warmly accepted Paul's preaching, impressed by his personal example and the congruence of his life with his message; but when their elders gave them prophetic words from the Spirit, there was a tendency to despise them. We noted on :12 and :13 that they were not as respectful to their elders as they might have been, and this was particularly serious when those elders were speaking to them by direct Spirit inspiration.

5:21- see on Job 34:4,5.

Test all things. Hold fast to what is good- As noted on :20, there were gifts of prophecy available in order to teach the new, illiterate communities what was the Lord's word for them. But there were false prophets around, and so the various prophetic words had to be tested. There was apparently a Spirit gift specifically for this (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Cor. 14:29 and see on Rom. 9:1). When a prophetic word was authenticated as legitimate, they were to "hold fast" to it and to generally "what is good". And by doing so, they would "abstain from evil" (:22).

5:22 *Abstain from evil wherever it appears*- See on :21. This abstaining from evil may specifically refer to rejecting false prophecies. But we can also read this on a more general level; we should abstain from every appearing of sin; wherever it comes up, we should abstain (this verse *doesn't* mean 'don't do things which look as if they're sinful'). Whenever we hear of sin we should seek to cover it, not to show it forth more widely, and especially seek for it to be forgiven. By doing so we will reflect our own experience of how God has dealt with His knowledge of our sins. "A talebearer

reveals secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conceals (Heb. 'covers') the matter" (Prov. 11:13). And it is the Spirit which is the context here in :19-24.

5:23- see on Phil. 1:10.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ- The context in :19-24 is of the work of the Spirit; and it is the Spirit which sanctifies or makes us holy (1 Cor. 6:11). The Holy Spirit is literally 'the spirit of holiness / sanctification'; "sanctify" here is a form of the word for "holy". It is by the Spirit that we are made holy or sanctified. That work of sanctification affects every part of our lives and being- it operates upon us "completely". However the Greek translated "completely" is a unique word in the New Testament, and literally means 'complete to the end'. The Spirit works in our minds now to progressively transform us, and it is that same Spirit which shall transform our bodies physically at the last day into immortality (Rom. 8:11). Paul has spoken earlier of the possibility of being alive at the Lord's return, and this was his great wish as it is ours. And it seems he has that in view here, in wishing that their whole spirit, person ["soul"] and even their body would be "preserved blameless" at the Lord's coming. We are or course sinful, but we are counted as "blameless"; as explained in Romans 8, the work of the Spirit is to make us in reality how we are counted by the grace of imputed righteousness. That grace has its outflow in the grace or gift of the Spirit in transforming us into that which we are counted as by status.

Paul at times quotes from or alludes to popular Jewish ideas with which he may not have necessarily agreed. The lack of quotation marks in New Testament Greek means that it's hard for us at this distance to discern when he does this – but it seems to me that it's going on a lot in his writings. Thus he uses the phrase "your whole spirit, soul and body", a popular Jewish expression for 'the whole person' – but it's clear from the rest of Paul's writings that he didn't see the body and soul as so separate.

5:24 *Faithful is He that calls you, who will also do it*- We are called to salvation. To get us there, as it were, the Spirit is being used to transform us and then to finally change us at the Lord's return from mortal to immortal; see on :23. Paul here simply states that we have been called to this, and He really will do it. This repeats the argument in Romans 8- that we were called to be saved, and so the Spirit will work to transform the called into a position whereby they will actually be saved.

5:25 *Brothers, pray for us*- Paul's authority was strengthened by his openness and exposure of his vulnerability. He needed their prayers.

5:26 *Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss*- "A holy kiss" seems to have been the way of concluding a first century Christian meeting, in the same way as Paul ends some of his letters with this (1 Thess. 5:26; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14). It's hard to translate into our terms the huge meaning of this in the first century world. It would've been unthinkable for a slave to take such initiative to kiss their master, or indeed any free person. This practice of all kissing everyone else in the congregation would've been arresting and startling. Sociologically, it stood no chance of ever being done. And yet these social and inter-personal miracles were what made Christianity stand out so noticeably- and in essence, our overcoming of social and inter-personal barriers ought to do the same for our community in the present world. But does it? Are we *so* markedly different from others... ? Is our love and unity of such an evidently deep and different quality? The implication is that all these various slaves from different households did meet each other for fellowship. We can

imagine the issues they faced with shifts, getting free time off, permission to leave the household etc. And the same effort is required by us to achieve face to face fellowship in Christ.

5:27 *I solemnly implore you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the brothers*- Revelation, Thessalonians and Colossians contain specific statements that the material was to be read out loud to the [illiterate] church members (Rev. 1:3; 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16); but the contents of those books require quite detailed analysis, which we tend to wrongly assume can only be given by reading the text. The processes of occasional listening to a text [employed by most first century believers] and reading a text [employed by many twenty first century believers] are quite different. We can go back to a text, re-read it, re-access it at will. Someone who occasionally hears a passage read, and who maybe only heard parts of the New and Old Testaments read once or twice in their lives, simply relates to the text differently. Further, the nature of the reading of the text, the delivery of the speaker, would've played an important part in the interpretation of it by the illiterate hearer- hence the greater responsibility of teachers in the first century than today. For the illiterate audience, the message was tied up with the messenger to a huge degree. Hence Timothy is told to pay attention to his [public?] reading, preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13).

5:28 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*- "Grace" often refers to the gift of the Spirit, the power of new life within the heart of the believer which is given by the Lord Jesus. "Be with you" can as well be translated "be within you", for this is where the Spirit most essentially operates. And such spiritual mindedness was Paul's greatest wish for all believers.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2 THESSALONIANS

2 THESSALONIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it,

respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- As the three of them were still together, we can assume that the second letter was written soon after the first. The emphasis upon "God" rather than the Lord Jesus continues, appropriate to the way they had converted to the one true God after being pagans (1 Thess. 1:9).

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- There was real meaning and intention behind these greetings and farewells. Grace, *charis*, often refers to the gift of the Spirit, and peace, Biblically, refers to peace with God through forgiveness. And Paul believed that by his prayers and wish, these things could be true for the readership.

1:3 *Brothers, we are obligated to thank God always for you, as is appropriate, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other*- As in 1 Thess. 1:2,3, Paul talked to God about the Thessalonians, thanking God for their spirituality. We need to have this feature in our prayer life too. And yet in chapter 3 it is clear that all was not well with the community; those sponging off others were hardly abounding in their love toward the others. But Paul's positivism, and faith in their status in Christ and His grace, was such that he genuinely held this view of them. See on 1 Thess. 4:4.

1:4 *So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure*- We recall Paul's boasting of the Corinthians' promised generosity to his Jerusalem Poor Fund. Despite all the betrayals and disappointments of his life, Paul's positivism about his converts- to God, to them and to others- is a real inspiration. The opposition to Paul during his brief visit

had obviously continued, but those converts- who had had only three weeks of Paul's time and probably only a few real contact hours with him- were still enduring. This is the abiding power of true ideas, of the Gospel, and of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to those who believe it.

1:5 *These are proof that God's judgment is righteous, and you are enduring them to the end you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer*- That "we must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom" was Paul's standard teaching (Acts 14:22). We are only accounted worthy of the Kingdom by the grace of God's plan of imputing righteousness to us. And yet because He counts us worthy, He works in our lives to make us in reality what we are by the status He has granted us. Romans 8 caps the previous teaching about imputed righteousness by teaching about the work of the Spirit in our hearts and the purpose of suffering- because these are the means by which we are brought in practice to that status of rightness with God which has been counted to us. And in 1:11 Paul uses the same word in praying that God would count them worthy of the calling he has given them; and this again is the language of Romans 8, where the predestined calling of God is cited as the great example of salvation by grace. This prayer for them to be 'counted worthy' as therefore uttered in full awareness that the process would require suffering on their part, which they had to endure. When we pray for another to be saved, to be in God's Kingdom, we are in fact praying that they shall pass through and endure "much tribulation". This is why our response to suffering now is a foretaste of judgment. See on 1 Pet. 3:16.

1:6 *It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who afflict you*- The emphasis is that God and not us will repay evil with evil. Paul had had to teach them that before; see on 1 Thess. 5:15. God's repayment of evil is just / righteous; whereas any human attempt to do so is unjust, because we fail to understand the complete picture which we are attempting to judge; and we too are sinners, in essence having committed whatever we would seek to condemn others for having done. "Afflict" is literally 'to narrow', and the same word is used of how only the narrow way shall lead to eternal life (Mt. 7:14). The persecution they endured was a narrowing of their way- that they might enter the Kingdom.

1:7- see on Mt. 24:28.

And to give relief to those who are afflicted (and to us too), when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire- Paul saw the day of judgment as an "assurance", a comfort, a relief longed for, rather than an inevitable and dreaded event on the horizon of our existence (2 Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 17:31). Job and David speak of it likewise. Paul envisaged the persecution of the Thessalonians as continuing right up until the moment the Lord Jesus returned from Heaven. He believed that the latter day tribulation had begun, at the hands of the Jews and Romans who were doing the persecuting; although he believed that the antichrist had still to be

revealed (chapter 2) and so the time of tribulation would continue for some time yet. And so often, Paul argues as if he and his readership were living in the last generation before the Lord would return; see on 2 Cor. 5:4. This is not to say he got it all wrong. The Lord's coming was indeed scheduled for some time in the first century, as the Olivet prophecy makes clear. But Bible prophecy is mostly conditional; preconditions must be met. And they weren't; there was not the repentance of enough Jews as required, the Gospel was not taken to the Gentiles as it should have been, the church was not spiritually fruitful enough to be harvested, and there was a falling away from the Faith. And so the Lord's return was delayed.

Note that the Lord Jesus will return to earth with His Angels, and this means that throughout eternity there will be Angels with us on the earth. This is something to take into account in our visions of the Kingdom age. It appears that they are more prominent in the setting up of the Kingdom, and that we will take over their role later on. They are the "reapers" sent forth to gather the saints, and that they will be responsible for punishing the nations (2 Thess. 1:7,8). Initially, the Angels and the Lord Jesus will be physically together in the judgement of the world- the unrepentant worshippers of the beast "shall be tormented... in the presence of the holy Angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10). Presumably the individual beast worshippers will be brought together to one locality for this judgement- the literal location of Gehenna, where the unworthy saints will be punished? This gathering process will be by the Angels, as was that of the saints and of the nations to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

1:8 *Rendering vengeance to them that do not acknowledge God and to them that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*- Those persecuting the Thessalonians were the Jews who had persuaded the Roman authorities to persecute the Christians (Acts 17). These Jews are described as not acknowledging God- whereas their much vaunted belief in God would make that seem a strange thing to say. But claiming belief in God is not very significant; He must be acknowledged, and that acknowledgment is through obeying the Gospel of His Son, who is the only way to the Father. To refuse to obey Jesus as Lord is effectively atheism; for such a person has not come to the Father. It is the Lord Jesus, and not apologetics, which leads to faith in God. We come to God through faith in Jesus, rather than coming to Jesus through faith in God. Some may disagree, but this is the Biblical position; and they would need to ask whether such 'faith in God' is legitimate and actual, rather than a mere intellectual statement. Acknowledging God and obeying the Gospel is language which tends to suggest that those in view were responsible to judgment- they had head the Gospel but refused to obey it. The reference would then be to the synagogue Jews in Thessalonica who had heard Paul preaching for three Sabbath days, and rejected the message. The same Greek phrase is used about the Jews not obeying the Gospel (Rom. 10:16). Those Jews who happened to be at synagogue service those three weeks had heard the Gospel- and were therefore responsible to judgment. That might seem rather tough, seeing that in later life they may well have forgotten all

about that unusual itinerant preacher who passed through and grabbed a bit of a following from amongst the Gentiles. But out of the billions who have lived on this planet never having heard the Gospel, those men were chosen to hear- and they rejected it. And so they are responsible to judgment. For them to receive the promised judgment of this passage, they will have to be resurrected and face the Lord whom they rejected.

2 Thess. 1:7-9 speaks as if the judgment of the wicked and the coming of Christ from Heaven are simultaneous. If we could break this split second into real time, there would be the process of mortal emergence from the grave, judgment involving a period of time, then the righteous being grouped at Christ's right hand side, and then they would all be immortalised together. "Come... inherit the Kingdom" is spoken to the whole group of sheep; we will be immortalised together, at the same time. If we are all judged individually in real time, this is impossible. Some would be immortalised months or years after others. This collapsing of time at the Lord's return would explain why "the resurrection" is sometimes used as a description of the whole process of resurrection, judgment and immortality (even in the OT- Ps. 1:5 LXX; 24:3).

1:9- see on Rev. 14:10.

They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might- See on :8. The punishment is destruction; it is eternal in that it has eternal consequence. No second chance, no way to have another crack at the eternal future which they have missed. "From the presence of the Lord" envisages them appearing before His judgment seat and then going out from His presence- "these shall go away into..." destruction (Mt. 25:46). Why the reference to them having to go away from "the glory of his might"? The "might" refers to His might which is given to us by the Spirit to transform us and lead us on the journey to transformation now and final salvation at the last day. The same word is used of this might in Eph. 1:19; 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:11. Those who are rejected will have hidden their talent / gift, quenched the Spirit, grieved the Holy Spirit... and now they walk away from it all to eternal non-existence. We really must use it or lose it.

1:10 *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints*- We can live the Kingdom life now, in that this word is only used again in :12, where Paul wishes them to glorify the Lord now.

And to be marvelled at in all them that have believed in that day (because our testimony to you was believed)- Our amazement and incomprehension at the judgment is brought out here, using a Greek word meaning 'to marvel at in incomprehension'. This praise will

also be on account of our being "presented faultless" before the judgment (Jude 24). We will feel the wonder of it all. The Gospels often record the 'marvelling' of people at the Lord Jesus. We are to do that in this life, so that we shall do so at the day of His coming too; see on :12. And all this is because Paul's preaching to them was believed; and as explained on 1 Thess. 1:1, this testimony to them likely lasted only a few hours. This is the power of ideas, of the Gospel- that what can be explained and believed in a few hours now can lead to life eternal at the last day.

1:11- see on 1 Thess. 1:3.

To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling- See on :5. Paul had the end in view for them, which was acceptance by the Lord at the last day; so that their calling to the Kingdom would come true in practice.

And fulfil every desire of goodness and work of faith, with power- Paul assumed they had such spiritual ambition, desiring good news, and wanted to see it realized. Spiritual ambition means that we will desire to do some things which we can't physically fulfil- and yet they will be counted to us and we will be empowered to do them. Abraham is spoken of as having offered up Isaac- his intention was counted as the act. And Prov. 19:22 RV appropriately comments: "The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness". It is all accepted according to what a man has, not what he has not. And yet the filling ["fulfil"] with "power" speaks of the power of the Spirit to empower us to actually do the goodness which we in faith would like to achieve. It is God's "desire" that we should be saved (Eph. 1:5,9 s.w.). If this is also our desire, then we will be empowered towards it. We are strengthened with "power" (s.w.) "by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16), "the power (s.w.) that works within us" (Eph. 3:20). If we desire goodness and believe God will empower us, then He will, through the gift of the Spirit. And that is in view too in the next verse (see note there). We know that it is God's will for us to be spiritual and to be saved; and so in praying for things relating to that, we are praying according to His will and will be thus empowered.

1:12 *To the end that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ*- The grace of God often refers to His *charis* or gift of the Spirit. The same Spirit is at work now transforming our hearts as will transform our bodies at the last day (Rom. 8:11). This is why we right now are to glorify the Lord Jesus, just as we will at His return (see on :10).

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Now brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we urge you*- The false teaching that the Lord had already come (:2) obviated the need to be gathered together to Him, a phrase clearly taken

from the Lord's teaching about our gathering to judgment. This is the problem with preterism and with any idea that the Lord has already come. We would then be effectively living with no accountability to a future judgment. And that false teaching would then tend to be reflected in lifestyle.

2:2 *Not to be quickly shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter appearing to be from us, as though the day of Christ had come*- The largely illiterate community converted by Paul after only a matter of hours of contact time (see on 1 Thess. 1:1) was going to be vulnerable to the attacks of the Jewish satan / adversary to Paul's churches; there was an organized opposition to his work. In Thessalonica, the Gentile converts had originally been synagogue attendees, and they mobilized the local Roman authorities against the fledgling church. There were false prophets who claimed to be speaking by the Spirit, and false letters claiming to be from Paul. This all indicates Judaist activity; they had elsewhere used the tactic of forging letters in Paul's name (Gal. 6:11; Heb. 13:22; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 3:1). Thus Paul concludes this second letter to the Thessalonians with "the salutation of me Paul with mine own hand which is the token in every epistle, so I write" (2 Thess. 3:17). Their reasoning was that the day of Christ, i.e. the Kingdom, was already present. This was a basically Jewish argument – hence the Judaist cancer at Ephesus had led to Hymenaeus and Philetus "saying that the resurrection (and therefore the Lord's return) is passed already; and overthrown the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18). We see similarities with modern day preterism, which likewise posits that the Kingdom and return of Christ has already come.

The two 'problems' addressed in 2 Thessalonians are this idea that the Lord Jesus had already come; and the problem of refusing to work and expecting material support, which is addressed in chapter 3. The two problems are related. The refusal to work was associated with a wrong idea that they were somehow already in the Kingdom. I will suggest on 2 Thess. 3:8 that there were some who liked to believe that the curse on man in Gen. 3 had been lifted for some, and therefore they were free from the need to work, and they were effectively saying that the day of the Kingdom had already come (:2). This is in essence similar to the way this world reasons that the effects of the curse can likewise be ignored, through technology, early retirement, labour saving devices, medical science etc. They ignore the stark reality that death itself cannot be removed. But accepting the ties that bind, understanding they are but temporary, empowers us to live a life free of frustration with our humanity and that of others.

2:3 *Let no one beguile you in any way*- Paul read the prophecy of deceivers arising in the last days as referring to deceivers arising within the ecclesia, i.e. people who were already baptized, consciously deceiving the majority of the ecclesia. He repeats this conviction at least three times (Mt. 24:4 = Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:3). The Olivet prophecy had incipient, possible fulfilment in the first century; and a major fulfilment is ahead in our last days. Paul's allusion to it suggests the "man of sin" prophecy is to be read likewise.

There are some connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 which show that the "man of sin" has specific reference to the last days, as Mt. 24 does:

Matthew 24	2 Thessalonians 2
Lawlessness will abound (v.12)	The man of lawlessness

Men saying "Lo, here is Christ" (v.23)	"Be not soon shaken... by word... that the day of Christ is here" (v.2 R.V.)
"Believe it not" (v.23)	"Let no man (of sin) deceive you" (v.3).
"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders" (v.24).	"With all power and signs and lying wonders" (v.9)
"Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (v.24); implying the non-elect *will* be deceived.	"All deceivableness... they (shall) believe a lie... but you, brethren beloved of the Lord, have from the beginning (been) chosen to salvation" (v.10,13) – i.e. it was impossible for *them* to be deceived.
"Behold, I have told you before" (v.25), as Christ prophesied His sufferings.	"When I was yet with you, I told you these things" (v.5)
"As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (v.27)	"The brightness of his coming" (v.8)
"The Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven (Angels) with power and great glory" (v.30)	"With his mighty Angels... The glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:8,9 cp. 2:8)
"Shall gather together his elect" (v.31)	"Our gathering together unto him" (v.1)
"I am Christ... shall deceive many" (v.5)	"Strong delusion, that they should believe a lie... all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (v.11,10).
"Iniquity shall abound" (Greek: 'multiply', i.e.	"The mystery of iniquity does... work" (v.7)

convert more people to it)

"The love of many shall wax cold" (v.12)	"They received not the love of the truth" (v.9)

For first of all must come the falling away and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of destruction- The falling away, or apostasy, speaks of a loss of faith and collapse within the church. Paul had warned them before that there would come this great collapse (:5). But it was not inevitable for any of them on a personal level. The word in common Greek referred to a revolt or defection; and is used in the LXX of a falling away from God (Jer. 29:32 e.g.); and in Heb. 3:12 of how the Jewish believers were tempted to fall away. Paul envisaged a collapse in faith amongst the believers in the last days, followed by the revelation of a particular individual who would be supported by and in league with the Jewish 'satan' (:9). This combination of Jewish and Roman power was exactly the problem which the Thessalonians were up against, according to Acts 17 and the various hints at it throughout the Thessalonian letters. This is why Paul chose to explain to them of all the churches what was going to happen. But what he envisaged didn't happen, even though Revelation likewise predicts the uniting of the Roman and Jewish forces of evil to persecute the fledgling church, to be destroyed by the Lord's return. I have elsewhere discussed and demonstrated at length the principle of conditional prophecy. Nineveh was to be destroyed in 40 days, with no mention of any conditions. But it was not, one possible path of fulfilment was replaced with another. Likewise with the prophecy of a grand temple to be built at the time of the restoration, with Messiah within it, in Ez. 40-48. This could have happened- but it didn't. This is not to say that these prophecies shall never come true- their fulfilment was rescheduled. The essence will be fulfilled later, in the last days. And so it is with the scenario envisaged here and in Revelation. The Lord could have come in AD70, and many of the signs such as famines, wars etc. began to come true; but the other human preconditions, such as the repentance of Israel and the taking of the Gospel to all the world, were not. And so His coming has been rescheduled, until our last days. The "man of sin" prophecy can therefore be seen to have the beginnings of a possible fulfilment in the first century; but we are to look for a final fulfilment in our last days. The 'destruction' [AV "perdition"] of the man of sin would be the destruction of the apostate within the church and of those who had refused the Gospel; a related word is used for the perishing or destruction of this category in :10.

We can be sure that the Jewish opposition which attended Paul's first visit to Thessalonica would have continued well after he left. They were under pressure from "them that trouble you" (2 Thess. 1:6), who are defined in Gal. 5:11–13 as the Judaizers ("they... which trouble you"). The Thessalonians are comforted that these troublers would be destroyed by the Lord's second coming in fire, "taking vengeance on them... that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (preferring that of Moses): who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (cp. Gehenna) from the presence of the Lord" (1:9). This sounds very much like the punishment of the responsible at judgment day (Jude 24) – and the Judaizers fit that category. Significantly, the only occurrences of the Greek idea of a "man of sin" in the LXX describe Jewish apostates (Prov. 24:22; Is. 57:4).

This prophecy speaks of a specific "man of sin" who would arise within the people of God [be they Israel or the ecclesia]. It seems that there may have been such

an individual in the first century:
– "You have heard that antichrist shall come" (1 Jn. 2:18)
– "Who [singular] did hinder you… a little leaven [that] leaveneth the whole lump… he that troubles you..." (Gal. 5:8–10)
– "He that is of the contrary part" (Tit. 2:8)
– "Who (which individual) hindered you?... (Paul's) letters, saith he, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:7,10 A.V. mg.).
– The world – the first century Jewish world, in John's usage of the term – was under the power of a 'Satan', a Prince or leader (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 1 Jn. 5:19) – perhaps the High Priest?
– A "stranger" to the flock and a "thief" would come to harm the flock of the Lord Jesus (Jn. 10:5,10).
– The existence of such an individual would make special sense of the Lord's request for the Father to keep the disciples safe from "the evil one" (Jn. 17:15). 1 Jn. 2:13,14 alludes to this prayer and shows it to have been fulfilled in the first century – the true believers had been kept safe from "the evil one". And there appears some connection with the promise of Rev. 3:10, given just prior to the cataclysm of AD70, to keep the brethren safe from "the hour of trial".
– John seems to speak, at least in the Greek text, of one specific individual – e.g. "The one [singular] saying he is in the light" (1 Jn. 1:9). "Who, then, is *the* liar?" (1 Jn. 2:22) has evident connection with the lying antichrist figure of 2 Thess. 2:8,9; and "the deceiver" (2 Jn. 7) connects with that same figure who will follow "deceit" (2 Thess. 2:11). John saw the singular antichrist as being heralded by many antichrists who had, he felt, already arisen in the first century. They belonged to the [Jewish] world (1 Jn. 4:5) – an indication that the antichrist is somehow Semitic, at least in its first century application. John's reference to "many false prophets" (1 Jn. 4:1) connects with Mt. 24:11, which in an AD70 context predicts that "many false prophets shall arise". This indicates to me that the singular antichrist had some fulfilment in the first century. And the same will be [is?] true in our last days. The likes of Saddam Hussein and Hitler are perhaps such antichrists who presage the coming of the specific person who will be the latter day antichrist. They had some similarities to him, but were not the actual person. Significantly, John seems to have understood this person as someone who would nominally accept Jesus, but deny that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Messiah (1 Jn. 2:22). This would fit a Muslim position far better than it would a Catholic – for Catholics believe that Jesus is the Christ. Likewise in the first century, the Jewish antichrists believed Jesus had existed, but denied He was the Christ.

It is noteworthy that this individual is not named. Martin Hengel comments, correctly: "One of the riddles of Jewish and early Christian polemic is that it hardly ever really names its opponents, but tends to use derogatory paraphrases. This is [also] true of Essene polemic, which conceals its opponents in ciphers" (Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: S.C.M., 1996 ed.), p. 41). In this context we recall the references to Babylon and Egypt in the Old Testament as, e.g., "Rahab". Paul likewise doesn't seem to refer to his enemies by their names but rather hides behind almost taunt phrases (2 Cor. 11:5,13; 12:11; Gal. 5:12; Phil. 3:2; and see too Gal. 1:7; 3:1,10; 4:17; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Rom. 3:8; 15:31). The references to the prophetess "Jezebel" in Rev. 2:20 and "the teaching of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14) don't actually name the individuals concerned, but rather give them a kind of code name. I would suggest however that the individual is not named because the prophecy did not

come to full term in the first century, because of the delay of the Lord's return until our last days.

The Jewish nature of the man of sin which Paul warns the Thessalonians of is also suggested by a careful reflection upon 1 Jn. 2:11,19: "He that hateth his brother... walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth... they went out from us, but they were not of us". This is all alluding back to the example of Cain going out from God's presence and wandering in the land of Nod with no direction to his life. Cain is a type of the Judaizers and the Jewish system (Jn. 8:44); the primary reference of John's letters was probably to the Judaizers. I note on 2 Thess. 3:14 that the Judaizers within the Thessalonian church were to be 'marked' just as Cain was. These people are described in 1 Jn. 2:18 as "antichrists" whose presence heralded the full manifestation of "*the* antichrist". This is why the New Testament repeatedly stresses that the appearance of false teachers and fake Christs will be a sign of the end. If these antichrists of the first century were Jewish, then "the antichrist" probably also was. There is ample evidence that John's letters were primarily intended for ecclesias facing this Judaizer problem. The copious links with his Jewish–based Gospel should make this evident. Note too that the Qumran Essenes described the apostate High Priest as "the man of lies". Tertullian's interpretations of John's letters clearly understood the "antichrists" to be referring to contemporary false teachers.

Paul warns that the Lord's coming will not be until there has come a marked further apostasy, and the full public revelation of the man of sin, whose "mystery of iniquity" was already quietly at work. It would be fully revealed once God's withholding patience had ended. At this stage the man of sin would show "lying wonders" which would deceive many; but he would soon be destroyed by "the brightness of (the Lord's) coming". This "mystery of iniquity" was the Judaist false doctrine undermining the ecclesia, resulting in many believers being influenced by them, until in the immediate prelude to Christ's 'coming' in AD70 the Jewish system seemed to have the upper hand over the true believers. We know from Heb. 6 and elsewhere that the Judaist elders were able to do miracles. Such a bout of impressive miracles to be done by false teachers in the last days is predicted in the Olivet prophecy and parts of Revelation. The events of AD70 then totally destroyed the Jewish system.

Our commentary seeks to interpret 2 Thess. 2 from these two perspectives – the possibility in the first century, and the major fulfilment in the last days.

Who Will He Be?

We have seen that the latter day man of sin will have some association with the people of God, after the pattern of Judas. He may be partly Jewish. He may even have Christian connections. Or it may be that he is an Arab, a half Jew, who will enthrone himself as the head of the Islamic beast and make his capital and temple in Jerusalem. Nah. 1:15 RV describes the leader of the Assyrian invasion as "the wicked one", the "wicked counsellor" (1:11), "*he* that dashes [Israel] in pieces" (Nah. 2:1). Further evidence for a charismatic Islamic antichrist is provided in my study of the revival of latter day Babylon in *The Last Days*. Of particular significance is the way that the man of sin exalts himself "against all that is called God or that is an object of worship" (2 Thess. 2:4 RV mg.). This is exactly relevant to Islam, whose insistent belief in one God leads them to be aggressively against any icon, idol or object of worship. This is the very opposite to the Catholic way of venerating objects of worship.

The following table shows the evident links between the personal "man of sin" spoken of in 2 Thess. 2, and the beast systems of Revelation:

2 Thessalonians 1& 2	Revelation
2:3 – son of perdition (see also Jn. 17:12)	17:8 – Beast goes into perdition
2:7 – mystery of iniquity (Gk. *anomia*) *(a reference to the son of perdition)*	17:7 – Babylon associated with mystery
2:8 – wicked (lit. 'lawless' – Gk. *anomos*) one revealed (see also v. 7 where "iniquity" = Gk. *anomia*)	1:1 – The revelation of Jesus Christ
2:8 – Lord consumes him [the wicked one] with the spirit of his mouth (cp. Is. 11:4)	19:11, 15 – Christ destroys the beast *(ref. To Isaiah 11:4)*
1:8 – Lord Jesus in flaming fire	19:12 – Christ's eyes "as a flame of fire"
2:11 – those who perish believe a lie *(*a reference to the wicked one of 2:8)	19:20 – "false (or lying) prophet"
2:11 – strong delusion (or working of deceit) (a reference to the wicked one of 2:8)	13:14 – deceive 19:20 – deceive *(references to the second beast and the false prophet)*
2:9 – signs (Gk. *semeion*) (a reference to the wicked one of 2:8)	13:13 – wonders (Gk. *semeion*) 19:20 miracles (Gk. *semeion*) *(references to the second beast and the false prophet)*
2:4 – temple	11:2 – temple

It seems reasonable to equate this "man" with the specific "antiChrist" of 1 Jn. 2:18. The beast / horn system is also an imitation of Christ. It breaks in pieces the whole earth (Dan. 7:23) – the same word used in Dan. 2:40,44 to describe Christ's breaking in pieces of the nations at his return. The little horn will "think to change times and laws". This is clearly alluding to Dan. 2:21, where God alone is described as changing the times and seasons. The little horn thus makes himself as God – the man of sin "as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). This man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's second coming (2 Thess. 2:8). He will therefore be actively in existence in the last days. This man of sin will be revealed during a falling away from the Truth just prior to the return of Christ (2 Thess. 2:2,3). Thus whatever fulfilments of this power there may have been over history, it has to be accepted that it will have a particular manifestation in the last days.

The man of sin is "the son of perdition", clearly alluding to Judas (Jn. 17:12). This associates this power with the apostate element within the ecclesia, who in the first century were Jewish. Through infiltrating the ecclesia, he will sit "in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4), i.e. the ecclesia. Judas was a betrayer; we have seen from the Olivet prophecy that there will be betrayers within the ecclesia in the tribulation period. The link with Judas surely teaches that there will be a 'Fifth column' within

the latter day church, who are connected with the latter day Babylon / beast / man of sin.

However, it is possible that these prophecies refer to a specific individual who claims that he is Christ – a real 'antiChrist', possibly associated with a renegade Christian (after the pattern of Judas being one of the twelve). It may even be that he builds a literal temple, which would then be the abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place. Remember that the horn / beast blasphemes the temple (Rev. 13:6), and in their manifestation as the King of the North, "he shall plant the tabernacle of his palace... In the glorious holy mountain" of Zion (Dan. 11:45). 2 Thess. 2:8,9 point the contrast between the Lord's coming and that of the man of sin – as if the latter is a replica of the former. This new power will break in pieces opposing nations just like Christ will (Dan. 7:23 cp. 2:44); he will institute a new set of laws world–wide as if he has God's authority (Dan. 7:25 cp.2:21).

Some may be duped into thinking that Christ has come back, when actually it is the 'antiChrist' of the beast. The beast may have its adherents within the ecclesia who will promulgate this view. The beast has a mouthpiece in another beast that speaks like a dragon – i.e. like the beast – but has horns like a lamb, i.e. a fake Christ. This beast "does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men (i.e. this is conscious exhibitionism), and deceives... by the means of these miracles which he had power to do" (Rev. 13:11–14). Bringing fire from Heaven means that this is a conscious imitation of Elijah, implying that the Elijah ministry is active during the tribulation. It will be opposed by the publicity stunts of the beast system.

The idea of an anti–Christ as a replica of the real Christ also occurs in Proverbs, where there is a designed contrast between the woman of wisdom (representing Christ, the seed of the woman, 1 Cor. 1:24), and the "foolish woman" who does the same external things as "wisdom" (e.g. Prov. 9:1–5 cp. 9:14–17). This prototype antiChrist is a whore, which is a symbol associated with the dragon / Babylon / beast of Revelation. Thus the antiChrist and the beast are closely linked. Because of the false miracles, the weak believer will worship the image of the beast and join the 666 system (Rev. 13:14–18). This is based on the image in the plain of Dura, which many of God's people were duped into worshipping. Only the three friends seem to have refused to do so. Perhaps the furnaces which were the means of punishment for those who refused to worship the image are related to the furnaces of the concentration camps, which we may well see repeated in the future.

"A time of trouble"

We have suggested that the blasphemous power building his palace on the temple mount in Dan. 11:45 is the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2, and thus also the little horn power. This is immediately before the second coming of Christ and resurrection described in Dan. 12:2. It is during this period that "there shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, natural and spiritual – the time of Jacob's trouble that occurs after Israel's present regathering to the land. "That day is great, so that none is like it" (Jer. 30:7). Those who are written in the book experience it, but are saved from it. This group must surely be true believers. Seeing that this will be a time of trouble for God's people such as never was, the previous sufferings of the Jews and the tribulation of the second world war will be nothing compared to this. It will be so bad that it will seem that every one of us will perish – "there should no flesh be saved" (Mt. 24:22). But for those who doggedly hold on to the patience and faith of the saints, the glorious, miraculous deliverance will come. Even an Angel was

so amazed by the extraordinary nature of this time of trouble that he asked: "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?". The answer was "For a time, time and an half (i.e. three and a half years); and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Dan. 12:7,8). The Hebrew for "the holy people" is literally 'the people of the holy ones' – i.e. all those among natural and spiritual Israel who belong to their holy guardian Angels. "All things" being fulfilled in Dan. 12:8 is probably alluded to in the fig tree parable – the generation that see the revival of Israel (fruit instead of leaves on the tree, as a result of Christian preaching) during that three and a half year tribulation will live to see the end of all things. The holy people are to be scattered (Dan. 12:7). The Hebrew means 'to break in pieces', and is also used regarding the beast / horn breaking in pieces the whole earth / land (Dan. 7:23). As it treats God's people, so it will be judged, seeing that the little stone breaks in pieces the beast / image.

The horn who scatters God's people in the last days, the "he" of Dan. 12:7 is the "King of the North" of Dan. 11:45 – suggesting that the beast / horn has something to do with latter day Assyria and Babylon, the historical / Biblical "King of the North". The faithful will be "tried" (Dan. 12:10) by this invader, as Israel were by the Babylonian invasion of the past (Jer. 9:7). The same word is used in Zech. 13:9 and Mal. 3:2 concerning the faithful remnant in Jerusalem enduring their future sufferings.

There are a number of similarities between Daniel 11 and the prophecies concerning the persecution of the saints by the horn / beast / man of sin:

Daniel 11	The Latter Day Tribulation
v.31 "Shall pollute the sanctuary"	The beast's blasphemy against the temple
v.32 "Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries"	Some of those in the covenant will be deceived by the flatteries of the beast (cp. Dan. 8:25)
"Such as do wickedly"	"The wicked shall do wickedly" (Dan. 12:10)
v.32,33 "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits... instruct many"	Zealous preaching by the faithful during persecution.
v.33 "They shall fall by the sword"	The beast kills the saints with the sword and leads them into captivity in the tribulation (Rev.13:10). "They shall fall by the sword" is quoted in Lk. 21:24 concerning the tribulation.

“Many days”	1260 days

v.35 “Some of them of understanding shall fall” (in death) “To try them, and to purge, and to make them white” “Even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed”	“Some of you shall they cause to be put to death” (Lk. 21:16) – the faithful remnant are characterized by their “understanding” – of the prophecies? “ Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried” (Dan. 12:10) The tribulation continues right up to the end – the Lord’s coming. The time appointed – 3.5 years of Dan. 12:7?
v.36 “The King...shall exalt himself”	As the horn did over the other horns. If this verse is a continuing description of Antiochus Epiphanes, then it just isn’t all true. Rather it seems do we have another gap / jump in chronological fulfilment, as happens elsewhere in Daniel, until the latter day antichrist.
“And magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods”	The man of sin exalts himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4); the horn speaks blasphemy against God.
v.38 “He shall sit in the seat of the Almighty God” (A.V. mg.)	Sitting as God in God’s temple (2 Thess. 2:4)

There are too many similarities here for this to all be coincidental. The primary fulfilment of Dan. 11 appears to be in the persecution of the Maccabees. The effective tribulation which they went through then, preparing as it did a faithful remnant who accepted Jesus as Messiah at His first coming, must be a dim shadow of what the church and natural Israel are to undergo in the last days. Note that Dan. 11:33 and 12:10 emphasize that only those who understand will spiritually survive the persecution. This should serve as the ultimate inspiration to zealously apply ourselves

to the study of prophecy, rather than give up because it seems too difficult. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The Old Testament Basis

In searching for an Old Testament basis for "that wicked one", we find that very phrase used in the Septuagint of Esther 7:4 to describe Haman. He too was 'revealed' for who he was – the Persian leader plotting the total destruction of Jewry, from which they were saved by grace. The entire story of Esther can be read as a detailed type of Israel's latter day weakness, persecution and deliverance by grace. The idea of a "man of sin" within the temple of God surely has its source in the Ezekiel passages (e.g. Ez. 8:8–16) which describe the idolatry ("abomination") which occurred within the temple in the days just prior to the invasion of Israel by the Babylonians. These passages lead up to the vision of the purged, perfected temple of the Messianic Kingdom in Ez. 40 – 48. The 'men of sin' which Ezekiel saw within the temple were the "elders of the house of Israel", the corrupted priesthood. The connection with 2 Thess. 2 suggests that in the last days, before the final neo–Babylonian holocaust, the elders of both natural and spiritual Israel will practice corruption in the temple / ecclesia of God.

There is an incident in the experience of Nehemiah, Governor of Jerusalem (a type of Christ, Mt. 2:6) which points forward to all this. Nehemiah (cp. Jesus) returned to the Emperor to have his authority over Jerusalem confirmed (cp. Christ to God, Mt. 25:19; Lk. 19:12,13). He then returned to the holy land, to find Israel indifferent to the state of God's house, taken up with the petty materialism of daily life, with the result that the Arab Tobiah had been permitted by the elders of Israel to live in the chambers of the house of God (Neh. 13:6–9). Nehemiah in fury expels him and "cleansed the chambers", throwing out all his things, after the pattern of Christ cleansing the temple (Mt. 21:12). Along with the type of Moses returning from the mount to a corrupted Israel, this points forward to the state of affairs at Christ's return. Is. 8:5 speaks of an "image of jealousy" being placed in the temple by the Jews just prior to the Babylonian invasion. This was the original image behind the Lord's prophecy of the abomination of desolation being placed in the temple by the Romans. And yet His prophecy has a distinct latter day reference. All this points to a similar literal fulfilment in some way, in a literal latter day temple.

"The son of perdition" was Judas (Jn. 17:12), the epitome of sin and the Jewish Devil (Jn. 6:70,71 cp. 8:44). We will see that throughout 2 Thess. 2 there is frequent reference to the events surrounding our Lord's suffering and death; as we also note in the Revelation passages concerning the saints' final sufferings. Judas was concealed among the disciples until he finally flew his true colours at his betrayal of Christ, which marked the beginning of His passion. The Judaizers were only revealed for what they really were in the traumas of AD69/70. And if the man of sin has a latter day equivalent, this group of false teachers will only show their hand immediately prior to the second coming, at the beginning of the tribulation, which matches the beginning of Christ's final sufferings which began after Judas' betrayal. This indicates that any witch hunt for this group is doomed to failure. The disciples tried to expose Judas, "the man of sin", before his proper time to be manifested; and ended up accusing each other of fitting the role. Such is the inability of human nature to make accurate judgment in this respect. There were three and a half days from the time of Judas being openly revealed for what he was to the end of Christ's sufferings, marked by the resurrection. It may be that there will be a three and a half year tribulation period for the latter day believers, beginning with the open revealing of the "man of sin".

The N.I.V. (correctly) translated “man of sin” as “man of lawlessness”, highlighting the contradiction in the fact that the law–crazy Judaists were actually law*less*. Because lawlessness abounds in the last days, the majority of the ecclesia will lose their love (Mt. 24:12). The beast is epitomized by a man – “the number of the beast... is the number of a man” (Rev. 13:18), in the same way as the system described in 2 Thess. 2 is personified as a man of sin. The figure of Rev. 13:5,6 is clearly based around an Old Testament ‘man of sin’, Goliath – a real, historical person. Rev. 11:4,13 draw a contrast between a god of the earth / land of Israel, and the true God of Heaven. The “god of the earth” has two olive trees and two candlesticks standing before him, with evident allusion back to Zech. 4:14; 6:5, where the Lord / King of the earth / land appears to refer to the King of Babylon.

These passages all imply that there may well be one specific “man of sin” in the last days. Judas, the prototype “son of perdition”, influenced the other disciples, as shown by the complaint concerning Mary’s ‘waste’ of ointment being described as made by Judas in Jn. 12:4, but by the whole group in Mt. 26:8. Jude’s letter is a warning against the Jewish–influenced apostasy of the first century. He cites “the gainsaying of Korah” as typical of the false teaching that was infiltrating the ecclesias. He could have spoken of “Korah, Dathan and Abiram”, but instead he focuses on Korah, as if he was the outstanding influence. By doing so, was Jude suggesting that there was one specific individual in the “last days” who was to be resisted?

The connection with Judas would suggest that the man of sin being in the temple may refer to the presence of this individual or system within the ecclesia. But there is a clear link with Mt. 24:15, concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the temple as a clear sign that Christ’s return is imminent, just as Paul says the man of sin in the temple is the clear sign of the second coming (2 Thess. 2:3). The Lord’s words are looking back to Daniel’s prophecy that a desolator (RV) is to appear in the temple, and also to Jeremiah’s description of Nebuchadnezzar as a ‘desolator’ of God’s people and His cities, who achieves his ‘desolation’ by a fake theophany, coming with clouds and chariots just as the Lord Jesus will (Jer. 4:7,13). The language used by Jeremiah in that section is very similar to that used in Ezekiel 38 about the individual named as ‘Gog’. The abomination that desolates is at the hands of an individual desolator – the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2. The likely application to an abomination within the ecclesia notwithstanding, one is tempted to look for a physical temple to be built in Jerusalem in order to ease the fulfilment of this prophecy. It cannot be insignificant that the right wing Rabbis are enthusiastic for this, *and have already drawn up the plans for one!* It could be that Rev. 13:14,15 predict that the man of sin will set up a literal image of himself there in the temple. And as has been pointed out, Caligula had ordered a statue of himself to be erected in the temple, and although this never actually happened, this would’ve been an enduring memory amongst the New Testament readership. This background again points to the personality cult of a specific individual being developed in the temple.

Paul was an enthusiast for living as if we know the Lord's return is imminent; but he told the Thessalonians that that blessed day wouldn't come immediately, because some prophecy still had to be fulfilled (2 Thess. 2:3). This, I suspect, is the situation we are in now: living *as if* we expect the Lord imminently, but recognizing that we don't *know* whether his return is imminent, and still looking for some prophecy to be fulfilled.

2 Thess. 2:3 RV speaks of "*the* falling away" which must come as the final, crystal clear sign that the Lord's return is imminent. It sounds as if Paul treated this as an obvious, well known thing amongst the believers. In the context, he's saying: 'How

ever can you believe this idea that the day of Christ is here now (RV)? As you know thoroughly well, the great apostasy from the truth in the ecclesia must come, and only *then* will the Lord come, to save the elect within his corrupted ecclesia'. The idea of latter day weakness in the ecclesia is taught explicitly and implicitly throughout the Scriptures. Both natural and spiritual Israel have to be almost pleaded with to come out from among the beast system of the last days (Rev. 18:4), implying that somehow they become part of it- although ideally they should never have become involved with it. Israel being tempted by Balaam and the Moabite women at the very end of the wilderness journey looks forward to the tendency of latter day spiritual Israel to mess up on the eve of the Kingdom. A fair case can be made for thinking that Adam sinned at the end of the sixth day, on the eve of the Sabbath of rest (cp. the Millennium). See on 1 Tim. 4:1.

The accounts of the latter day invasion of Israel all feature a single charismatic individual, who will be destroyed personally by the Lord Jesus at His coming. This is Paul's "man of sin", Daniel's aggressive king of fierce countenance, Ezekiel's Gog, the chief prince. It is also the person referred to by Micah: "And this man [Messiah] shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Mic. 5:1,2). The Lord Jesus will save His people in the latter days from an "Assyrian". It has been shown that Assyria and Babylon are used almost interchangeably in Scripture. Gog was a Jew who apostatized and went to live in Assyria / Babylonia, according to 1 Chron. 5. This is why he has the appearance of spirituality; and he may even be a middle Eastern Christian. I say this because 2 Thess. 2 describes him as "the son of perdition", exactly the phrase used about Judas, the false disciple of Jesus.

2 Thess. 2:3 is clear enough that the "man of sin" will arise in the last days immediately before the Lord's return. We need not think that Christ is about to return until we see this person gloriously enthroned "as God". This is what Paul seems to be saying. And when the Lord was asked for the signs of His coming, he started off by warning that false Christs would come (Mt. 24:4,5). 1 Jn. 2:18 says just the same: "It is the last time [RV "hour"]: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time". This was true in the run up to AD70, and it will be true in the ultimate last hour too. Ezekiel 38 likewise speaks of a man called 'Gog', a "chief prince", who would come against God's people at the time of the end. This is the man of whom Dan. 8:25 speaks- "he will destroy many and will stand up against the Prince of princes", the Lord Jesus.

2:4 *He that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself up as God*- I suggested on :3 that the situation envisaged was of a joining together of the Jewish and Roman opposition to Christianity. This would result in a specific individual enthroned in the Jerusalem temple, and also in the temple in the sense of the church of God. The language used here is very similar to the cult of Caesar worship; Nero especially set himself up as God. As explained on :3, this scenario did not come about in the first century although an incipient fulfilment was seen in the events of AD70. We look to a future fulfilment in our days.

"He that opposes" was clearly the Jewish satan, to which Paul alludes in most of his letters; an organized network of opposition to his missionary work. The word and idea is used in concerning the Judaizers and Jews in Lk. 13:17; 21:15; 1 Cor. 16:9; Phil. 1:28; 2 Tim. 2:25 and 1 Tim. 5:14. This opposition to the Gospel in the Thessalonian context has already been established as coalition of Jewish and Roman

forces of evil (see on 1 Thess. 2:18). Their arrogance is well described as exalting themselves above anything that is 'worshipped', whether Christian or otherwise. This is the same word as "devotions" in Acts 17:23 concerning pagan idols. The forces of Jewish and Roman evil were to unite to set up an entity which would be above any idol. They made themselves "as God", perhaps by imitating Moses, the god of this (Jewish) world" (2 Cor. 4:4 and context); James 4:11,12 is just one example of the Judaist–influenced eldership making themselves equal to Moses. There are two Greek words translated "temple", one referring more to the physical building and the other to the spiritual dwelling place of God, i.e. the ecclesia (1 Tim. 3:15). It is this latter one which is used here – the man of sin sits down (Gk. 'takes his place') in the ecclesia, showing himself (Greek 'demonstrating') that he is God. This word is translated "approved" in Acts 2:22 concerning Christ's approval as God's representative by His miracles. This indicates that the man of sin is an imitation of Christ – a true antiChrist. The showing that he is God would be through the pseudo miracles of v.9 – in the same way as Moses was made as God to Pharaoh through the miracles he did (Ex. 7:1). The Judaist–influenced elders of the Jewish ecclesias seem to have retained the power of the miraculous gifts for a short time after their apostasy (Heb. 6:4–6); the Jews also had their false miracle workers (Acts 13:6; 19:14). The beast of Revelation also works impressive miracles. Thus as the man of sin did false miracles in the first century through the Jewish miracle workers and their Judaist friends within the ecclesia, so both in the beast system of the last days as well as in the ecclesia, the latter day "man of sin" will work false miracles.

In the last days context, the ecclesia will be infiltrated by a "man of sin" who appears to be an apostle, and who in league with the beast, the power dominating the world, corrupts the ecclesia. He is an anti-Christ, a false God. His sitting in the temple of the ecclesia is matched by Tobiah the Arab having rooms in the temple- rooms which should have been symbolic of the dwelling place of God's people with Him (Neh. 7:13 cp. Jn. 14:1-3). He will get this place, as Tobiah got his place, because the ecclesia has failed to grasp the rigid line of demarcation between the things of God's Kingdom and those of Satan's. They will have been deceived by the apparent similarity between the two Kingdoms. The presence of antiChrist within the ecclesia will be the sign "whereby ye know that it is the last time" (1 Jn. 2:18); and 2 Thess. 2:3 and Mk. 13:5,14 say the same thing. The recognition of the presence of such false teaching within the ecclesia will be what tells the faithful remnant that the Lord's return really is imminent. If the "man of sin" is to be connected somehow with the Muslim beast as we have suggested elsewhere, it may be that the vague, outline similarities between Islam and the One Faith are what are capitalized upon in order to make the differences seem minimal. Thus Muslims tenaciously believe in one God and a restored paradise on earth, and Shi'ite Muslims (comprising 99% Iranians and 60% Iraqis) look for the return of the 12th Imam (who they believe has ascended to Heaven) to rule the world. Muslim mosques are fake temples of God, designed as they are around an outer court and two sanctuaries. As Adam desired equality with God (see the allusions to his fall in Phil. 2) and was punished with an inability to hide, shame and nakedness as a result, so Edom will be punished in precisely the same way (Jer. 49:10)- because they too desire equality with God, as Babylon did in Is. 14:13, and as the man of sin will attempt (2 Thess. 2: 4). The connection between Babylon, Edom and the man of sin's blasphemy suggests that he is connected with radical Islamic religious blasphemy.

The antichrist is a mimic of the true Christ; his kingdom is a parody of God's

Kingdom. And the King of Babylon claiming “I am and none else beside me” are the very words of Yahweh- the King of Babylon is clearly to be identified with the man of sin, who sits as God in God’s temple (2 Thess. 2). The “man of sin” will sit in the temple of God and proclaim that he is God. This is surely the “abomination that maketh desolate” that the Lord Jesus predicted would sit in the temple just prior to His return. The abomination makes “desolate”, clearly referring to *Jerusalem* being made desolate by Babylonian / Iraqi invaders (Dan. 9:2,17). Luke 21:20 parallels “the abomination that maketh desolate” in Mt. 24 and Mk. 13 with “the desolation of Jerusalem”. The abomination / abominator will stand “where *he* ought not” (Mk. 13:14 RV). He is the “one that maketh desolate” (Dan. 9:27 RV). A specific individual is clearly implied. Dan. 8:13 RV describes this person as “the transgression that maketh desolate”- yet it is the abominator that makes Jerusalem desolate. Therefore “the transgression” is surely being put by metonymy for a man, who will sit in the Most Holy place and make Jerusalem desolate. And 2 Thess. 2 says just the same- “the man of sin / transgression”. The whole tenor of the Daniel prophesies is that they refer to an individual who will arise in the last days- not someone like a Pope sitting in St. Peter’s for centuries. The vision of the 2300 days of abomination- the days during which the abominator will make Jerusalem desolate- “belongs to the latter days” (Dan. 8:26). These are the days during which the sanctuary and the host of God’s people will be “trodden under foot”; interpreted by the Lord as Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles until “the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled”.

It is quite clear that the leadership of Israel's fiercest enemies would dearly love to sit and stand in the Sanctuary if they could get their hands on Jerusalem [as they vow they will]. He will sit there “as God”. Another place where we read of a man sitting in the temple proclaiming that he is God is in Ez. 28:2, where the King of Tyre proudly says that he sits as God ruling the seas of the people. The King of Tyre was a prototype for the latter day man of sin. The King of Tyre was “in Eden the garden of God” where he was “anointed” and beautifully adorned (Ez. 28:12,14). These descriptions may be further information about the serpent in Eden, although omitted from the Genesis account; and of the idol cult of Tyre being established in the Jerusalem temple in Ezekiel's time. In this case, the fake-Christ [anointed one] is “the old serpent”, just as the latter day beast leader will be (Rev. 12). The beast is so often paralleled with its leader, just as the little horn seems to refer to both a leader and a nation / political system. The sudden destruction that comes upon Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2 is the same kind of thing spoken of in 1 Thess. 5:3- “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh”. The saying of peace and safety is exactly the language of Daniel regarding the false peace produced in the very last days by Antichrist. It could well be that under Babylon’s domination there is a brief boom period for the entire world. This ensures his political survival, and explains why all the world’s merchants will weep at his fall. This sorrow by the traders hardly seems likely to happen if the Vatican was destroyed. This person will accuse the brethren of Christ before the throne of God (Rev. 12:10), but will be thrown down by the Lord’s return and the establishment of the Kingdom. This is exactly the language of 2 Thess. 2 about the antichrist who is to be destroyed by the Lord’s coming. Yet the idea of a false accuser of the brethren before the throne of God takes us back to Job’s satan- who seems to have been a pseudo-disciple, bringing down the outpouring of vial-like judgments upon God's people (cp. the scene in Revelation). Antichrist, the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, is surely the abomination that Jesus said is to be in the temple in the last days, leading to the final desolation. Is. 14 describes the

rise and fall of the King of Babylon; he too desired to set himself as God in the temple of God, having first terrorized the nations that dwell on the 'earth', those situated in the land promised to Abraham between the Nile and Euphrates. This seems so on the cards for latter day Babylon- to terrorize the Middle Eastern world into accepting her leadership, and then to seek to set up the King of latter day Babylon on "the mount of God", Zion. Finally, Nahum speaks of how there was one specific Assyrian leader who was to be destroyed by the coming of Messiah. The phrasing is so similar to that found about the "man of sin": "There is one gone forth out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor… behold upon the mountains the feet of him [Messiah] that bringeth good tidings… the wicked one shall no more pass through… he is utterly cut off. He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face" (Nah. 1:11,15; 2:1 RV).

2:5 *Have you forgotten that when I was still with you I told you these things?*- Paul was only with them for three Sabbath days. He had little contact time with them, and yet he warned them of future tribulation at the hand of Jewish and Gentile forces of evil, to result in a "man of sin" being enthroned in the Jerusalem temple. And yet from 1 Thess. 4 it is clear that they were still ignorant of basic theology about the resurrection. Clearly Paul considered practical warnings as to the difficulty of the path ahead as being more important than theology.

In 1 Thess. 5:3–5 they had been told that the pre-eminent sign of the Lord's coming is the "peace and safety" cry within the ecclesia. Now in 2 Thess. 2 Paul puts it another way: "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away *first*", or most importantly, as the most obvious sign.

2:6 *And now you know what is restraining him now, that he may be revealed in his own time*- This restraining influence was known by the Thessalonians; it lay within the range of their experience. That is significant in our attempt to interpret this difficult question as to who or what the restraining influence refers to.

"Restraining" is also translated as "stand fast" and also "keep hold", often in the context of resisting Judaist infiltration by retaining true doctrine. This would imply that the spiritually strong within the ecclesias were withholding the revealing of the man of sin and the Lord's return ("that he might be revealed in his time" can neatly refer to either, cp. 1 Tim. 6:15). However, it was only a matter of time before the falling away was so widespread that they would be "taken out of the way"; "for the mystery of iniquity (literally 'law–breaking', another pun on the Judaizers' position) doth already work" (v.7). This is the opposite to "the mystery of Godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16), and refers to the Judaizers claiming to be so spiritually deep that the Truth was a "mystery" known only to them (cp. Jude 19; Rev. 2:24). That which hindered the revealing or coming (cp. 1:7; a false second coming) of the man of sin would be taken out of the way. "Out of the way" here is normally translated "from among them" – the spiritually minded members of the ecclesia were to be taken away, so that God's punishments could come upon the rest of them. In the first century this was shown in the command for the faithful to flee the Jerusalem ecclesia (Lk. 21:21), to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4), which is a common symbol of Israel and apostate Jewry in the prophets. The word for "mystery" is also used in a negative sense in Rev. 17:5,7 concerning the woman of sin riding the beast – hinting at a specific individual who will be the figurehead of the beast?

I suggested on :3 that what is in view, initially, in the first century context, was a coalition between Jewish and Roman forces of evil, culminating in the enthronement of a Nero like figure in the Jerusalem temple, proclaimed as the only object of worship, and thus closing down all the various idol cults. This coalition of Jews and

Gentiles against the church would be a repetition of what happened to bring about the Lord's death, and the church would therefore fellowship His sufferings in this way. But that was restrained by the strong paganism of the population. Perhaps it was this which was initially in view; as well as political opposition to such an extent of Caesar worship and deification within the Roman leadership. There was indeed a movement against this development. But this was to be taken out of the way. The restraining nature of Roman civil law as it was then practiced was well known to the Thessalonians, for it was this which had saved Paul from being lynched at Thessalonica (Acts 17:6,9).

We can only speculate what the restraining influence may be in the last days. It could simply be God's desire to delay the Lord's coming so that more may get a chance to repent. Even in the first century, there was this element of Divine delay (2 Pet. 3:9).

2:7 *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so, until he is out of the way*- The "mystery" could refer to the false teaching of the Judaizers, or to the development of the imperial Caesar cult. See on :6 and :7. "The mystery" in the New Testament refers to the mystery of the Kingdom, of the Gospel; and the Gospel likewise was "at work" through the Spirit in believers. But the man of sin is a fake Christ, and is associated with a false Gospel and another spirit and mystery. The 'working' is defined as "the working of satan" (:9), and I have noted that the great satan or adversary to the Lord was the Judaist movement. This is termed lawlessness because as Paul often shows, Judaism was effectively anti God's true Law. By not obeying the Gospel they were effectively not knowing God (see on 1:8).

2:8 *And then shall be revealed the lawless one*- The revealing of this individual would be at the time of the revealing of the Lord Jesus (1:7). The revealing of this individual is therefore a mimicry of the Lord's revealing from Heaven. And the true Christ shall clearly be shown. Just as Judas was revealed for who he was ("the son of perdition", :3, = Jn. 17:12), so this latter day individual would be revealed.

"The lawless one" of 2 Thess. 2:8 alludes to “the wicked one” of Is. 11:4 LXX, who is “the Assyrian”. So it would appear very likely that the latter day antichrist figure comes from ‘Assyria’. And what’s going on in the territory of ‘Assyria’ right now is gripping the whole world’s attention. See on Rev. 19:20.

Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the powerful glory of his coming- The Spirit and brightness of the Lord’s coming parallels the description of judgment on the Judaizers in 1:6–9: “...mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance... punished... from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”. This judgment is against “them that trouble you” (1:6), i.e. the false Judaist ‘brethren’ who were leading the early church astray (Gal. 1:7). The link with 2:8 shows that it is such false brethren *within the ecclesia* (temple) who are “the wicked one” which will be destroyed by the second coming; along with the "man of sin" system of the world. On :3 I suggested there is a religious and secular element to the system in view. 2 Thess. 1:6–9 also recalls the description of coming judgment on the apostate Jews in Rom.1:18: The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unGodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness”. Paul’s words in Thessalonians can also be traced back to Is. 11:4: “He (Christ) shall smite the earth (Heb. ‘*eretz*’ – land, of Israel) with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” in Israel, primarily. The Greek for “wicked” is translated “without law” in Romans, again making a play on the Judaizers who were claiming to keep the Law. There is a parallel between “the mystery of iniquity” in v.7 and the “wicked one” of v.8 – the revealing of “that wicked” is

therefore the revealing of a mystery, which mimics the 'revealed mystery' of the true Gospel (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; 6:19; Col. 1:26). The wicked one was to be "destroyed", the Greek for which is also translated "abolish", "do away", "make of no effect", "vanish away", "make void" etc., all in the context of the doing away of the Jewish Law and the system which supported it. This was only fully done with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD70.

"The spirit of his mouth" looks forward to Rev. 19:15,21 concerning Christ's destruction of the beast at the last day, which has close links with the man of sin. The emphasis on the destruction of the man of sin by Angels and fire recalls Dan. 7:10,11 concerning the beast's destruction by the Lord's return. Perhaps the man of sin will appear associated with the latter day ecclesia, the temple of God, but he will be linked with the political 'beast' which will then be in control of the world.

2:9 *But the coming of the lawless one will be according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders*- However we understand the "working of Satan" (*energeian tou Satana*) in 2 Thess. 2:9, it was under the control of God – for it was part of the "strong delusion" (*energeian planes*) which *God* sent (2 Thess. 2:11). The repetition of the word *energeian* is missed through the mask of translation through which most read this passage, but in the original Greek it stands out clearly. The 'Satan' isn't working *against* God but is being used by God in *His* working in the lives of others. It is "evil" and "the work of Satan" which deceives the wicked (2 Thess. 2:9,10); but God works through this, it is *He* who sends the delusion... an indication that 'Satan' here is not radical evil, i.e. evil that is free and independent from God, lurking free in the cosmos as it were, but is sent by God, under His control. But of course, we want to know more about this 'Satan'; and clearly the Jewish opposition to the Christian Gospel was a significant adversary or 'Satan' in the first century.

'Satan' in the New Testament frequently refers to the Jewish system. We noted on :3 the idea of a coalition between Jewish and Gentile forces of evil. The envisaged new religious order would be supported by the Jewish satan, who would perform false miracles to give it credibility. "Coming" can be translated 'coming in', referring to the subtle entry of Judaist agents and ideas into the ecclesia (Gal. 2:4 etc.). The coming of Christ was associated with miracles, and this would be matched by 'Satan's' miracles at *his* 'coming'. The Greek for "working" is often used concerning the working of the Holy Spirit. "Power, signs and wonders" is a phrase always used concerning the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 2:22,43; 4:30; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:4); and in 2 Cor. 12:12 concerning the qualifications of an apostle. This would portray the man of sin as a false apostle (cp. 2 Cor. 11:13–15) doing false miracles to accompany a false Gospel; he is "the son of perdition" after the pattern of Judas. The Greek for "lying" is used about the apostate Jews in Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:25; 1 Jn. 2:21.

Jannes and Jambres were another prototype of these Judaizers (2 Tim.3:8). Perhaps these magicians who replicated Moses' miracles were apostate Jews. Israel's experience in Egypt points forward to ours at the time of the second coming. Perhaps the beast, symbolic 'Egypt' of the last days, will also have a group of renegade Jews in tow, who match the miracles performed by the latter day Moses. Showing "signs and lying wonders" is an evident allusion back to Mt. 24:24, concerning this happening in the last days of AD70 and our own times. If the miraculous gifts are possessed by some of the faithful in the last days, e.g. In connection with the Elijah ministry, the ability of the apostate believers to do miracles will seem the more

credible. There are many links between 2 Thess. 2 and the Olivet prophecy, as noted on :3.

The description of those deceived in 2 Thess. 2 is amplifying that of the judgment seat in 1:6–9, which is concerning those responsible to judgment, i.e. those who know Christ. We therefore conclude that the many who are deceived by false claims of miracles are actually within the ecclesia. Only the elect will not be deceived. This was what happened in the run up to AD70, and must presumably be seen in our last days too. The establishment of the beast's power in Jerusalem, accompanied by powerful miracles and the support of some Judas–like brethren within the ecclesia for it, will persuade some in the church to think that Christ is back. The connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 indicate that many (Gk. the majority, Mt. 24:12) within the ecclesia will be deceived, egged on by a subtle group of false Christians who will be the counterpart of the first century Judaizers.

2:10 *And with all unrighteous deceit of them that perish. Because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved*- The deceit refers in the first century context to the work of the Judaizers (s.w. 2 Pet. 2:13); "unrighteous" is used about the Jews in Rom. 1:18,29; 2:8; Heb. 8:12; 2 Pet. 2:13). Paul insists that his preaching at Thessalonica was not of deceit (1 Thess. 2:3)- unlike, by implication, that of the Judaizers who stirred up persecution for him there. There will be a conscious program of deceit orchestrated in the last days too, and according to the Olivet Prophecy and the implications here in 2 Thess. 2, many shall be taken in by it. Loving the truth doesn't simply mean that they have a love of truth in the sense of wanting to find the right interpretation of the Bible. "Truth" here is being placed in opposition to the deceit and lies coming from the coalition between the "man of sin" and the Jewish satan. It is not academic truth which shall save, but "truth" in the sense of living relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is why :12 speaks of loving unrighteousness instead of loving the truth; there is clearly a moral dimension to "truth" in how Paul uses the term here. The same ideas are found in :13; we are the 'loved' of the Lord if we believe the 'truth' which is the Lord Jesus. The truth in this sense elicits love (1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1). This love which comes from truth is to be 'received' rather than cultivated by steel will. This is the word used frequently for 'receiving' the Gospel; the Jews in Thessalonica did not "receive" the word of the Gospel (Acts 17:11 s.w.), and the Thessalonians to whom Paul is writing are commended for having 'received' (s.w.) the Gospel (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:13). The group in view here are therefore those who had heard the Gospel but refused to receive it, meaning that they did not live in love and truth but rather in deceit and hatred towards the Lord's people. All this was within the direct experience of the Thessalonian readership.

2:11- see on 2 Thess. 2:7.

For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie- "Strong delusion" is literally the energy of delusion; just as God can work within the minds of believers according to His *energeia* by His Spirit (Eph. 1:19; 3:16-20), so those who refuse to believe have another spirit sent to work within them, deluding them into believing the lie. "The lie" refers to the "delusion"; and in the first century context, that delusion was the words of the Judaizers, framed as they are as the serpent in Eden and Cain who told the first lies (the same Greek word for "delusion" is used about the Judaizers who sought to delude the believers in Eph. 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:17; Jude 11 cp. Jn. 8:44). John contrasts a love of the truth (cp. :10) with "the spirit of error [s.w. "delusion"]", which operated through the false Judaist prophets / teachers infiltrating the churches (1 Jn. 4:1,6). Psychological confirmation of

disbelievers is a feature of God's working with men (Is. 6:9,10; Rom. 1:24-28), and God even sends false prophets or teachers as part of this process (1 Kings 22:22,23; Ez. 14:9; Job 12:16). If a prophet is deceived, God has deceived that prophet (Ez. 14:9), although Ez. 13 is clear the prophet will be judged by God for the deception. So again we conclude that the operation of God's Spirit does not remove human freewill, but rather confirms us in the way we ourselves wish to go. Likewise with Ahab being deceived by the false prophets who were controlled by God's Angel in 1 Kings 22:22,23. He was being confirmed in what he already had set his heart upon doing, which was to go and fight at Ramoth Gilead. Romans 1 has more of the same. God gives men over to the lusts of their hearts / minds, to passions, and "to a depraved mind" (Rom. 1:24,26,28). This is what will particularly happen in the last days (1 Tim. 4:1), just as it did in the collapse of Christian faith which was seen in the run up to the events of AD70. The contrast is in :13, where "but... for *you*" there is sanctification, holiness, brought about by the Spirit of God, but again confirming those who wish for holiness. This sanctification by the Spirit is in terms of the comfort [by the Spirit Comforter] of our hearts / minds, and establishing them in the mindset we wish for (:16,17). This all serves to magnify the huge importance of the human decision and desire. We are left utterly alone to decide whether we wish above all things for God's Kingdom, or for the things of the flesh. Just as the Lord was in Gethsemane, to the point of feeling forsaken by God.. This is why His struggle in the garden was more poignant than His actual death on the cross, which was simply the path of total surrender which He had chosen in Gethsemane. But that aloneness then fades once we decide rightly, and the Spirit confirms us in our path.

This passage explains clearly why the Bible is so confusing. God plagued the first century ecclesia with false brethren who could work impressive miracles; because "they received not the love of the truth (they treated it as a hobby)... God shall send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie". God deceived brethren in the run up to AD70- it's that plain. And the events of AD70 are typical of our last days. 2 Thess. 2 has many connections with the Olivet Prophecy, as noted on :3. The idea of brethren being deceived at the time of Christ's "coming" connects with Mt. 24:5,11,24 describing 'the majority' (Gk.) of the latter day ecclesia being "deceived". 2 Thess. 2:11 says that this deception is sent by God because they refuse to love the Truth. The conclusion is hard to avoid: in our last days, the majority of us will be deceived because we don't "love the truth" - it's no more than a hobby. Whether we have yet reached that situation must remain an open question. God worked false miracles at the time of AD70, according to 2 Thess. 2:9-11. This means that the 'miracles' claimed by some false religions may be actual miracles; God allows them to be done because He wishes to deceive such people.

This same word for “lie” is used in :9 about “lying wonders”. This implies that the beast / false prophet / man of sin is somehow allowed by God to do the lying wonders; they will be sent by God to test the faithful. God deluded the unfaithful within the first century ecclesia into false doctrine and alienation from Him; and it seems, it we are interpreting correctly, that He will do the same in these last days.

2:12 *That they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*- See on :10. "Truth" clearly has a moral aspect here. To not love or believe the truth means that one has pleasure in unrighteousness rather than pleasure in or love of the truth (:10). Truth, even on an academic, intellectual level, is often rejected because of a subconscious desire to walk in unrighteousness and to dodge the moral demands of God's truth. This is why every false doctrine has a

moral basis to it, a widening of the narrow way in practice, or some implied excuse for not living in the Spirit as we should.

2:13 *But, brothers, we are obligated to give thanks to God always for you, beloved of the Lord, for God chose you from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*- This final section down to :17 emphasizes the work of the Spirit in confirming the believers, because we have been reading that those who refuse to believe are confirmed in their unbelief by another spirit sent from God to psychologically confirm them in their path; see on :11. As also explained in Romans 8, God's election of us is part of His grace, and if we believe the truth of Christ, He will sanctify us by the gift of His Spirit in our hearts. We can resist that process, quench or grieve the Spirit, limit the Holy One of Israel. The Judaizers taught that Israel were the chosen people; the same word for "chose you" is used in the LXX of Israel (Dt. 7:7; 10:15). But the new Israel in Christ are the chosen ones, "the beloved of the Lord". The Jews had chosen not to "believe the truth" of Christ (:12); those who do believe the truth are the chosen. It is by such belief that we make our "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Those who do not believe nullify their calling; they become those whose names were not written in the book from the beginning (Rev. 13:8) and are therefore destroyed because of it. Our having been chosen from the beginning was so that we might be holy or sanctified (Eph. 1:4); if we refuse to be holy then we are annulling our calling. But if we wish to be holy, then the gift of the Spirit will work in our hearts to sanctify or make us holy in practice. The Spirit working in our hearts can sanctify us, make us holy and acceptable to God. This is a common theme. "The Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 1:2), our spirit / mind / heart is sanctified by God, this is something psychologically done to us, an operation performed upon us (1 Thess. 5:23); and it begins at baptism: "you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). To live an unholy life, one which is not sanctified, is to despise "the spirit of grace" or gift (Heb. 10:29).

2:14 *Unto which He called you through our preaching of the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*- Paul was only with the Thessalonians three weeks at most, during which time he worked day and night to support himself, dodged and endured persecution, and they also had to work. So the number of contact hours was very small (see on 1 Thess. 1:1,9). And yet through that brief witness, they heard their calling, which had been prepared for them from before the beginning (:13) and which if followed, would lead them to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus. The glory of the Lord Jesus is His moral perfection; and the gift of the Spirit to those who believe the truth and accept the calling was intended to make them holy in their hearts and practice (:13), so that at the last day they would be made fully like the glory of the Lord Jesus.

2:15 *So then, brothers, stand fast, and hold to the teachings which you were taught, whether by word, or by our epistle*- Seeing the great process which was going on with them, begun by their responding to the brief message preached to them (see on :14), they were to hold on to the teaching received, remain within the process of being sanctified by the Spirit (see on :13).

2:16 *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace*- "Grace" often refers to the gift of

the Spirit (see on :13). The love of the Lord Jesus was in dying for us (Rom. 8:37; Gal. 2:20), and His death was likewise the Father's love for us (Jn. 3:16). It was through that death that the Comforter, the Spirit which would abide eternally, was given (Jn. 14-16). The ideas here are all connected together in Rom. 5:5: "Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". The gift of the Spirit in our hearts, the Comforter, sanctifies us and propels us on the journey towards salvation (:13)

Everlasting consolation- This comfort has been given us, and yet Paul prays they might have this comfort (:17). Clearly enough he realized that so much potential spiritual help is available, but it doesn't come automatically into our lives in practice; it must be perceived, desired and prayed for. Thus Paul prays that the Lord Jesus would "establish" them in their works (cp. Ps. 90:17) and then confidently proclaims in 3:3 that He will indeed do this for them- so confident was he that his prayer for their innermost strengthening would be heard. The eternal nature of the Holy Spirit comforter is in that we are now being sanctified, made holy (:13), transformed into the kind of characters we shall eternally be. In this sense the Comfort would abide with us for ever (Jn. 14:16).

2:17- see on 2:7.

Comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word- This is another call for direct action upon the hearts of believers by the Father and Son; and they have promised to do this through the work of the Comforter, the power of the Spirit within our hearts. We will be established in whatever good work or word we speak or teach; whatever we put our hands too in His service will be blessed and established. The establishing is at the last day (1 Thess. 3:13 s.w.); the good works and words of this life all form part of a spiritual character which shall be set in stone eternally, as it were, at the last day.

"Good work" is the same phrase as in Eph. 2:10, where we are to do the good works which were "beforehand prepared" for us. "Beforehand prepared" suggests we were prepared for the performing of our good works from a specific beginning point. And that surely was at 'the beginning'. Our entire genetic history, the nature of our early childhood experiences and surrounding family, was prepared so that we would be born with the wiring required to do the works intended. To turn away from those works, through disinterest, laziness, wilful lack of perception, self absorption... is to waste so much. We on our side must be prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21); "be eagerly ready [s.w. prepared] unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1). We are to abound in good works (s.w.) because of God's abounding grace to us (2 Cor. 9:8). The good works are therefore a way of life and not some occasional good charitable deeds. We will be 'established' in this life of good works (2 Thess. 2:17); we are to "follow every good work" (1 Tim. 5:10), a strange phrase until we undertsand that the good works were prepared for us ahead of time, and we are to follow after them. We are to be on the look out, prepared, for those good works.

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1- see on Lk. 18:1.

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, even as also it is with you- Paul's frequent requests for prayer show his need, vulnerability and equality with his converts. We ought to unashamedly ask

others for their prayers if we too believe that the prayers of third parties really can influence our path and the success of our preaching work. The word of the Lord was glorified when people believed it (Acts 13:48), but Paul believed that the prayers of others could somehow influence whether individuals believed it or not.

There is an idiom in Scripture which concerns running. To 'run' is sometimes used to describe a man's response to God's word (Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; Jn. 8:37 RV; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.)- it must be a running, active, speedy response. Dan. 12:4 seems to imply that in the last days, God's word will be clearly understood by the brotherhood and therefore many will "run to and fro" in response. The more clearly we understand and perceive God's word, the faster we will 'run' in response. We cannot separate our Bible study from our actions. This is why we should not only do our Bible readings daily, but study and pray and strive to understand… so that we will be the more motivated in practice. It is all too easy to be apparently zealous for good causes, as are many unbelievers, because of the needs of the moment, because we are in a situation where we would feel awkward not to enthusiastically respond… but the only true and lasting motivation for good works is an understanding, a purely personal understanding, of God's will for us. When the shepherds were told that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, they "quickly" went there- for they believed what they had understood (Lk. 2:16). Paul "immediately" went to preach in Macedonia after seeing the vision suggesting he do this (Acts 16:10), just as he "immediately" began his initial preaching commission after receiving it (Gal. 1:16).

The word of the Lord was glorified in the Thessalonians- so Paul sincerely felt. But he goes on to speak of weakness amongst them. But he sees the cup half full rather than half empty, and never seeks to give the impression that he is addressing only some within the community he is enthusing about.

3:2 *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men. For all do not have faith*- These surely refer to the Judaists, whose schemes to stop the spread of the Gospel were Paul's constant headache. "All do not have faith" may be a way of saying that this group of people appeared to have faith but did not; they were the false brethren who posed as converts of Gal. 2:4.

3:3 *But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and guard you from the evil*- Mt. 13:19 describes the evil one taking away the word out of our heart. However can we resist that evil one? Paul had his eye on this question in 2 Thess. 3:1,3, where he speaks of the word being *with them*, and also of the Lord keeping them from the evil one. Paul knew that the Lord (Jesus) will help us in keeping the word in our hearts, if we allow him to; he saw the Lord's power as greater than the schemes of the Judaizers to upset their faith (see on :2).

"Establish you" translates Greek meaning 'to turn in a direction, to confirm'. The Lord confirms us in the path we wish to go; He has the ability to turn human hearts by His direct operation upon us (:5; Prov. 21:1). The theme continues in :5, where we read that the Lord directs our hearts; and see on 2:17. But this turning or establishing of the human heart is often done by the Lord through a human mechanism; the same word for "establish" is found in Lk. 22:32, where Peter is told to "strengthen" his brethren, in Rom. 1:11 where Paul speaks of his strengthening of the Roman believers through his personal presence with them and teaching the Gospel to them (Rom. 16:25), and in 1 Thess. 3:2 where Timothy's visiting of brethren would strengthen them (Paul goes on to say that *the Lord* would strengthen them, 1 Thess. 3:13- working through Timothy to do so, we can conclude). Likewise in :5 when we read that the Lord will "direct" their hearts, the only other time Paul uses this word is in 1

Thess. 3:11 where he speaks of how God will direct his journey so that he visits the Thessalonians. God's confirming of His children in their way to Him can operate through the agency of our pastoral efforts for others, our physical presence with them through visiting them, our sharing of the Gospel with them.

They could be 'guarded' or 'kept' from the forces of evil, the Judaizers associated with "the man of sin" in chapter 2. This implies direct psychological action upon them by the Lord Jesus; and clearly He uses His Spirit to achieve this. Thus the same word is used of "the Holy Spirit which dwells within us" empowering Timothy to keep or guard what had been entrusted him (2 Tim. 1:14).

3:4 *And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do, and will do, the things which we command*- Why "confidence in the Lord", rather than 'confidence in you'? The Greek strictly means 'to be persuaded'. Paul was persuaded of their current and future obedience because they were "in Christ". Time and again, this was the basis for his positivism about others. They were in Christ and counted as Him. And so he assumes their current and future compliance with His will, knowing that the Spirit would be working to make them in reality what they were counted as by status.

3:5- see on Jn. 5:42.

And so may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God- Paul was confident God would act directly upon their hearts due to his prayer for them of 2:16,17. Here we have a clear statement to the effect that God is able to work directly upon the human heart, guiding it to a position or understanding. If we are simply intended to read the Bible and figure out things for ourselves, then Paul not only would state this explicitly, but there would be no point in him praying and wishing for such 'direction' of their hearts, if the direction of the human heart is purely down to our unaided efforts, and by our own intellectual processing we are intended to as it were squeeze the Spirit out of the pages of the book called the Bible.

Into the patient waiting for Christ- Gk. 'the patience of Christ'. His characteristics should be our aim, and Paul knew that God can work directly on the human heart to make us more like His Son. Note that He is even now patient; John spoke of how he was sharing in the patience / endurance of Christ (Rev. 1:9). This is the same idea as in Colossians 1 and Rom. 8 [see notes there]- we are counted righteous by reason of our status in Christ, but God's grace doesn't simply count us that way, but works through the Spirit within our hearts to actually change us into the "Christ" which we are counted as being. That work of the Spirit is through mechanisms, such as God's word which is Spirit and life (Jn. 6:63), and through the ministering of men like Paul who aim to present us "perfect" or completely in Christ, in the last day (Col. 1:28). But God is also sovereign and can clearly work directly on human hearts; for historically, not all believers have had access to Bibles and the majority have been illiterate.

3:6 *Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly*- "Disorderly" is the same word translated "unruly" concerning those who ought to be "warned" at the time the first letter was written (1 Thess. 5:14). If the warning hadn't worked, then the Thessalonians were to withdraw themselves from these individuals who were demanding financial support from the church whilst refusing to work (:11). The "tradition" received from Paul may have been a verbal or written statement directly from the Lord, to the effect that there were not to be handouts for those who refused to work and who saw church membership just as a means of income, confirming them

in their laziness. In every age and society, there are those who wish to join the church in the hope of material benefit. Paul here does not advocate a totally non-judgmental approach; he is quite insistent that this should not be allowed. And his motive was clearly because he wanted to see human salvation in Christ; and going through the motions of joining Christ simply in order to attain some secular advantage was not going to help the people concerned. 'Withdrawing' means more to keep away from, rather than religious excommunication; in this context it could simply mean that the church was not to give them financial support. But "withdraw yourselves" is also translated "avoid", literally meaning 'to arrange around' (as in 2 Cor. 8:20). The idea may not be formal excommunication, but some other form of church discipline- or simply, an exclusion from the list or "number" of those who received support as in 1 Tim. 5:9. Verse 10 is translated in some Bibles as "don't give them food", supporting this idea; but the force of "withdraw yourselves" seems to suggest that Paul wasn't merely warning the ecclesia not to give food as welfare support to these people, but to not associate with them, and therefore, not to eat with them in a religious sense.

The whole passage in 2 Thess. 3:6-12 seems to criticize sloth and sponging off others in remarkably strong language, insisting that those who are think they can get an easy ticket through life at others' expense must be separated from. But the language is *so* strong, that we wonder whether this really is all that in view. We recall that the feeding miracles of Jesus and His general attitude to assisting the sick and needy never incorporated any kind of "means test", a checking out of whether actually every single person in the crowd of 5000 males was in fact genuinely in need of food. Rather does He give, so superabundant in His grace that there were large carrier baskets full of the crumbs afterwards. When we encounter human need, it could probably often be argued that the need could have been avoided by harder work by someone somewhere; but surely the need is the call, to action on their behalf. For any hard hearted "God helps those who help themselves" attitude seems to me at variance with the gracious giving of the Lord to us. We from our distance are unaware of exactly what was going on in the ecclesia to which Paul wrote, and we don't fully know the false teaching and exact forms of misbehaviour which he was up against. But the evidence above is surely enough to conclude that whatever the details, Paul wasn't arguing so strongly for the utter exclusion of lazy spongers. There seems to have been far more to this group of people than simply that. I suggest on :10,11 and :14 that these who refused to work and demanded support were in fact Judaizers, who in line with Paul's dire warning against them in chapter 2, needed to be excluded from the church.

And not after the tradition which they received from us- It seems from 2:14,15 that Paul taught them the Gospel, and then gave them “traditions”, ‘that which is passed on’, i.e. from Christ, concerning practical Christian living; exactly in accord with how the great commission requires us to preach the basic good news of a risen Christ, baptize people, and then teach them further all things He commanded and passed on to us (Mt. 28:19,20). But the context goes on to say that they were to follow Paul's example; as if his personal example was the tradition he had set for them to follow. He repeatedly states that he had consciously lived as he had in order to set them an example, and he is now declaring this as the "tradition" they are bound to follow.

3:7 *For yourselves know how you ought to imitate us. For we ourselves did not behave disorderly among you*- As suggested on :6, the "tradition" received may have simply been in Paul's example, which the Lord intended his converts to imitate. The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your

inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking; and it would have been especially appropriate to an illiterate church who didn't have access to the completed New Testament and had been likely cast out of the synagogue where the Old Testament scrolls were located. This is why Paul realized that he was to be their example of Christian walk, and encourages them to follow his example. He several times uses the word 'mimicking', Greek *mimicos*, normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul. "You became *followers* of us and of the Lord.... you know how ye ought to *follow* us... an example unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication could be that that in the gap between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).

3:8 *Neither did we eat bread for nothing at anyone's hand; but we ate our bread as the result of our own labour and toil, working night and day, that we might not financially burden any of you*- Paul paid Jason for the meals provided; as he was only three weeks in town, and would not have had time to set up his own tentmaking business. He would therefore have had to do odd jobs for low pay, working at night as well. And he did so having recently been severely beaten in Philippi, with the marks of the wounds clearly all over him and likely with broken or fractured bones. "Labour and toil" are words which mean pain, weakness, weariness. He performed his work, perhaps carrying water or shifting building materials or merchandise in the market, with difficulty because of his physical state. See on 1 Thess. 2:9.

Note the allusions here to the LXX of the account of the curse on man in Eden, to 'eat bread' as a result of 'labour and toil' (Gen. 3:17-19). Paul is saying that he accepted the curse and didn't seek to get around it, as some in the church were trying to. It could be argued that living "disorderly" is alluding to the common Rabbinic statements concerning the "order" established for man in early Genesis. The same Greek word is used in Greek translations of the Rabbinic interpretatins of the curse in Genesis. So perhaps these people were caught up in a false teaching that the curse in Genesis has been lifted- and therefore they were free from the obligation to work. We too live in a world where man constantly seeks to avoid the curse in Genesis, rather than accepting our humanity and fallen position and working within those ties that bind, towards the ultimate freedom of God's Kingdom. See on 2 Thess. 2:2.

3:9- see on Acts 19:31.

Not because we do not have the right to do so, but to make ourselves an example to you- that you should imitate us- Here we have an example of choosing to live on a higher level than the minimum; Paul could have asked for material support from the Thessalonians, but he chose not to in order to set them an example and to avoid establishing a wrong precedent. He was deeply aware that he was the living example of Christianity to them, the only template they had to copy in practice; see on :7. Many of our choices come down to a decision between living on a higher or lower level; and the pattern of the Lord Jesus inspires us to live as high as we can, whilst showing understanding to those who like us all, in many areas of life, live on lower levels.

3:10 *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: If any will not work, neither let him eat of your food*- Paul's example, as noted on :8 and 1 Thess. 2:9, was absolutely congruent with his commandment to them. He was the word made flesh in this sense. It is clear from 1 Thess. 4 that there were gaping holes in their theological knowledge, given the brief time Paul was with them; but his focus was more on the practical issues which are very much the Gospel as preached by the Lord Jesus in the gospel records.

But what may lie behind Paul's tough line against those who refuse to accept that "if any will not work, neither shall he eat" (3:10)? "If any will not work, neither shall he eat" is a quotation from a Jewish Targum [paraphrase] on the curse upon Adam in Eden; especially the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 3:19. The language of Gen. 3:17-19 about working and eating bread is alluded to several times in 2 Thess. 3:6-12. When Paul speaks of how he "worked in toil and hardship" because he couldn't eat others' bread for nothing (3:8), he clearly has in mind the curse upon Adam. Paul's comment that such persons shouldn't be 'given anything to eat' in 3:10 would then be an allusion to how the serpent gave food to Eve, and she then gave the food to Adam. And the serpent is set up as typical of the Judaizing element that sought to destroy the church (2 Cor. 11:3; Rom. 16:20). Genesis 3 is arguably the most used and yet most misunderstood chapter in the Bible, and thus it has ever been. So many of the false teachings circulating in first century Judaism involved misinterpretations of this chapter.

My suggestion would therefore be that there was a teaching going around that actually we are no longer under the effects of the curse in Eden. We don't need to work, we bear no responsibility for our sins nor do we suffer from the effects of Adam's sin. And they believed this to the point that they expected more wealthy Christians to as it were fund their belief by providing for them materially. Now this all involves something far more than the laziness and occasional irresponsibility which at times we all struggle with. They were "disorderly", *ataktos*, not in "order". The word is used in a military context for soldiers falling out of line in marching. By claiming to be more than human, these people were unacceptive of their humanity, their place in the ranks of the rest of humanity. Interestingly, *ataktos* is derived from the Greek verb *tassein*, "to order", and this verb is several times used by the Septuagint in the context of the "order" decreed by God at the beginning (Lev. 18:4; Dt. 27:1; Job 38:12); it's also used in Jewish writings about the "order" established by God at the time of Adam's sin (M.J.J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 131 provides examples). Sirach 7:15 speaks of how Adam's sin led to "toilsome labour and agriculture, *ordered* by the Most High". The *dis*orderly walk of some in Thessalonica was therefore in refusing to accept their own humanity and the consequences of being human; in this sense they were *dis*orderly in that they refused to accept that we must work if we are to eat, and sought to get around it, with the implication being that they had not sinned and didn't deserve to suffer under such a curse. And hence they walked around as walkers around up to no good ["which walk... as busybodies" disguises a play on words in the Greek original]. This walking around up to no good sounds very much like the serpent in Eden; and Paul elsewhere fears lest the churches, whom he likens to innocent Eve in Eden, should be misled by such serpents (2 Cor. 11:3). And other New Testament letters suggest that misinterpretations of Eden were being used in the early churches to justify various moral, especially sexual, misbehaviours. All this leads to the same conclusion as noted on :14; that these who would not work were in fact Judaizing false teachers.

3:11 *For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that do not work at all but are busybodies*- "Busybodies" is literally 'working around'; we have here a word play, literally ‘not busy, but busy’. Human beings have to do something with themselves all day. One blessing which came out of the Edenic curse of working in order to procreate and survive is that most people are thereby kept ‘busy’ and don’t fall into major sin. With the unequal distribution of wealth which there is in many societies and the attempts of social welfare systems to redistribute it, there has arisen a subclass of the very rich and of the very poor who don’t have to work; and the

amount of work others are required to do has in some ways been lessened by technological advances and the concept of retirement. The result of this is that people become “busybodies”- their busy-ness becomes focused on destructive meddling in others’ lives, often through the internet under the guise of social networking. I suggested on 1 Tim. 5:13 that the busybodies of Ephesus were in fact false teachers; it was these women who were forbidden from going around teaching their Judaist ideas in the house churches (1 Tim. 2:12, see note there).

3:12 *Now those that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread*- He has already warned them about such behaviour (1 Thess. 5:14), and now makes yet another appeal to them before having to advocate the discipline of :14. We should live “quietly”, and we are exhorted to do this “by our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 3:12). Our imagination of who He was and how He would have lived must be our pattern. We are in this sense in the grip of a personality cult based upon Him. Thus His patience is to be ours (see on :5). "Quietness" literally means "silence"; a strange thing to say if the only problem was laziness. I have suggested throughout this section that there is more to these lazy folk than may meet the eye, and that in fact the reference is to Judaizing false teachers who refused to work but demanded payment for their false teaching. Here then we would have a command that they should be silenced, they should not teach and not demand payment for it, but should instead work for their own bread. See on :10.

3:13 *But you, brothers, be not weary in doing good*- Not referring so much to outstanding ‘good deeds’, but to the workaday life of :12. It is this patient continuance in the workaday life, lived in the Spirit of Christ, which is so hard to maintain, and so easy to weary from. The Greek for not being weary is found in Lk. 18:1 about not being weary in the life of intense prayer (see note there). 2 Cor. 4:16 teaches that this not being weary is inspired by the gift of the Spirit, which is constantly renewing our inner man. Likewise in Gal. 6:8,9, it is "of the Spirit" that we shall not weary in well doing. This inner power to keep on keeping on cannot come merely from the flesh, for we shall simply lack the endurance. It is of the gift of the Spirit which we must be open to.

3:14 *And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, note that man, that you have no association with him*- "Note" or marking the person is literally 'to set a mark upon', with clear allusion to Cain; Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 3:12 and Jude 11 present Cain as a prototype of the Judaizers. These people refusing to work but demanding material support would then refer to the Judaizers, who demanded payment for their false teaching. This feature of them is noted many times in Paul's letters, and cements their association with those seeking dishonest gain from religion. This would better explain Paul's apparently very strict attitude to those who were refusing to work. If they were simply lazy, we wonder why he would make such a major issue about them. If in fact they were Judaist false teachers, we can better understand his approach, especially in light of the prediction in chapter 2 that the 'satan' of the Jewish plot against Paul was to join hands with Roman civil power in order to seek to destroy the Christian community; see on :10. The call to "have no association" is strong, and I suggested above is not simply a reaction against laziness of itself, but is rooted in the fact that these busybodies were in fact Judaist false teachers. The term is only elsewhere used about not associating with brethren who were idolaters, sexually perverted and so forth (1 Cor. 5:9,11). Laziness seems of a different order, until we join the dots and see the picture, that the group referred to were in fact Judaist false teachers.

So that he may be ashamed- Even the lazy, or as I suggest, the Judaist false teachers, could repent; and it was Paul's hope they would. Shame is the outcome of condemnation at the last day, and Paul wanted them and us all to go through that process now rather than then. Paul had warned these people in 1 Thess. 5:14, and now was asking for them to be shamed. We recall how he tells the Corinthians that he is warning and not shaming them (1 Cor. 4:14), as if these were two distinct parts of a church discipline procedure. Many churches have no sense of church discipline; somebody is tolerated unchallenged, and the only discipline known is excommunication. But there were a range of disciplinary actions reflected in the New Testament. Even this 'being ashamed' may not be the final step, because :15 encourages the person to continue to be warned as a brother. So the avoidance / shaming did not include a total breakoff of relationship with him.

3:15 *But do not count him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother*- See on :14. Paul did count some as enemies, using the same word about some false brethren in Acts 13:10 and Phil. 3:18. The Jews who rejected the Gospel were 'enemies' (s.w. Rom. 11:28). Chapter 2 has warned of how the Judaizers were going to collude with the Romans to bring about a time of terrible persecution of the Christians. Paul sees these busybodies as under Judaist influence, but he doesn't feel they have gone so far as being all out enemies of the Gospel. Likewise he states clearly in 2:3-7 that the final apostasy has not yet come. We must ever remember that we were enemies of the Lord, but were reconciled to Him (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21 s.w.). Our attitude to the unreconciled must be the same as His has been to us; and His patience and seeking to work with us by all means has to be our pattern.

3:16 *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all*- The Lord Jesus is presented as the source of peace. This means that peace is not brought about merely by our own submission of our mind to God's ways and living according to our own conscience. Such peace would therefore be as it were self-created. But the peace here comes from the Lord Jesus, a gift from Him. The allusion is surely to the gift of the Spirit given by Him, and the Lord's being 'with' us through His Spirit. This is the specific teaching of Jn. 14:27; 16:33 about the Lord's gift of the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, who would be so within our hearts that truly the Lord Jesus is 'with' us and gives us peace. See on :18.

3:17 *The salutation of me Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle. So I write*- This was particularly significant in the light of the falsified letters being sent in Paul's name; see on 2:2.

3:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*- "Grace" often refers to the gift of the Spirit, the power of new life within the heart of the believer which is given by the Lord Jesus. "Be with you" can as well be translated "be within you", for this is where the Spirit most essentially operates. And such spiritual mindedness was Paul's greatest wish for all believers. He wished it for "all" of them, including those who wouldn't work or were lazy, despite his example of working night and day when weak to support himself; and including those influenced by anti-Paul doctrine. He truly wished the Lord's grace and Spirit to be with them all. For he wished the Lord's glory.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 1 TIMOTHY

1 TIMOTHY

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle*- Paul begins by saying he has been called to be a sent out one, and then a few verses later backs it up by repeating that he was appointed to be an apostle (2:7). The same pattern is to be seen in 2 Timothy; the opening verse speaks likewise of how he is an apostle (2 Tim. 1:1), and then 2 Tim. 1:11 says he was indeed appointed as

an apostle. Perhaps Timothy was beginning to doubt Paul's credentials, and this was a factor in Timothy's lack of full devotion to his ministry? Or perhaps Paul is urging Timothy to follow his own example of commitment to the calling he had received. For the letters to Timothy suggest that Timothy needed to be stirred up to continue responding to the calling received.

Of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope- The most essential error, practically or doctrinally, is to “lose connection to the head [Jesus], from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together... grows” (Col. 2:19). The Lord Himself taught what Paul called 'growing up into Him who is the head'; He commented that the end goal for His disciples was that "every one [i.e. disciple, in the context] when he is perfected shall be as his master", i.e. Himself (Lk. 6:40). This was why Paul can speak of "Jesus who is our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1), all we hope to ever become. The hope of glory is to have Christ in us fully (Col. 1:27), which explains why the presence of the spirit of Christ in us now is a foretaste and guarantee of our eternal salvation.

The Greco-Roman idea of a 'Saviour' was that anyone who had dramatically personally saved / delivered someone could be given the title "Saviour" by the person whom they had saved. A physician might be honoured with the title "Saviour" by someone whom he had cured. But always the title was granted with reference to some highly specific and defined act performed to an individual who then designates the person as their Saviour. The idea of calling God and Jesus "our Saviour" means that we have felt deep gratitude for a specific act of saving, performed specifically for us individually at a specific time. The specific historical act was surely the Lord's death on the cross. This is what we rightly celebrate regularly, and personally name Him as "Saviour". This all serves to underline how the Lord's death is consistently, persistently portrayed in the New Testament as the climactic act of God's love for me personally; and how salvation is something we now enjoy, and have cause to celebrate. We shall indeed die in this life, but we have a great salvation to celebrate all the same, in that we have already been saved from death. 'Saviour' implies a salvtion *from* something; but if we proudly refuse to accept conviction of the reality of sin and death, then we will not crown him as our saviour. Potentially, God is the saviour of all men (1 Tim. 4:10). But they will not let themselves perceive this- lest they break down in a gratitude that will totally consume their lives. It is not as if a crisis situation arose, and the Lord Jesus then stepped in to save us. He saved us from death, whilst we were still sinners, and we never even knew it. But now we do. And so our appreciation of Him as our Saviour is of a far deeper nature- than if He had obtruded into our lives to grab us out of a situation which arose during our lifetimes.

1:2 *To Timothy, my true child in faith*- Timothy had not been converted to Christ by Paul's preaching directly. But his spiritual formation was largely thanks to Paul's influence. We

can have children in the faith as a result of pastoral work with them, even if we ourselves were not responsible for their conversion or baptism. "*True* child" might suggest that our real children are our spiritual children. For our efforts with them will last eternally. We might even infer from this that Paul had other, unbelieving children of his own. This is great comfort to the childless or those whose children haven't turned out spiritually as they would have wished. You can, in fact, have other such children. As the son of a Jewess who had married 'out of the faith' to a Gentile (Acts 16:1), Timothy would have been considered spiritually illegitimate; so perhaps Paul is saying that no matter how we are born under a bad sign in the eyes of the world, and lack legitimacy with our society- we are 'true / legitimate children' in Christ.

Grace, mercy and peace to you- They are nearly always mentioned in this order. God's grace is the basis for His mercy and this leads to peace with God. The standard wishing of peace to a person [*Shalom / salaam*] was thereby invested with so much more meaning when used between Christian believers. It was a real wish that 'May the things we believe really be true for you'.

From God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord- The clear separation between Father and Son here and in :1 [and so often in Paul's letters] ought to be proof enough that Trinitarian understandings are wrong.

1:3 *Stay at Ephesus*- From what we figure of Timothy later in the correspondence, the implication would be that Timothy wanted to give up in his work with the believers there because he was tired of the inter-personal tensions involved in confronting people and leading people to a better way.

Just as I urged you to do- The Greek can stand the translation 'begged'. Timothy clearly needed to be persuaded and was weak from the start.

When I was going into Macedonia- It seems this refers to the time of Acts 20:1: "Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them he said farewell [to Ephesus] and departed for Macedonia". But soon afterwards we read that Timothy rejoined Paul (Acts 20:4); we could conclude that Timothy couldn't stick it for long. And now Paul is urging him again.

So that you might instruct certain men not to teach a different doctrine- “Instruct” is to charge. This word is repeated three more times to Timothy; he was to charge others as to how to behave (1 Tim. 4:11; 5:7; 6:17). For a young, insecure man to charge others regarding their behaviour was of course very difficult. All teaching is difficult because the message we have is not acceptable to our audience, for the most part. This is why true teaching of God's word is not an easy work- if we do it properly. It is not entertainment; reasoning with folks about how to use their money (1 Tim. 6:17) is bound to be difficult and not something we naturally would prefer to do. The difficulty was worse because the Ephesian church had originally been formed out of the synagogue,

and the false teaching in view in this verse was probably by Jews. And Timothy was born uncircumcised and probably not fluent in Hebrew. Yet he was to charge the Judaists with authority that they must not teach their false teaching further.

We must compare Paul's charges here to Timothy with the Holy Spirit's statement that "From your own number will men arise and distort the truth to draw away disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30). "Certain men..." implies specific individuals whom Timothy was perfectly aware of, and surely the allusion is to the words of Paul about these very "men". Clearly God states what 'will' happen but there are conditions and various forks in the path which depend upon human freewill. And as Jeremiah makes clear, judgment spoken need not come about if there is repentance. The prophesied false teaching was to come from false teachers within the church at Ephesus. And that is why Paul spends so much time telling Timothy to resist false teaching, and to appoint elders according to the strict qualifications of 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-25; seeing that teaching was to be done only by the elders (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). This was likely why Paul didn't write to them directly as a church, warning them to tackle their false teachers. Probably the eldership wouldn't have even read his letter to the church. I take the 'Epistle to the Ephesians' to be more of a circular letter rather than addressed specifically to the church in Ephesus. Instead Paul focused upon strengthening Timothy, so that this young, weak believer could wrestle with church politics and strong minded elders who were deeply astray. That Timothy succeeded, according to the Lord's own letter to Ephesus, is an amazing evidence of the power of the Spirit. The uninspired Epistle of Ignatius to the Church at Ephesus [dated around AD 110] likewise implies they were a doctrinally orthodox church. Paul chose the weakest and most unlikely person to do the job. And this is just how God works too.

1:4 *Nor give heed*- The same word used about not giving heed to the teaching of the Pharisees (Mt. 16:6,12) and the scribes (Lk. 20:34). The specific nature of the false teaching was Jewish, because the Ephesus ecclesia had begun in the synagogue. And further, the Judaizers had a conscious program of seeking to infiltrate Christian groups with their teachings. The same words are found in Tit. 1:14, warning Titus not to give heed to *Jewish* fables. Later in 1 Timothy the word is used about not giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (4:1). These terms might appear to be more relevant to paganic ideas; but a great theme of Paul is that Judaism was in fact another form of paganism. This needs to be given its full weight by those Christians who seem attracted to Jewish legalism to this day.

To fables- The Jewish myths which were considered by them to be inspired on an equal level to the Old Testament scriptures.

And endless genealogies- Literally, unfinished genealogies. The idea may be that the only genealogies worth studying are those which finished in Christ, as recorded in

Matthew and Luke. The temple records were destroyed by the Babylonians, and so Judaism was in crisis- as the priests could not conclusively prove their descent from Levi and Aaron. All they had was incomplete genealogies which they used to justify their positions.

Which cause disputes- The problem with much academic Bible study is that it can only minister questions and not building up. This is not helpful in any pastoral context. By saying this, I am not appealing for a simplistic approach. But rather a way of interpreting the Bible which builds up, using building blocks of interpretation and connection which are not speculative and are therefore not open to any question.

Rather than Godly edification which is in faith- The Hebrew and Greek idea is of trust. Edifying, building up, involves trust. And nothing more can be said. We do not arrive at such trust / faith by considering endless questions which have no definitive answer. So much that passes for apologetics is in my view misplaced. It is childlike trust which enables God's word to build us up, not endless debate or "disputes". They do not forge a path towards upbuilding.

1:5 *The intended result of this instruction is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith*- The purpose of keeping our understanding of the basic principles clear is that this will lead to true love and faith (1 Tim. 1:3-5). Timothy was to "charge" some that they didn't teach false doctrine, and the "end" of this charge [s.w. :5] was "charity out of a pure heart... a good conscience... love unfeigned". This is what the true Gospel enables, and *this* is why it should be defended. This is where it all leads. All commandments are "briefly comprehended" in that of love (Rom. 13:9). This is the end result of everything, it is the singular fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), the bond of maturity (Col. 3:14).

1:6 *From which things some having strayed have turned aside to idle talking*- If the development of love and faith is not the end point in our motivation, all discussion of Biblical interpretation ends up straying and going wrong, degenerating into academic difference of opinion for its own sake. All the profound disputes end up therefore as "idle talking", literally, 'babble'. For all their apparent erudition, they are just that- babble. Our motivation is so very important before getting involved in any doctrinal teaching or dispute.

1:7 *Desiring to be teachers of the law*- Clearly the nature of the problem in Ephesus was rooted in Jewish thinking. These people aspired to be small time rabbis. And Paul the rabbi had quit all that; he was in the best position of all to warn against this tendency. The term 'teacher of the law' was applied to Gamaliel, Paul's tutor (Acts 5:34). These men pretended to Gamaliel; and Paul had once done the same.

Though they neither understand what they say, nor what they confidently affirm- The word is only used again in urging Titus to confidently affirm the need for true spirituality in the face of Judaist false teaching (Tit. 3:8). Spare a thought for timid Timothy, up against men with every air of self-assurance, who confidently affirmed the teachings which he was asked to stand up against. We wonder why someone of Timothy's nature and timidity would be used by the Lord for such a ministry. Our callings in ministry are very often right against the grain of what we would consider ourselves naturally suited to. This is the nature of carrying the Lord's cross. Thus Paul was sent to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews, when naturally they were both best suited for the opposite role.

1:8 *But we know that the law is good*- Paul is always at pains to point out that the Law is holy, just and good. The problem was with how it was used (Rom. 7:14).

If a man use it lawfully- Galatians 3 explains that the law was given in order to convict sinners of the hopelessness before God, and to prepare sincere sinners to throw themselves upon salvation by grace in Christ. The intended usage of the Law was therefore for sinners; but the Jews considered it was intended for the righteous.

1:9 *Since we know that the law is not made for a righteous man*- See on 1:8 *If a man use it lawfully.* This was the very opposite of the Jewish understanding of the Law as intended for the righteous.

But for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers- Why this particular list of crimes in :9 and :10? The first four commandments of the ten commandments are all broken by the "Lawless and unruly... ungodly and sinners... unholy and profane". Murderers of parents break the fifth commandment; manslayers break the sixth commandment.

1:10 *For fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers*- As noted on :9, the list of sins chosen here is not random, but each of them refer to various commandments within the Decalogue [the ten commandments]. Significantly, Paul doesn't allude to the command about Sabbath keeping; that is the one command in the Decalogue he considers as not morally binding.

And if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine- Whilst Paul is arguing against legalistic obedience to the Law, he is not saying that the Law is somehow 'not good' (:8). Indeed, he sees sound Christian teaching ["doctrine"] as being in line with the spirit of the ten commandments, excluding the Sabbath law. Hence 1:11 continues: "In accordance with the Gospel...". Breaking the spirit of the Decalogue was breaking the spirit of the Christian Gospel.

1:11 *In accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God*- The language recalls in Jewish terms the glory of God revealed at the giving of the ten commandments. The previous three verses have laboured the point that the Gospel precludes the same things as were forbidden by the ten commandments. The giving of the Gospel is as glorious, in fact far moreso, than the giving of the Law. The would-be Rabbis whom Timothy had to struggle against (:7) were claiming that God's revelation had come to them, and therefore they had authority. Paul's point is that the Gospel in all its glory has been revealed to each one who has faith in it ["committed to my trust" is literally 'en-faithed'], making each believer no less authoritative than the Rabbis.

Which was committed to my trust- Paul uses a strong and emphatic Greek construction here. The Greek means 'to me, myself, I, personally'. Those raised 'knowing the truth' should pause and reflect whether the wonder of the fact they have been given the Gospel is registering with them as it might. God believes in us; this is why He has graciously called us to know His Truth. Thus when Paul writes in :14 about his own conversion: "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus", he perhaps means that it was the love and faith of Christ in him, Paul, that was the basis of his being converted by the Lord Jesus.
Every time Paul speaks of having been entrusted with the Gospel, he uses the common Greek word for 'to have faith in'; and within the next verses, we find him using the same Greek word again, in the context of our belief in Christ (1 Tim. 1:11,12,16; Gal. 2:7,16). We had faith in the Lord, and He had faith in us, He en-faithed us, with the preaching of the Gospel we have believed in. Here we see the awesome mutuality between a man and his Lord. We have been entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel; the Lord believes in us to do His work.

1:12 *I thank him that enabled me, Christ Jesus our Lord*- Literally, en-strengthened me, put His *dunamis* in me. I take this as a reference to the internal strengthening within a believer made possible by the gift of the Lord's Spirit. Such a gift is received after baptism. And Paul is the parade example; after his baptism, he "increased the more in strength" and preached boldly (Acts 9:22 s.w. "enabled"). He refers to this strengthening later: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Those "all things" in that context refer to the internal, mental, psychological ability to cope with various life circumstances. He wishes Timothy to make use of the same strengthening: "Be strong in the grace [Gk. 'the gift'] that is in [that comes from being in] Christ" (2 Tim. 2:1). And at the end of his days, Paul could reflect that the Lord Jesus stood with him at his final trial and strengthened him (2 Tim. 4:17). The same word is used of how weak believers like us were strengthened out of their weakness to be strong in faith- again a reference to psychological strengthening (Heb. 11:34), just as Abraham's weak faith was strengthened (Rom. 4:20 s.w.). The same power strengthens believers [s.w.] unto internal characteristics such as endurance, patience and joy (Col. 1:11), the "power" in

view being the spirit of Christ. This same power / *dunamis* is referred to in Rom. 15:13 as the source of these same internal, mental attributes: God fills us with "all joy and peace... that you may abound in hope, through the power / *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit". To deny the operation of this power is not simply a matter of missing out on so much; it is a denial of the essence of the transforming Gospel. A related word is found in Eph. 3:16- we are "strengthened with might [*dunamis*] by His spirit in the inner man". This is where the gift of the Spirit operates; the reference is to "the inner man" and not the public display of the Spirit in special miracles etc. Paul's whole ministry, like ours, is a result of "the operation of His power / *dunamis*" (Eph. 1:19,21; 3:7). On this basis, Paul urges timid Timothy to allow the spirit / *dunamis* of love and a sound mind to work in him [again, internal attributes, not referring to any ability to perform miracles]; and this would drive out his "spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). It was this *dunamis* which would enable Timothy to endure "the afflictions of the Gospel" which were clearly making Timothy balk (2 Tim. 1:8). Paul notes that the opposition to Timothy within the church had a "form of Godliness [possibly referring to their upholding some kind of statement of faith] but [were] denying the power [*dunamis*]" of that form of Godliness, i.e. the doctrines of the Gospel (2 Tim. 3:5). Paul has spoken of the "form of sound words" as referring to some kind of corpus of Gospel teaching in 2 Tim. 1:13. This has unpleasant similarities with those of our day who loudly profess their Biblicism, their holding of some "form of Godliness" in the Gospel; but who deny the operation of the power / *dunamis* which is associated with it, in that those who accept the Gospel shall be given the Spirit. And this element within the church of today deny this, insisting that the Spirit is not given in response to belief of the Gospel, and that the days of Spirit operation ceased in the first century. It is this *dunamis*, this power from the Lord, which provides us with all things required for spiritual life and Godliness, and keeps us unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3). See on :14 *And the grace*...

For that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service- Very much the language of Romans, about how we who are sinners are judged and yet found innocent because of our status in Christ. We are counted as faithful; it would be rather arrogant surely to assume we are given a ministry because of our righteousness. But that is surely not what Paul intends to say, especially as he now goes right on to speak of his terrible past. He who was such a sinner, was judged / counted faithful. That is Paul's point. The ministries we are given are therefore given as an outworking of God's undeserved, unmerited grace to us; and not as a function of any human adequacy for the tasks. And yet Paul is appealing to Timothy to be faithful. He is presenting himself to his 'son in the faith' as a role model, and yet only by grace. Just as we do to our natural and spiritual children.

1:13 *Though I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and abusive*- Orthodox Judaism was and is highly sensitive to the possibility of blasphemy. Paul so often casts Judaism

in the language of paganism; and he saw himself as such. He had compelled others to blaspheme (see on Acts 26:11); and he sees himself as the blasphemer. He took responsibility for what he had forced others to do.

Paul saw himself, his own life and experiences, in the light of the words of the Gospels. He saw himself as having been like those Roman soldiers who nailed Christ to the tree trunk (Lk. 23:34 = 1 Tim. 1:13). He saw himself as "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), and therefore one of those referred to by Christ in Mt. 9:13.

However, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief- Ignorance is not an excuse for crime. The Lord had prayed on the cross for forgiveness of those who persecuted and crucified Him, because of their "ignorance" (Lk. 23:34). The Jews however were not totally ignorant, just relatively so. And Paul likewise was not totally ignorant; he had been pushing against the goads of conscience. And as one brought up in Jerusalem, he presumably would have heard the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself. Paul knew full well from Mosaic precedent that ignorance did not remove guilt; for there were guilt offerings prescribed for sins of ignorance. Remember that Paul is about to hold himself up as an example and pattern of ultimate grace. He is saying that he "obtained mercy" on the basis of the Lord's prayer of Lk. 23:34 as it were covering him too; his torture and murder of those in Christ had been done to Christ personally, for they were His body. And He Himself had pointed this out to Paul in saying that "I am Jesus, whom you persecute" (Acts 9:5). Paul knew that ignorance was no basis for innocence before God; and he is not to be read here as preaching that. He is saying that *even though* ignorance is not an excuse, yet the utter, extreme grace of Jesus in His prayer for His personal tormentors was applied by Jesus to those who likewise tormented those in His body. And so the same extreme grace was shown by Him to Paul. And he urges us to realize that this happened in order to set him up as a pattern for everyman who should afterward believe. Nobody should ever therefore feel that they are somehow beyond the scope of God's grace- because of the parade example shown to us all in Paul.

If ignorance is indeed no excuse for sin, the idea may be that Paul's "belief" was what enabled Divine mercy to cover what he had done in the years when he was "ignorant". "Ignorance" does not simply mean that he genuinely didn't know what he was doing was wrong. For the Lord said that Paul's behaviour was a kicking against the cattle prods of conscience. "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:38 s.w.; also 2 Cor. 6:9 "as unknown [ignorant, s.w.] yet well known") shows how you can be "ignorant" in the sense of refusing to act upon what you do in fact know. It doesn't have to mean that you are genuinely uninformed and unaware. Paul's comment that he persecuted Christians in "ignorance" is therefore using 'ignorance' in the sense of 'willful ignorance', as in 1 Cor. 14:38. He did those things kicking against the prods of conscience; he knew what he was doing was wrong. Many times Paul uses the word to appeal to his readers

not to be "ignorant". The very fact he is appealing means that he is using the term in the sense of 'willful ignorance'. 'I obtained mercy *because* I did it ignorantly in unbelief' therefore requires some retranslation. The common word *hoti* , rendered "because", doesn't have to mean "because". "As though I did it ignorantly..." would also be a fair translation. His ignorance was not the basis of forgiveness- for sins of ignorance still needed atonement. But he who deserved great punishment was by grace (:14) treated as if he had been ignorant- when in fact, he was willfully ignorant and kicking against the prods of conscience. This continues to exemplify what he has said in :12- that he was "counted" faithful, even though he was not.

1:14 *And the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*- See on :13 *I obtained mercy*. God's grace to him was indeed outstanding. But the sense seems to be as in the GNB: "Our Lord poured out his abundant grace on me and gave me the faith and love which are ours in union with Christ Jesus". "Grace", *charis*, carries the idea of 'gift', and there is here a reference to the Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit to Paul after his baptism, the point of our "union with Christ"; see on :12 *Him that enabled me*. The gift of the Holy Spirit was fundamentally a gift of a new spirit, a mind / psychology. And it included such internal spiritual, mental attributes as faith and love. In Ephesians, Paul calls faith itself "the gift of God". It is not of ourselves. That a sinner like Paul should be given such a transforming gift was grace / gift indeed. And in this, he is the pattern to all who subsequently believe- we too receive that same gift. See on :16 *Believe in Him*. "With faith and love" could however be saying that this super abounding grace of the Lord Jesus is all the same made actual by our faith which, if it is really faith, will manifest itself in love. Because we cannot be passive to the greatness of the gift given; we will respond, and that response will be to love as He has first loved us.

1:15 *Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance*- This could refer to inspired prophetic sayings being judged by other inspired prophets to be "worthy of acceptance", and coming to form a corpus of Holy Spirit inspired material which was accepted as authoritative in the early church. Perhaps this corpus of material is referred to as the "form of sound words" or "form of Godliness" (2 Tim. 1:13; 3:5). The idea that Paul was the parade example of the Lord's operations and grace to all believers was therefore accepted and distributed in the early community.

That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief- Clearly perception of sinfulness grew in Paul after his conversion. He considered himself blameless in keeping the law (Phil. 3:6); and yet chief of sinners. He realized that sin is to do with attitudes rather than committed or omitted actions. I'd paraphrase Paul's personal reminiscence in Rom. 7:7-10 like this: "As a youngster, I had no real idea of sin. I did what I wanted, thought whatever I liked. But then in my early teens, the concept of God's commandments hit me. The command not to covet really came home to me. I struggled through my teens and twenties with a mad desire for women forbidden to me

(AV, conveniently archaic, has "all manner of concupiscence"). And slowly I found in an ongoing sense (Gk.), I grew to see, that the laws I had to keep were killing me, they would be my death in the end". Paul's progressive realization of the nature of sin is reflected in Romans 7:18,21,23. He speaks there of how he came to *know* that nothing good was in him; he *found* a law of sinful tendency at work in him; he came to *see* another law apart from God's law at work in his life. This process of knowing, finding and seeing his own sinfulness continued throughout his life. His way of escape from this moral and intellectual dilemma was through accepting the grace of the Lord Jesus at his conversion. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he now faced his death, he wrote to Timothy here that he was "chief of sinners", the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. It could well be that this is one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- for surely he had in mid the way the publican smote upon his breast, asking God to be merciful "to me *the* sinner" (Lk. 18:13 RVmg.). Note that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is rooted in the Lord's words that He came to call sinners and to seek and save the lost (Mt. 9:13; 18:11).

1:16 *However, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as the chief sinner might Jesus Christ*- Peter uses the same term in saying that all God's people have obtained mercy (1 Pet. 2:10). He took his friend Paul at his word, seeing in Paul a pattern of everyman's conversion.

Show all his patience- The Lord had spoken of how Paul had kicked against the goads. His patience with Paul was amazing, even allowing him, as it were, to torture and murder Christians until Paul finally surrendered to conversion. This is a template for His patience with us all.

As a pattern- He saw in his conversion a pattern or template for all those who would afterwards believe (see on :15 *Faithful is the saying*). Having said that he was "chief" of the tribe of sinners, Paul goes straight on to say that this "was so that in me *as chief* might Jesus Christ shew forth *all* his longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should later believe on him" (1 Tim. 1:15,16 RV). This sounds as if Paul realized that he was being set up as the chief, supreme example to us; a template for each of us, of forgiveness and zealous response to that forgiveness. His conversion and subsequent

spiritual growth are recorded as they are because they are a pattern for every subsequent believer- not just for those involved in preaching and pastoral work. It's because of this, it seems to me, that we have *so much* information about the man Paul; we really are enabled to enter into his spirit and personality. His physical appearance is stressed (Gal. 4:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:3,4; 2 Cor. 10:10; 12:5,7,9; Phil. 3:21; and especially his hands: Acts 21:11; 27:19; 1 Cor. 4:12). We imagine him as having a dark complexion, seeing he was confused with an Egyptian (Acts 21:38).

To those that would later believe in him to gain eternal life- According to John's Gospel, the eternal life begins now, in that through the work of the Spirit we begin to live the kind of life which we shall eternally live. The Greek literally reads "Believe on Him in[to] eternal life". Faith in Christ, demonstrated by baptism into Him, results in the Spirit empowering us to live the life eternal, the kind of life we shall eternally live. Paul has touched on this idea in :14.

1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen*- The whole style of this suggests that :15-17 are all part of the "Faithful saying" which Paul is quoting. Note especially the "Amen" at the end, followed by a resumption of the argument in the next verse and continuing on with the rest of the letter. It could be that the "Saying" about Paul being our pattern of grace was part of a liturgy, said or sung in prayer or hymn. Yet the first person pronoun, "I", might suggest that it was said or sung about each believer and not just about Paul; everyman should see in himself a pattern of amazing grace for others. This would explain why such a "Saying" was used in hymn or prayer- as a witness to the unbelievers listening.

1:18 *This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy*- The charge of remaining in Ephesus and resisting the false teachers (:3); a charge which had been supported by inspired prophecy.

In accordance with the prophecies which were made about you, that by them- There were prophecies about Timothy which had gone before, or “led the way to thee” (1 Tim. 1:18 RVmg.). But Paul had to encourage Timothy to fulfil them, to make them come real and true for him. Likewise the fearful and timid Jeremiah was told “I have made thee this day a defenced city... be not dismayed” (Jer. 1:17,18). He had to live out the potential personality which God had enabled him to have.

You may war- But Paul had to warn Timothy that whoever goes to war cannot entangle himself in the things of this world (s.w. 2 Tim. 2:4). It seems that Timothy had the potential to pull down great strongholds in his warfare; but he was distracted by the things of the world. Not living up to potential is a tragic feature of so much spiritual life.

The good warfare- The word is only used elsewhere in 2 Cor. 10:4: "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds".

The warfare was too much for timid Timothy; but he had access to great spiritual strength to cast down the strongholds of false teaching.

1:19 *Holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some having thrust from them, made shipwreck of their faith*- The lead examples were Hymenaeus and Alexander (:20). 2 Tim. 2:17 informs us that these two men had lost their faith in the resurrection, and taught this, resulting in the faith of others being overthrown. Those who lose their own faith so often seek to overthrow ["shipwreck"] the faith of others. Their teaching that the resurrection was past already was therefore rooted in their lack of faith. False teaching so often has a root in a lack of faith or other moral deficiency. Human nature seeks to bring others down to our own level; whereas the call of the Gospel is to seek to raise our own aspirations and to encourage others to aim higher and be elevated to Heavenly things.

1:20 *Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme*- The fact they were still causing trouble in 2 Tim. 2:17 means this intention didn't work out; they continued their blasphemy. The mention of blasphemy is in the context of :13, where Paul has admitted to being a blasphemer, who had been converted by the long patience of the Lord Jesus as an example to others (:16). And now Paul seeks to reflect to others the patient, seeking, saving grace which he has experienced. And this was his motive in whatever courses of action were involved in his 'delivering [these men] to satan'.

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

2:1- see on 1 Pet. 3:7.

I urge therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made- In view of the way believers fall away and also because of our great duty to witness to the world, *first of all* (i.e. most importantly), *prayer* must be made (1 Tim. 2:1 and context). Indeed, it is an actual sin- albeit a sin of omission- to cease to pray for our brethren (1 Sam. 12:23).

We naturally ask why these four forms of prayer are spoken of here: "supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings". One possible explanation is that these terms are all elsewhere used about the prayer work of the Lord Jesus; indeed, "intercessions" are spoken of as being specifically *His* work and not within our capability to make (Rom. 8:26,27,34; for the other words, see Heb. 5:7; Lk. 22:19,45). And directly in this context, Paul emphasizes that there is only one mediator, one who can make intercession- and that is not us, but the Lord Jesus (:5). This leads us to reconsider the opening words of this verse: "I urge...". This translates *parakleo*, to call near. It could be that Paul is calling out to the Lord Jesus to pray / draw near to God for the things he now mentions.

For all men- If as suggested above Paul is calling the Lord Jesus to pray / intercede "for all men", this enables us to understand the same phrase being used in :4 concerning God's willingness to save "all men". The Judaists would have felt that prayer was only appropriate for Jews and not for Gentiles.

2:2 *For kings, and all that are in high place, that we may live a calm and quiet life in all Godliness and dignity*- This implies that environment does indeed affect our spirituality, and we should pray for that environment to be such that it allows us to live in "proper conduct". And perhaps it follows that we ought to consciously seek environments which enable us to lead Godly lives. Yet on the other hand, according to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5, God seeks our spiritual fruitfulness and gives us ultimately the optimal environment for that. Also remember that Paul is writing to Timothy about the situation in Ephesus, where the believers were very much at the mercy of the mood of the governing bodies towards them.

The Greek for “dignity” conveys the idea of soberness, gravity, seriousness. This is indeed appropriate for those who are face moment by moment with the very real issues of eternity, eternal life or death... both for themselves and others. Perhaps this was a reference to Timothy's need to "flee youthful passions" (2 Tim. 2:22 ESV). He needed to act with a gravity beyond his years.

God's own Son made the point that He did not pray for the world, but for His own people (Jn. 17:9). The way He tells the Father this in prayer would seem to emphasize how strongly He felt about this. The commands to pray for the world are in the context of requesting that human Governments might permit God's people to live spiritual lives among them (Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:2); not for the Governments etc. in themselves.

2:3 *This is good and acceptable*- A reference to the incense and sacrifices being acceptable before God. For prayer really is our equivalent of incense and sacrifice under the new covenant. Again, remember that Paul is writing to Timothy in the context of the problems faced from Judaizers.

In the sight of God our saviour- With the Governments so against them, it would've been tempting for Christians to think that they should publicize their prayers for their rulers in order to show that they were not against the Governing bodies. But Paul, as so often, foresees that likely tendency and urges them to pray because it is acceptable *before God*. Prayer should never be used for image or to impress men.

2:4 *Who would wish all men to be saved*- See on 2:1 *For all men.* I have suggested that Paul bids the Lord Jesus pray for all men, especially those in the Governments; and he here gives the reason. The Lord's will that all be saved requires the taking of the Gospel to all men, and their acceptance of the message. And so Paul bids the Lord Jesus to pray for those in authority, because it was and is typically them who hinder the spreading of the Gospel and who create environments which penalize accepting the Gospel.

Paul tells Timothy [or calls the Lord Jesus- see on :1] to pray for the Government to allow him to continue preaching, because God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1-4). There is here the suggestion that Timothy’s prayers would enable more men to come to the knowledge of the Truth, and thereby fulfil God’s intention. But that intention and will of God had been made dependent on the prayers and preaching of the likes of Timothy. God’s “will” is that all will be saved; yet not all will be. His will is that not one of the little ones perish (Mt. 18:14); but we can offend the little ones, so that they do perish. His *intention* is that the church reveals His wisdom to this world (Eph. 3:10); but it doesn’t always do so. None can resist His will; and yet His will is not necessarily what He does, in that His will does not force men and women into obedience or compliance. God is not a manipulator nor a bully, i.e. He does not enforce His will

over others. Only in the future Kingdom of God will His will be done on earth as it is now done in Heaven. His will to save all has been frustrated by the church. The Gospel was to be taken to every person under heaven, from the first century onwards. So why, then, did billions live and die in ignorance? I have no final answer, but I would suggest that this was not His will; just as our behaviour so often is not His will. The church was potentially empowered to take the Gospel to the planet, right from the start. And yes, I include to the remotest islands of the Pacific, the jungles of South America etc. The technology would have been raised up- the logistical side of it would've been nothing for God to fix if believers had wished to do it with all their hearts. Instead they argued over theology and got lost in legalism and divisions between themselves, and allowed the world and all its limitations to influence their thinking. Here, Paul is appealing for prayers for Governments so that "all men" can be saved. He realized that state opposition hinders the salvation of all men, because people

It could also be observed that "all men" need not mean 'every human being', but 'all types of men'. In our age we see this happening. The Gospel *is* going to all the world. Not only to every nation, but to every type of person. Even in the West, men from prisoners to the highest business executives are now being baptized; and women from prostitutes to politicians. There is repeated Biblical emphasis that “all men” will hear and respond to the Gospel (Jn. 1:7; 5:23; 12:32; Acts 17:30,31; 1 Tim. 2:4). It can’t mean ‘every man, woman and child who ever live’; for many have lived and died knowing nothing of Christ. It must surely mean that a few of ‘all [types of] people’, ethnically, linguistically, socially, in terms of personality types... will be saved; just as there were representatives of all types of animal gathered into the ark [a type of baptism into Christ, as Peter informs us]. If the rain is a type of the second coming, it follows that before that time, all types of animal, clean and unclean [which Acts 10 interprets as Jews and Gentiles] must be gathered into the ark of Christ. And now in this century, as we come to the end of human history, all types of people are realising deep within them that something is up with this world. They are starting to feel their desperation, for all their show of hedonism. There are far more believers in God today than there were 50 years ago. That’s a fact. Never say or think that people ‘just aren’t interested’. Some of them are, indeed more and more of them are, and they are desperately interested. Men and women are somehow turning to Him, but lack the knowledge. And if we go on with this work, the end will shortly come.

And come to the knowledge of the truth- Paul sometimes writes of *the* truth, with the article; but this is one of the 14 times in the pastoral letters where he doesn't use the article. So I don't think his sense is that God wishes all men to pass through a process of knowledge / study until they come to a defined set of theological understandings which he calls "the truth". The very same phrase is used in 2 Tim. 3:7: "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". So learning, 'Bible study' of itself will not necessarily lead to "the knowledge of the truth". And that is true to observed experience; for all manner of folks study the Bible but come through all their learning to a different set of truths at the end of it. I suggest that as so often, there are two halves to this verse, which state the same thing but in different terms. "To be saved" is parallel with 'coming to the knowledge of the truth'. Jn. 17:3 speaks of life eternal as knowing the one true God; the great salvation which we shall experience in terms of knowing Him and His Son, the relationship with them then which begins now- that is the knowledge of truth. This is the one and ultimate truth.

And that is not the same as sitting for eternity reciting the terms of a statement of faith, the various correct Biblical interpretations we have come across. Knowing God and His Son is all about relationship with them, as is made clear so often and especially in John's Gospel. Phil. 3:8 speaks of "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" and parallels it with 'winning Christ' at the last day; the 'knowledge' which is in view here in 1 Tim. 1 is also, I suggest, speaking of our relationship with Christ in the Kingdom. This is the 'knowledge' of 1 Cor. 13:12: "Then shall I know, even as also I am known". For now we "see through a glass darkly", our 'knowledge' is blurred and incomplete; and only then shall we see / know Him "face to face".

Unfortunately, an over hasty and slipshod reading of this verse has led to the phrase 'saving truth', by which the impression is given that the possession of true Biblical interpretation will somehow save the possessor thereof. And thus the attitude develops that if we 'know the truth', in the sense of understanding a particular set of teachings, we shall thereby be saved; and maintaining those same understandings up to our grave planks is seen as the most essential part of Christian endeavour. But we cannot be saved by intellectual knowledge; but rather by faith in the simple truth of Christ and God's saving grace. This is what can lead us to the faith that is certain that if the Lord returns at this moment, by grace I shall indeed be saved. Focusing upon 'saving truth' gives high priority to the issue of whether we have our interpretations all completely right; and it creates inevitable tension over words and meanings, with the need to disfellowship others who differ however slightly from the supposed 'saving truth' of our interpretations.

2:5- see on Heb. 4:14.

For there is one God and one mediator- The "for" here suggests that we are being given another reason for Paul's statement that the Lord wishes the salvation of "all men". The fact the Lord Jesus was human, a man, shows God's desire to save all men. A representative man was required to save men. God is not passive to human salvation or the extent of it; having given His only beloved Son to save men, He wants all men to be saved. He wants us saved! He therefore has no pleasure in the death or condemnation of the wicked; exactly because He gave His only Son to *save* men. He wants to see the purpose of the sacrifice achieved. The logic of encouragement here is powerful indeed. The reminder that there is only one God and one mediator may suggest that their total and unique focus is combined upon "men". There are no other creations God is saving through His Son, because His Son was *human* and therefore is a saviour of humans.

Between God and men, the man Christ Jesus- Against the Judaist background of this letter, it would seem that Paul is emphasizing that God is seeking connection with "men", indeed "all men"- and not just the Jews. Moses was a mediator between God and Israel, but the Lord Jesus between God and "all men". The word for "mediator" is mainly used about the Lord Jesus being the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). The "men" in view would then be all those who are in the new covenant; and these, therefore, would be the "all men" whose salvation God wishes, the "all men" for whom the ransom was given, i.e. those redeemed / ransomed (:6). However, the problem is that the "all men" is surely that of :1 for whom prayer is to be made, and includes governors. However it could be argued that "for all men; for kings, and all that are in high place" (2:1,2) could refer to leaders within the ecclesia; although *basileus*, "kings", is hard to apply to church elders.

The extent of Christ's humanity is brought out by the RV translation of 1 Tim. 2:5.

"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus". Paul is writing this after the Lord's ascension and glorification. A mediator might be thought of as being somehow separate from both parties; but our mediator is actually "himself man", so on our side, as it were. Having received Divine nature doesn't take anything away from the Lord's appreciation of our humanity, to the extent that Paul here [for all the other exalted terms he uses elsewhere about Jesus] can call Him even now "himself man".
He is described even now as “the man Christ Jesus”, able to feel the pulse of our humanity. This, in passing, opens a window into what Divine nature will be like: we will be able to completely feel the human experience, to the extent of still bearing the title ‘men’ even in immortality. On this account we will be able to relate to the mortals in the Millennium.

Throughout this exposition I take the position that the Ephesian church was under strong influence from the Diana cult. This cult taught that there were many gods; whilst Paul's statement stands true in a global sense, it is clear that as so often in these letters, he is alluding to the specific errors of the Diana cult.

The Jewish obsession with Angels influenced the early Christians in the area of Christology [i.e. theories about Christ], just as it did on the topic of the Devil. Chapters like Hebrews 1 and Colossians 2 deal with this in detail, stressing that Jesus was *not* an Angel [something which the Watchtower movement of today needs to consider more fully]. The Jewish *Testament Of Daniel* 6.1 exhorts Israel to "draw near unto God and unto the angel that intercedes for you, for he is a mediator between God and man". This is alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim. 2:5, when he underlines that to us there is "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus". Clearly Paul is alluding to the apostate Jewish angelology and correcting it- as in Hebrews 2, the point is laboured that Jesus was a man and not an Angel, and He is the only mediator.

Much has been made of the similarities between Jn. 1:1-3 and the 'Wisdom' literature of the Jews. Judaism believed in a number of intermediaries who interceded between God and Israel- Wisdom, the *Shekinah* [glory], the *Logos* / word. The *Torah* [law] had become so elevated and personified that it was spoken of almost as a separate 'God'. John and Paul are picking up these terms and explaining their true meaning- Jesus is the glory [*shekinah*] of God, He alone is the one and only true mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). By stressing that the mediator was "the man Christ Jesus", Paul is also taking a swipe at the Greek idea of a superhuman mediator between the world and the world's creator, sometimes called a "second God". And when it comes to the Logos, John is explaining in his prologue that the theme of all God's word in the Old Testament was ultimately about Jesus, and that 'word' became flesh in a person, i.e. Jesus, in His life and death. Understanding this background helps us understand why John appears to use very 'Divine' language about the logos. He's doing so because he's alluding to the mistaken beliefs of Judaism and showing where the truth really lies in Jesus.

2:6 *Who gave himself as a ransom*- see on Rom. 3:19; Gal. 5:1. We were bought out of slavery by His death- and should not remain under bondage to any legal code nor to anything.

For all- Christ died a ransom “for all”, and yet more specifically “a ransom for many”, i.e. not all (1 Tim. 2:6 cp. Mk. 10:45). See on 1 Cor. 11:3. The Lord was “a

ransom for all", although it was only us, the redeemed, who were ransomed by Him out of sin's slavery (Lk. 1:68; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 8:13; Rev. 5:9; 14:3,4). The "all men" of our 'world' could therefore be limited to those who constitute God's world, as here defined. The real solution to being 'too inward looking' is to go out into the highways and byways, and compel men to come in to the covenants of promise.

Do we admit that we just don't preach as we should, failing to engage people with the Gospel because we assume 'nobody's interested'? 1 Tim. 2:1-6 has something for us. The Lord's death on the cross was a ransom payment "for all men"; and in this context, Paul urges that because God therefore wishes "all men to be saved" we should therefore pray "for all men, [even] for kings and those in authority". If the Lord's death truly was for all, in that He was representative there of all men, He there "tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9)... then we should pray for "all men" quite literally to be saved, knowing that God is willing that "all men be saved". And Paul makes this point in the context of appealing for us to pray for all men, even Kings. This means that we should pray for even those we consider most unlikely- that they might be saved. For the cross of Christ has potentially saved them- if they will accept it. Thus Paul comments in 1 Tim. 2:6 that the cross was "a ransom for all, to be testified". The testifying or witnessing to it is to be done by our preaching. Notice how Paul draws a dynamic parallel between praying for all men and witnessing to all men (1 Tim. 2:1 cp. 6). Preaching- when it is truly inspired by the cross- can never be a prayer-less exercise, a mere presentation of information. It will be done prayerfully, thoughtfully targeted at specific individuals whom we're praying will accept the message.

Paul exhorts that prayers be made “for all men", just because “Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all", and He thereby is the one and only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:1-6). Because of what He enabled for all, we should pray for all, that somehow circumstances might be allowed which enable all men’s salvation in Jesus to indeed spread to all men.

The testimony made at the due time- The idea is overall as in GNB: "That was the proof at the right time that God wants everyone to be saved". The cross of Christ is the assurance that God wants human salvation. He is not passively waiting for us to clear some bar, but rather urges us on through demonstrating in the cross His passion for our salvation.

2:7 *To this [end] I was appointed a preacher and an apostle*- This continues to be in the context of the Lord's desire to save all men. Any effort we make to preach and save men has His full passion, will and enabling behind it.

I speak the truth, I do not lie- As noted on 1:1, it would seem that Timothy was perhaps doubting Paul's authority over him; or at least, those Timothy was caring for had such doubts. I sense that Paul is really speaking to Timothy's doubts; for throughout the correspondence we have the impression of Timothy having doubts and fears about everything. And yet in Rev. 2:2 the Lord later commends the church at Ephesus for having tested and rejected false apostles in their church. So we can work out that Paul's apostleship was under challenge from false apostles, and Timothy was prone to be taken in by them. The fact that finally he rejected those false apostles shows how a man was made strong out of psychological weakness.

A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth- Preacher, apostle, teacher is allusive to the titles of Jewish rabbis and teachers. Paul is saying that he has indeed been appointed rabbi with responsibility for teaching Gentiles, just as there was such a position within Judaism. However, in practice Paul didn't focus on his commission to

the Gentiles, but rather was obsessed with preaching to Gentiles- which was Peter's commission.

2:8 *I therefore desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands*- I suggested on 2:1 that Paul has called upon the Lord Jesus to pray for all men, to enable the Father's will to save all men to be progressed and achieved. Now he asks the "men" who were part of the "all men" to be saved- to themselves pray. The subject of the prayer is clearly the progression of the plan to save "all men".

Having reminded us that there is "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all", Paul drives home the practical result of understanding Christ's work: "*Therefore* I desire that the men pray everywhere... without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:5-8). "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are- yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:15,16 NIV). Really appreciating that Christ is our personal High Priest to offer our prayers powerfully to God, should inspire us to regularly pray in faith.

Without anger- Perhaps the warning is to not pray like Jonah did, angry that Gentiles and "all men" could be saved. In this case the words of prayer would have been said with an agenda, not to God but designed more for the hearing of men or as a duty which the heart was not in. This is an easy pitfall in prayer- to pray to oneself as did the Pharisee (Lk. 18:11), or to pray with attention to how our human hearers will receive the words. To begin prayer with "Our Father" and a few thoughts on the God to whom our words are being directed is surely wise advice from the Lord. We can pray with an impure heart; and yet the very practice of prayer can make us think we are somehow spiritually acceptable before God. Thus Paul had to warn that prayer should be made "without wrath and doubting". He knew that a man can pray to God with an angry heart, thinking the act of prayer cancels out his anger.

And dispute- Or, "argument". This connects back to Paul's warning to Timothy not to allow himself or others to get obsessed with endless questions and disputes about interpretation, "which only produce arguments" (1:4). One problem with all that argument and inter-personal tension arising therefrom is that prayer is hindered, especially intense prayer for the salvation of "all men".

2:9- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

In like manner, I urge that women adorn themselves- "I also" (AV), or "In like manner" means the women are being addressed in the context of :8. And that is of prayer. I suggest that the warning is not to pray as the pagans and some Jews did- whereby women thought that by dressing up nicely they would somehow impress God and give power to their prayers. It is in this context that Paul is criticizing dressing up. The whole figure of a bride adorning herself is used positively in the Bible; it's not that God is against cosmetic adornment *per se*. But it adds nothing to the acceptability of prayer- that's the point in the context. The 'speaking' of women which is in view later in this chapter is probably likewise in this context, alluding to some local custom of women in the church at Ephesus.

In modest apparel- As noted above, I suggest the reference is to prayer not being made acceptable by some gaudily dressed priestess. Remember Paul is writing to Timothy in the context of his work in Ephesus- which was a city devoted to the

worship of Diana, descriptions of whom fit exactly with the language Paul uses here about the kind of dress which is not appropriate to associate with the acceptability of female prayer. Now we can understand why Paul was just emphasized that there is only *one* mediator between God and man (:5); the Diana cult featured a mass of female priestesses, the Melissai, who were claimed to be mediators. Paul is teaching that men should pray to God through the one mediator- and not think that gaudily dressed women in the church were adding something to the prayers of males. For more reason to think that the Diana cult was the problem in the Ephesian church, see on 3:15 *The house of God.* The priestesses of Diana, like many such cult priestesses, had sex with male worshippers in return for money under the excuse that they were enabling the worshippers to have intercourse with the god or goddess. The sex act, ejaculation within a woman, was understood as intercourse / fellowship / worship / prayer to the idol, through the idol's representative. This is why this challenge to these young women was so serious. Here, Paul says that these young women must not do this, because Christ is the only mediator, and must save themselves from their path to condemnation by having children. Later in 1 Timothy he addresses the same group of young women, saying that they must stop defrauding the widow's welfare fund, and instead have children (5:14). The funds given to them from that fund were nothing less than payment for sexual services rendered; but it was all dressed up under a Christian guise. If the young widows of 1 Timothy are the same women here addressed, they may not have been that many- for there were not that many young widows in the congregation, surely, who were engaging in this activity. It may have been as few as four or five, but surely not more than 20. But all the same- it was a huge problem, as it involved a considerable number of male Christians in the church.

With bashfulness and sobriety; not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing- 'Goddess Diana' earrings feature pearls in gold; all this is the language of Diana, goddess of the Ephesians, with whom Paul was dealing.

2:10 *But apparel which becomes women professing reverence towards God through good works*- Rev. 19:8 likewise speaks of the apparel of the saints as good works. But their apparel is granted to them by Christ; it is His good works which are counted to them. "Good works" is a term used several times by Paul to Timothy. It is used twice about women in the church (1 Tim. 5:10). Perhaps the sisters felt they were not a fundamental part of the church or had no meaningful part to play. Here again in 2:10 Paul is urging the women towards being proactive, to get involved with "good works" which backed up their prayers for the spread of the Gospel to "all men"; rather than dressing themselves up in the belief that thereby they would somehow make the prayers of the men more acceptable with God. Some conservative Protestant churches of our age have come not too far away from this very kind of position, and need the same call to action. Significantly, the Lord's letter to the Ephesian church in Rev. 2 commends them for their good works, and for how they have resisted false teachers. So it would seem that Timothy's ministry was successful; all Paul's challenging, rebuking and encouraging of him actually paid off. We can easily get the impression that such appeals for change and improvement never really achieved anything, but the Lord's letter to the Ephesians seems to indicate that in Timothy's case, the letters we are reading did indeed bear fruit in his response.

2:11 *Let a woman learn*- Judaism discouraged women from learning or studying the Scriptures. Perhaps Timothy was caught up with that pressure; and Paul urges him to let the women learn. As noted on :10, it would seem that the sisters were not being encouraged to see themselves as in personal relationship with the Lord or to be proactive in their faith and works.

In quietness with all subjection- I read this in the context of Paul's concern that all the argument about abstract interpretation in the Ephesian church had led to a lack of "quietness". See on 2:8 *Or argument.* The men couldn't pray properly without bringing in the various arguments which were ongoing in the church (:8); and the women likewise couldn't learn without being tempted to be distracted by the background noise. The teacher from whom the women were to learn was Timothy. That is the context of 1 Timothy. He was to teach, and Paul wished him to include the women as his students; and they were to be allowed a learning environment free from background noise distraction. That is a perfectly valid meaning for the word translated "silence" or "quietness".

2:12- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

I do not permit- The Greek suggests 'I have not given over / transferred'. Paul could here be answering a claim made about him, as he often does in his letters.

A woman to teach nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in submission- It is clear that in some contexts, women did publicly teach in the early church. We think of Philip's daughters (Acts 21:9) and the command that female teachers should do so with covered heads in the Corinth ecclesia (1 Cor. 11:4-6). It could be that they were not to teach at some meetings, perhaps the breaking of bread meeting, but they could at others. Or it could be that the commands we are reading in 1 Cor. 14 about female silence were specific to Corinth, these in 1 Tim. 2 were specific and context limited to Ephesus; whereas in other areas, such as Philip's church, it was allowed. But I suggest that here in 1 Tim. 2 we are reading Paul's commands to Timothy in Ephesus where there was a specific threat to the church from Judaist infiltrators and false teachers. Timothy was being told by Paul to pull himself together, take responsibility, and secure the platform in the church, not allowing the Judaists to teach. I have sought to demonstrate that in commentary on chapter 1 and elsewhere. Perhaps it was that some very pushy Jewish women were insisting on teaching their Judaistic teachings in the church, claiming that Paul had allowed them to do so when he was in Ephesus. Paul is saying that he has *not* permitted them to do that; and he is telling Timothy to ensure they do not teach because as Judaist influenced believers, they were like Eve in Eden, deceived by the serpent. And Paul has used that very figure elsewhere in describing how the early converts likewise were as Eve in Eden but prone to be deceived by the serpent of Judaism (Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 11:3). Paul wants Timothy to do the teaching- not any Judaists, including women. This interpretation would fit the context seamlessly. Otherwise, why would Paul suddenly start talking about the place of women, when his letter to this point has been concerned with Judaist false teaching? He is urging that these female false teachers should not be given the platform. They should be in submission to the teaching of the true teachers.

2:13 *For Adam was first formed, then Eve*- See comment on 2:12. Paul wants Timothy to do the teaching, perhaps setting him up as Adam; the group of Judaist women wanting to teach were as Eve. The emphasis upon Adam being formed *first* and Eve being the one deceived may be in order to challenge a particular wrong emphasis or teaching within the church at Ephesus. The commentary on chapter 1 has surely established that the church was under threat from Judaists. But we also know from Acts that many former worshippers of Diana were in the church. The pull of paganism would always be significant. We have deduced from :9 that some women within the church believed that their part in prayer was in dressing up with the same opulence as Diana. It could be that wrong Jewish speculations about Eve were mixed with pagan ideas about Diana. This kind of Jewish-pagan synthesis was what led to the doctrine of the trinity. Perhaps this is why Paul here draws their attention to Eve's

weakness, and Adam's primacy in creation. Reading this teaching about women in its context, it would seem to me that Paul is tackling some specific group of women in the church who were advocating a quite wrong attitude to prayer, and who were glorifying unspirituality.

2:14- see on Rom. 5:12.

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression- These female false teachers were misinterpreting the story of Eve, and adding to it various Jewish myths. And so Paul alludes to it and shows them what it really means, and how by associating themselves with Eve, they are condemning themselves. As Eve was deceived by the serpent, so believers were being deceived by false teaching (s.w. Eph. 5:6 "let no man deceive you with vain words"). Eve, then, contrary to Jewish ideas and myths (1:4), was not to be glorified and pretended to. Nor was she to be crossed with Diana. She was deceived, just as they had been by false teachers. And Timothy was to challenge and correct this. Note that the same word for "deceived" is used about the deceit of Jewish false teachers in Col. 2:8 and 2 Pet. 2:13. Note that Paul is not saying that Eve 'transgressed' and Adam did not. He uses the very same word about Adam's transgression in Rom. 5:14. He is saying that Eve fell into the transgression through having been deceived; whereas Adam, it would therefore seem, entered into the transgression clearly understanding what he was doing.

2:15 *But she shall be saved through the child-bearing*- Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, there is no article here. No reference is being made to "the child bearing", as if the birth of Messiah is in view. The sentence continues "If they continue in faith..."- so the reference is to plural women and not to the singular woman, Mary, who bore the Lord Jesus. And the salvation of Mary or women generally is surely not just because Mary was the channel for the Lord's birth. Likewise, general child-bearing is not the salvation of women.

We must look for the answer to this apparently strange statement in the context. And a glance at standard reference works (such as the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* edited by James Orr) reveals that the priestesses of Diana / Artemis in Ephesus "were all virgins". They did not have children because they were devoted to Diana; even although some of them slept with the worshippers, they aborted their children conceived as a result of this. Such abortion was common amongst temple prostitutes of many cults, but was apparently particularly enforced in the worship of Diana at Ephesus. Paul is saying that the group of sisters in the Ephesian church who were acting like these priestesses, claiming to make the prayers of males acceptable (:9), acting like mediators rather than accepting the one mediator (:5), dressing up in luxurious clothing in imitation of the Jewish Eve cult and the pagan Diana cult... these women were not to teach. Their influence was to be cut off by Timothy. They were to have children, and not abort them, and not to denigrate child-bearing. And they were to realize that Eve was not a heroine to be pretended to in that she sinned, was deceived by false teaching- as they had been. Instead they were to copy her in moving on after she realized her sin- by doing what first century women generally did, child-bearing. But with the difference that they were to raise a Godly seed, doing this work in faith and Godliness. Paul is advising this group of Ephesian women to get on and have children rather than imitate the Diana cult priestesses by not having children. The only other time the Greek word for "child-bearing" occurs is in 1 Tim. 5:14, where a group of young widows in the Ephesian church are advised to "bear children" and focus on leading their families- rather than giving the enemy an opportunity.

Perhaps this same group are being referenced here. A group of young widows were becoming attracted to the cults of both Eve and Diana. Paul didn't want Timothy allowing them to teach, and he advises them to settle down and have children rather than playing at being priestesses.

So it would seem to me that Paul is addressing a particular group of women in Ephesus, and is advising Timothy how to deal with them. Those women are probably those referenced in 2 Tim. 3:6, influenced by false teachers "that creep into houses [house churches] and take captive weak minded women laden with sins, led away by various lusts". Timothy had been charged to stop and root out this false teaching, as it was particularly influencing the sisters. But Paul is not making global statements about women and their place. For as pointed out, there is New Testament evidence of other [more Godly] women speaking and teaching in the churches.

If they continue in faith, love and sanctification with sobriety- These terms are used elsewhere about men as well. So there is no intention of telling all women globally how they as women must behave. Instead of their involvement in the behaviour discussed above, these women in Ephesus were to focus upon the positive spiritual attributes required of all believers, male or female. Paul uses the same words translated here "continue in faith" in saying that God continues faithful (2 Tim. 2:13); His abiding faithfulness to us is to result in our abiding faithfulness to Him. This same idea of mutuality between God and man, whereby we both trust in each other, has just been used by Paul in 1:12 [see note there].

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

3:1 The picture we get of Timothy is of a young man with frequent health issues, timid, with a spirit of fear rather than of power and a stable mind, easily tempted by "youthful lusts", easily awed by older, loud mouthed false teachers ["let no man despise your youth"], apt to forget what he had learned from his mother and grandmother; and yet with a desire to minister. And Paul gave him the ministry of being the bishop at Ephesus (1:4), with the brief to charge false teachers not to further teach. I speculated in discussing chapter 2 that he faced a powerful group of women in the church who were influenced by the cults of Eve and Diana, who had to be conclusively dealt with. And he was to model good works and encourage the church to likewise do them. The list of qualifications of a bishop are Paul telling Timothy how he should be; and how he should appoint brethren to leadership who met these criteria. We wonder how ever he coped. But we know- because soon afterwards, the Lord wrote to the church in Ephesus, telling them that they had done well in doing good works and in limiting the false teachers. His words were addressed to "the angel of the church"; either Timothy or those whom Timothy had appointed in leadership. So Timothy for all his weakness of character, which we can probably identify with, did indeed rise above all his limitations and achieve the spirit of what Paul is asking here.

Faithful is the saying- As noted on 1:15, there appear to have been inspired 'sayings' which were accepted as genuine by those with the Spirit gift of discernment. These short sayings were doubtless remembered and were valuable in a largely illiterate community.

If a man seeks the office of a bishop- I assume from :14,15 that Paul is writing with Timothy in view as the bishop of the church at Ephesus: "These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly. But if I am delayed, I write so you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God". A bishop or overseer was exactly the

role Paul gave Timothy- for Timothy was to be in a position where he could charge church members not to teach (1:3). Perhaps timid Timothy in naive youthful zeal desired to be a bishop- and Paul having made him one, is now telling him what it involves in practice. To 'seek' means literally 'to stretch oneself unto'. So it could be that Timothy actually didn't have the ambition to be the bishop in that difficult situation. Rather, Paul thrust it upon him and he stretched himself out to it, he accepted it, although it clearly was a major stretch for Timothy, well outside his comfort zone.

He desires a good work- There is nothing wrong with spiritual ambition. The Greek *epithumeo* literally means 'to lust'. The noun is used by Paul when later warning Timothy to "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). We could translate the phrase before us as meaning that if a man seeks / stretches out to the office of bishop, then he must lust after good work. The passions which are part of our nature must be directed into good work rather than for our own sensual pleasure. Instead of desiring wealth (s.w. 1 Tim. 6:10 "love of money, which some reaching after..."), we are to desire / reach out after spiritual things. This redirection of sexual or passionate energy is likewise found in Eph. 5:3,4, where we are told that "fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness" is inappropriate, "but rather giving of thanks". It seems that Timothy failed to make that complete redirection of passion, because he had to be reminded in 2 Tim. 2:22 about fleeing his lusts. In another figure, we are to draw near to God; fleeing lusts means running towards God. And He will draw near to us.

We must be aware that the leadership of the early church was the obvious focus for persecution by the Roman authorities. To desire being a bishop would therefore have been a reflection of self sacrifice and willingness to give up all for the sake of the Lord's work.

3:2- see on Rom. 12:13.

The bishop therefore must be without reproach- Paul's advice to Timothy in 1 Tim. 3 as to what constituted good eldership was shot through with reference to his address to the Ephesian elders [remember Timothy was in Ephesus], where he outlined what manner of man he had been: Blameless = "pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26); Husband of one wife = Paul? Sober = "serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (:19); Given to hospitality = his example was in that he was "ready to support the weak…it is more blessed to give than to receive" (:35) and his whole attitude to care for the Jerusalem poor was evidence enough. Apt to teach = "I have taught you publicly, and from house to house…I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (:20.27). Not covetous = "I have coveted no man's silver" (:33). One that ruleth his own house well = Paul as the father of so many. Not a novice = Paul. A good report of them without = "These things cannot be spoke against" (19:36), and witness his appeals to a good conscience before both God *and men* when on trial.

The husband of one wife- This could refer to not being polygamous; or it could equally mean 'a man of one woman'. These qualifications suggest Timothy was married.

Temperate, sober, orderly, given to hospitality- The Greek *philoxenos* could be read as being the opposite of xenophobic. A love of strangers / foreigners would not have come easily to any first century Jew; indeed, society was very parochial, with anyone from outside the local area being seen as suspicious. Love was to be shown to one's own rather than to strangers; and the characteristic of being *philoxenos* would have been distinctly a Christian virtue. As some bishops may not have had homes

large enough to entertain visitors, we can be sure that this word doesn't refer to 'hospitality', but rather as suggested.

Able to teach- This could imply that some were being chosen as bishops because of their secular status rather than their familiarity with scripture or ability to teach.

3:3 *Not given to wine*- As noted on :1, Timothy took Paul's words to him very seriously. He had to be later advised to at least take a little wine for his stomach problems; he had totally quit alcohol on the basis of Paul's words here and drunk only water (5:23).

Not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not argumentative, not covetous- The implication would be that within the church, as potential for being chosen as bishop, there were Christians of whom these things were true. We see here the tolerance in the early church when it came to baptism and acceptance of sinners; and yet the way that the leadership positions, the platform, was not at all open.

3:4 *One who rules his own family well, having his children in submission with all reverence*- See on :15. As explained on :1, Paul is writing specifically with Timothy in view, at least in the first instance. Perhaps Timothy's weak character meant he had a tendency to allow anarchy in his home. And if he indeed was married, then Paul's warning to flee youthful [sexual] lusts and to be a man of one woman (:2) suggest that Timothy was tempted not to be a solid husband.

1 Tim. 3:4,5 lays down that an elder in the house [church] of God must be one who rules his own household well. The implication perhaps is that the ecclesias of which Paul wrote were household churches. The 1st century household was governed by the *paterfamilias*, the head of the house. In terms of the household ecclesias, this person was the 'elder'; but to govern a household church required that such a person governed their own domestic household well. My point is that there is an implied equation between the 'church of God' and the domestic household; understandable, if the early churches were in fact household groups. Where things would've got awkward was if the 'elder' or leader of the household church was not in fact the *paterfamilias* of that house where the church gathered. We are left to imagine wealthy brother A opening up his home to the house church, in which poorer brother B was the leader of the spiritual house. This is the radical import of Paul's teaching that eldership in the ecclesia was to be based upon spiritual criteria and not human wealth or social position. No wonder the extraordinary unity and social bonding of the early churches proved so attractive and startling to the world. And we in our day are invited to practice similar sociological impossibilities in our ecclesias.

The commands relating to bishops (overseers) stress that he should only be treated as such if his own family is in order (1 Tim. 3:4,5,12). This could suggest that he was the one who had converted others; for the image of our converts being our spiritual children is a frequent one (1 Cor. 4:14,17; 2 Cor. 6:13; Gal. 4:19; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 10; 1 Pet. 5:13). In the same way as a father ought to be respected by his children, so converts ought to respect those who converted them. The fact Paul had made converts and founded ecclesias was used by him as a proof that he deserved at least some respect- they were his 'seal', the hallmark that showed him genuine (1 Cor. 9:2). My sense is that the first century Gentile ecclesias were very similar to many Christian groups throughout Africa, Europe and Asia today; somebody was converted by a visiting preacher, and they in turn converted a group of their associates. Such groups need leadership, and the logical leader is the one who converted. This is why elders

are defined in Heb. 13:7 as those who preached the Gospel to those they lead. Yet there can be a tendency for groups of converts to forget the eternal debt they owe to those who brought them to new life in Christ, just as there can be a forgetting of responsibility to our natural parents. The respect afforded to such leaders should, however, be qualified by their meeting of the standards Paul lays down: e.g. their own natural children should be well led by them. The integrity and manner of life of those who converted us is what inspires us to carry on

3:5 *For if a man does not know how to rule his own family, how shall he take care of the church of God?*- Maybe the stress is on 'know *how*'. Timothy as a young parent and husband needed to realize that family life doesn't just happen; there must be a conscious learning *how* to conduct family life and operationalizing it, rather than just allowing life to take its natural course; which is a frequent reason for the failure of spiritual development in family life.

Perhaps it should be noted that the bishop's qualification is that he *knows* how to rule his own house (1 Tim. 3:5). It may be that as with Samuel and other elders, their children or converts do not 'turn out' well. If this is because there was a lack of spiritual leadership, this disqualifies a brother. But if he *knew* how to rule, but they rebelled, then he is not thereby disqualified. Fathers cannot be held responsible for the spiritual failure of their children in all cases (Jer. 31:29,30; Ez. 18- and the example of Yahweh with Israel). Likewise, Paul was clearly a bishop and yet was single. "A bishop *must be* the husband of one wife" therefore requires us to again read in an ellipsis: '[If he is married he must be…] the husband of one wife'.

3:6- see on Lk. 12:49.

Not a new convert, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil- There is a word play here, because "new convert" translates a Greek word literally meaning one newly sprouted or puffed up. Seeing Paul is in the first instance writing to Timothy, perhaps he is warning him that as a new convert, he must be aware that he will be prone to pride in his new conversion.

A new convert should not be made an elder because he may fall into "the condemnation of the devil". This may refer to the Jewish 'devil' eagerly waiting to accuse the leadership of the Christian ecclesia in Ephesus. But *diabolos* is often used in the pastorals in relation to gossipers (1 Tim. 3:6,7,11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3). Gossip is the clearest manifestation of the 'devil' within our natures, and we should be aware of this. "The condemnation of the devil" may therefore mean that the gossipers, whether within or outside the ecclesia, will more easily condemn a novice. If a brother has behind him all the qualifications listed in 1 Tim. 3, of faithful children, a reputation as stable, patient etc., then such gossips will have less power to condemn him in the eyes of others. Paul indicates that he understands the power of gossip in the church- he knew that a spiritually young elder was going to face slander, as sure as day follows night. And therefore, young elders aren't a good idea, he concludes. We too need to face up to the reality of gossip, that it will happen, and we need to seek to protect those vulnerable to it before it starts.

3:7- see on 1 Tim. 6:9.

Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace or into a snare of the devil- "The devil" or false accuser is paralleled with "outsiders" who were waiting to catch Christian leaders in a trap. The church at Ephesus was surrounded by Jews who were bent on destroying Christian

congregations and were happy to work with the pagan Government to effect this. Timothy is being warned against being naive, which was perhaps another of his characteristics. There were people out there, perhaps members of the 'Jewish satan' which dogged early Christianity, eager to set snares for people in Timothy's position and indeed any church leader. Not falling into snares himself would enable Timothy to persuasively exhort others not to fall into the snare of seeking wealth (6:9). We are enabled now to better understand Paul's later warning to Timothy to help some escape from the "snare of the devil" which they were caught up in (2 Tim. 2:26). This snare could have involved some Jewish plot aimed at entrapping Christians, perhaps by an offer of wealth or some get rich quick scheme. Hence those chosen for leadership were not to be "greedy for money" (:8). The fact Timothy had become aware of the snares and avoided them empowered him to help others out of them. And that principle is true for us all.

3:8 *Likewise, deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine*- For this to be said we can infer that there were such within the church whom Timothy would consider for the office of deacon. The early church was open to all sinners and some clearly didn't change very quickly if ever; but the leadership structure was to be held to standards of behaviour and doctrinal position. Note too that it was Timothy who would appoint the deacons. Democracy was never used in order to choose leadership.

Not greedy for money- This was important because of how the Jewish satan outside the church was using offers of money in order to ensnare people. See on :7 *A snare*.

3:9 *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*- In discussing chapter 2 I suggested that the believers in Ephesus were under pressure from their pagan background in the Diana cult and also the myths pedalled by Jewish false teachers such as the Eve cult. These cults and indeed all paganism loved the idea of "mystery". Paul is saying that deacons must wholeheartedly be committed to the mystery of the Christian faith. They were to hold it in a good conscience, i.e. not also holding to other mysteries as were the women forbidden from teaching in chapter 2.

3:10- see on Gal. 6:4.

And let them first be tested- This idea of a probation period is found also in the command to Timothy to "Lay hands hastily on no one" (5:17), i.e. do not hastily appoint anyone to office, but require a probation period first. Perhaps here we see a hint that Timothy had a tendency both to naivety and to impetuous, quick action. He was perhaps not naturally a wise man; the way he succeeded at his difficult calling (see on :1) shows the real power of personal change which is possible to those led by God's word.

If they are found blameless, then let them serve as deacons- Gk. 'unacccused'. Perhaps a reference to the way that the church in Ephesus was surrounded by critics eager to falsely accuse ["the devil"] and thereby entrap the unwary in snares. Truly Timothy's position is one not to be envied.

3:11 *Likewise, their wives must be reverent*- This could mean that their wives served as part of their office as deacon; for Phoebe was a female deaconess. Deacons in this case would refer to husband and wife teams. Or it could be that the sign of a suitable

deacon was that he had influenced his wife for spiritual good. Because otherwise, the objection could be raised that a man is not surely to be judged by the behaviour of his wife.

Not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things- “Slanderers” is from the same word as "devil". In the immediate context, the snare of the devil has referred to the schemings of the Jewish and pagan opposition to bring down the church at Ephesus (:6,7). The requirement may be that a deacon's wife was to have no part in those systems. “Temperate” and the other characteristics of a deacon’s wife are the same requirements for the bishop himself (:2; Tit. 2:2). The implication could be that ideally a deacon and his wife should work as a husband and wife team, each with the same spiritual qualifications.

3:12 *Let deacons be men of one woman*- Not polygamous, or at least, not womanizers, focused upon their wife as their one woman.

Ruling their children and their own families well- As noted on :5, family life was not to be allowed to just follow a natural course. There was to be conscious leadership.

3:13 *For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus*- The "for" connects with the previous verse, talking about ruling in one’s own family. The idea may be that if they have served as deacons in their own family first, then they will be qualified to do so in the church. In the process of being a deacon, faith is developed. The very process of service and obedience leads to greater faith in practice in the upward spiral of spirituality. The “good standing” is surely before God and not men.

3:14 See on Acts 20:25 *I know*.

These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly- Paul had appointed Timothy the bishop of the church at Ephesus (1:4), and so we are to read these principles about eldership as Paul reminding Timothy of how he should be living. This is not to say that the principles do not have wider, general application; but the first context reference was to Timothy. These principles were to explain to Timothy how he personally should behave in the church (:15).

3:15 *But if I am delayed*- Paul had no miraculously provided itinerary. He realized the many variable factors in the life of a believer.

I write so you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God- The existence of house churches within the Ephesus ecclesia would explain the slightly unusual Greek construction here which in the Greek speaks of behaviour “in a house of God”. Maybe Paul refers to the same distinction between house churches and larger gatherings in Ephesus when he advises that a bishop should rule well his own house [church] and have his children in subjection (:4,5). There is a common New Testament understanding of ‘children’ as referring to converts; and the Greek word translated “rule” is only used elsewhere, both in 1 Timothy and in the rest of the New Testament, about ‘ruling’ or ‘providing for’ the church in a pastoral sense (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 3:14). This interpretation would solve a commonly observed difficulty- that the children of many fine elders aren’t not always believers, they’re not always “in subjection”, and neither were those of many Biblical heroes. And further, seeing even the children of believers ultimately have freewill choice, how can it be that church leaders are held as it were responsible for their children’s

choices? If we understand the 'ruling' here to mean spiritual provision for those in one's own house church, as a qualification for appointment to being a minister of the larger, joint congregational gatherings- then this difficulty disappears. And this idea- of being faithful over a household and then being promoted to greater responsibility- would then be an obvious allusion to the Lord's parable about the faithful house-manager [AV "steward"] who is then promoted to greater responsibility in the Master's own household (Lk. 12:42 compared with Mt. 24:45).

Which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth- I have pointed out that most of the Ephesian church were Gentiles- hence the letter to the Ephesians several times refers to "you Gentiles". Most of them would have been converts from the temple of Diana, which was put out of business by the Christian preaching. And yet as noted on chapter 2, various rituals and ideas associated with temple worship had not been fully jettisoned by all the converts. Paul here uses language associated with a temple- and applies it to the ecclesia or church of God, making the point that the true temple is the Christian community and not an edifice with literal pillars and foundations. The *oikos* of God uses a word elsewhere translated "temple" (Lk. 11:51). The final phrase "of the truth" may simply mean that the *true* edifice, the *real* pillar and foundation of the temple, was the ecclesia- the group of individual Christian believers, and not any literal physical edifice. Excavations of the temple of Diana / Artemis at Ephesus have found that its pillars were an unusual feature of it- there were 127 pillars, 60 feet high, supporting a striking roof. It would've been easily identified by the large number of pillars all around it. All that now remains standing of the temple is in fact one pillar. So without doubt it is the temple of Diana, from whence many of the converts had come, which was the point of the allusion; the true pillars and supports [NEV "ground"] of God's temple were the converts. Contrary to what was being taught, no physical building had any significance in God's saving plan. And this confirms our suggestions on chapter 2, that the converts had brought with them the baggage from Diana worship. The church at Ephesus may well have been relatively small, a house church or a group of Christian homes. And yet this was the true temple, compared to that of Diana.

3:16 *And without controversy, great is the mystery of reverence towards God: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory*- See on :9 *The mystery*.

1 Tim. 3:16 speaks of how Christ was:

1. God manifest in the flesh [on the cross]
2. justified in the Spirit [in the resurrection- Rom. 1:4]
3. seen of angels [at the resurrection]
4. preached unto the Gentiles
5. believed on in the world
6. received up into glory [the ascension].

It must have occurred to many expositors that this would be nicely chronological- were it not for stages 4 and 5. "Preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world" seems a clear reference to the great commission- to preach the Gospel of the resurrection to all the world, and whoever believes it will be saved. But the tenses are definitely past tense, not future. Indeed, the whole passage seems to have Mark's record of the resurrection, preaching commission and ascension specifically in mind [not surprising if tradition is right in saying that this Gospel was learnt by heart by candidates for baptism in the early church]. I would suggest that Paul is using a

Hebraism although writing in Greek (and E.W. Bullinger provides scores of other examples of where Paul does this, in *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*). Paul is thinking in the Hebrew 'prophetic perfect' tense, to describe something yet future as already past, so sure is it of fulfilment. He *is* referring to the great commission when he speaks of Christ as "preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world"; and he *is* giving a chronological account of the Lord's resurrection, with reference to Mark's Gospel record. But he sees the command to go and preach to the Gentiles, to make them believe, as so sure of being obeyed that he speaks of it in the past tense. The fact the Lord asked us to do this, for all the many reasons outlined in this study...this of itself is such a strong imperative to do it that Paul sees it as *already done*. And so the Lord's bidding should weigh as heavily with us. In fact, He had just the same idea when in Luke's record of the commission He says: "Beginning at Jerusalem you *are* witnesses" (Lk. 24:48 RVmg., cp. Acts 1:8). What He meant, according to Mark's version, is that 'You are to go world-wide and be witnesses'. But He speaks as if they have already done this, as if He were saying: 'Go and be world-wide witnesses, you are witnesses, it's axiomatic to your experience of my resurrection that you will witness, so I see it as if its already being done, even as you stand here before me'. L.G. Sargent, quoting C. Spicq, tabulates the following parallels in *The Gospel Of The Son Of God* p. 210 (Birmingham: CMPA):

Mark 16:9-19	1 Tim. 3:16
:12 appeared (i.e. was manifested) in another form	manifest in flesh
:15 preach the gospel	preached unto the Gentiles
:15 into all the world…:16 he that believeth	believed on in the world
:19 was received up into heaven	received up, into glory

1 Tim. 3:16 seems to have been a well-known confessional formula in the first century church; perhaps it was recited by the candidate in the water before being baptized. It can be read as a chronological description of the Lord's death and resurrection:
1. "God was manifested in the flesh" in the Lord's *crucifixion*, not just His *life*. The manifestation of the Son was supremely in His death (s.w. 1 Jn. 3:5,8; 4:9 cp. Jn. 3:16; Heb. 9:26 Gk.; Jn. 17:6 cp. 26).
2. "Justified in the Spirit" - the resurrection (Rom. 1:4)
3. "Seen of Angels" - at the tomb (Mt. 28:2)
4. "Preached unto the Gentiles for belief in the world' (Gk.)- cp. Mk. 16:15,16
5. "Received up into glory" - what happened straight after the commission to preach the Gospel world-wide.

This chronological approach suggests that "God was manifest in the flesh" refers to the Father's especial manifestation in His Son's crucified human nature during those

hours of final suffering- rather than just to His birth. There on Calvary, Almighty God Himself was supremely revealed. He, *God Himself*, was despised and rejected by men; *His* love and self-sacrifice were so cruelly spurned; *He* was spat upon and made the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69:12). The same word for “manifest" occurs in other passages which relate it to the crucifixion:
- Heb. 9:26: “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he *appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself".
- 1 Pet. 1:19-20: “...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world [as the sacrificial lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13:8], but was *manifest* in these last times for you".
- I Jn. 3:5-8: “And ye know that he was *manifested* to take away our sins [on the cross]; and in him is no sin... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil", which He did through His death (Heb. 2:14-18).
It may be added in passing that the same word is also used about the final manifesting of the Lord Jesus at His return (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2). This explains the link between the cross and His return; who He was then will be who He will be when He comes in judgment. And this explains why the breaking of bread, with its focus upon the cross, is a foretaste of our appearing before Him then. See on Jn. 1:14; 19:19.

Another option is to see this hymn as based upon the hymns which went with enthronement ceremonies: "Jeremias and Spicq add a history-of-religions dimension by suggesting that in form the hymnic quotation is patterned, perhaps unknowingly, after the enthronement ceremony in ancient Egypt. The first stage is exaltation: the new king receives divine attributes (lines 1 and 2). The second stage is presentation: the deified king is presented to the gods (lines 3 and 4, here to angels and men). The third stage is enthronement: the king receives his rulership (lines 5 and 6)". In this case, "believed on in the world" would refer to acceptance by the masses of his kingdom. "Manifest in the flesh" would also make it clear that the King was not the God who was being manifest in his flesh.

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

4:1 *But the Spirit says expressly*- The reference may be to the Lord Jesus, the Lord the Spirit, stating clearly that there must be false teachers and a falling away amongst the believers before He returned (Mt. 24:10,11,24). Interestingly, Paul has commissioned Timothy to try to *stop* that happening (1:4). This is an interesting example of how human freewill effort dovetails with God's foreknowledge and developing purpose.

That in the last times some shall fall away from the faith- We either depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12), or we depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19, 22; 1 Tim. 6:5). We’re always moving in one direction or the other.

Giving heed to seducing spirits- Yet Timothy's job was to ensure that the church did *not* "give heed" to false teachers (1:4)- who are the "seducing spirits" spoken of here. Like Moses reasoning with God about Israel's fate, it could be that Paul is encouraging Timothy to reason with God, to do what he can so that the Lord's express prediction will not come true. Just as the Ninevites did, and succeeded. As noted on

3:1, Timothy's ministry was successful, according to the Lord's letter to the Ephesians in Rev. 2. He did shut down false teaching and inspire the doing of good works.

And teachings of the idol worshippers- So far in this exposition I have suggested that the Ephesian church was prone to influence by the Diana cult, from which many of the converts had come; and also from Jewish false teachers from the synagogue where Christian preaching had first begun in Ephesus. And that picture is confirmed by these warnings here in chapter 4. Paul will go on to warn also against those who taught that only some foods could be eaten (:3); this clearly was the Judaist false teaching. Paul saw in these attacks, and the fact some believers fell for them, a fulfilment of the Lord's Olivet prophecy where He had warned that these were signs of the last days. The Lord could have come in the first century- all was in place. But the church didn't take the Gospel to the world nor bring forth spiritual fruit which enabled that potential to happen, and so it has been deferred until our last days. The body of Christ is likewise suffering from legalism on one hand [cp. Judaism] and worldly idolatry on the other.

4:2- see on Mt. 23:28; Rev. 13:15.

Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies- Hypocrisy suggests the Lord's warnings against the Pharisees, i.e. Jewish false teachers.

Branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron- Paul felt that Christian co-crucifixion with Jesus meant that we too are branded with His marks. He uses the same figure in Gal. 6:17. So he feels that we bear the marks of ownership, either of Jesus or of some other system. This is exactly the picture we have in Revelation- believers in the last days marked either for the beast or for the Lord Jesus.

4:3 *Forbidding to marry*- This fits with our comments upon Paul's encouragement of female child-bearing in chapter 2. The Diana cult forbad their female followers to marry and have children. Paul is not making a global command to women to marry and have children, rather is he countering the false teaching of the Diana cult which had affected some sisters in the Ephesian church.

And to abstain from food- which God created to be received with thanksgiving- Jewish false teaching which was also a pressure upon those in Ephesus.

By them that believe and know the truth- Not 'know and believe'. 'Knowing the truth' is used by Paul to refer to an ongoing relationship with the Lord; he doesn't mean 'those who correctly understand a set of theologies'. We ought to be deeply, deeply moved by the fact that we have been called into God's world, into His sphere of vision. He even created the different types of meats "to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth"; they were made for us, not the world, and therefore *we* ought to give thanks for our food with this realization.

4:4 *For every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected*- Paul often alludes to Peter, and this clearly references Peter's experience on the housetop. I have argued elsewhere that Paul pretended to Peter, wishing dearly that he was the apostle to the Jews as Peter was. But it can also be so that Paul genuinely respected Peter- which is an essay in humility, that a leading rabbi would so respect an illiterate fisherman.

If it be received with thanksgiving- Here and in :5 Paul assumes that believers will pray before food, and this ought to be our pattern too in these days. Perhaps he has in

view the standard Christian prayer "Give us this day our daily bread", which he understands as a thankful admission that our food is indeed a gift from God. And if a Divine gift, then surely it is sanctified by Him.

4:5 *For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer*- Peter had been taught that it was the Lord's sacrifice which sanctified unclean food. So "the word of God" may refer, as it often does, to the Lord Jesus rather than the Bible. For the Bible in that sense doesn't cleanse unclean food. It could also refer to 'the Gospel'. Or it could be that Paul had in mind the simple statements of Genesis, that we have been given all food by God (Gen. 1:29; 9:3). This would be typical of Paul- as he does so powerfully in Galatians, he bids us return to God's original intentions in Genesis and consider the Mosaic Law as a temporary addition which has now ended. Food is not of itself sanctified or not sanctified (Rom. 14:14), so I doubt that Paul meant that the chips on your table are made somehow holy because you prayed over them. It is human life which can be sanctified to God, as Paul so often says in his letters. Thanksgiving for food is therefore a recognition that we have been given food in order to live life which must be sanctified to Him.

4:6 *If you put the believers in mind of these things*- Gk. 'put them under'. Clearly Paul had set up timid Timothy in a position of authority which was quite foreign to his natural disposition, especially as the believers included many forceful, dogmatic individuals. Our ministries too are often not naturally compatible with who we are.

You shall be a good minister of Christ Jesus- A good deacon. Timothy was to be act as both a bishop and deacon. This is in contrast to later abuses of the position of “bishop” in orthodox Christian churches. Timothy has been advised how to choose deacons in chapter 3, and he is being asked to model to them how they ought to be. Such servanthood is ultimately service to Jesus- "a good minister of Jesus Christ". Our service to others in Christ, including the dogmatic, the difficult and the woefully misinformed, is all service to Him. He would be a "good minister" insofar as he was nourished in the "good doctrine".

Nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed- By teaching these words to others, Timothy would himself be nourished by them. By feeding others, he would himself be fed; see on :16 *By so doing*. and 5:18 *The ox when he treads out the corn.* This is one reason why the Lord has chosen to work through the process of evangelism. The very process of teaching something makes us come to that material ourselves in a more intimate way than we would if we didn't teach it but simply mentally assented to it within ourselves. "The words of the faith" may refer to the 'faithful sayings' which Paul several times alludes to in his letters- brief inspired sentences which were distributed amongst the new converts. "Followed" is a word used again by Paul in 2 Tim. 3:10 where he says that Timothy has fully followed his own teaching and example. This is quite some commendation. As noted on 3:1, Timothy was very obedient to Paul, and thus his ministry was successful, in that the Lord's judgment of the Ephesian church in Rev. 2 reveals that the very things Timothy was asked to do- he achieved. Despite not at all being cut out for that task. Timothy was to be "nourished up in the words of the faith [a reference to 'words' of basic doctrine which comprised a first century Statement of Faith?], and of the good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6 RV). True doctrine has the power of growth; it is the seed which is sown, leading to the fruit of good works. The basic Gospel ("doctrine",

AVmg.) of the cross is the active, outstretched arm of Yahweh the Almighty (Is. 53:1). We must let that power work. "Let your conversation (way of life) be as it becomes the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). By nourishing others with good teaching, he would himself be “nourished up in the words of faith”. Caring for others on whatever level is what stimulates an upward spiral in our personal spiritual growth. In doing so, we will ourselves find spiritual growth. Practically, this is evident- in that the brother who looks through the Bible readings before doing them with his family, or reads a chapter with his five year old daughter and then the same chapter again with his wife, who makes an effort to prepare a different sermon each time he speaks rather than re-hash an old one... the one who benefits is ultimately himself.

4:7 *But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself with reverence towards God*- This rejection meant 'Do not let these things be taught in the church', because that was his brief in 1:3, to not allow false teaching. There was clearly a problem with some women in the Ephesian church. We saw in chapter 2 how Timothy was to stop some women teaching who were advocating a version of the pagan Diana cult mixed with the Jewish cult of Eve. And there were older women who likewise were teaching "fables"; and Timothy has been told in 1:4 not to allow Jewish fables to be taught in the church. Here and in chapter 2 it could be argued that we have evidence that women were indeed allowed to teach in the Ephesian church; but Paul's concern was with *the content* of what some of them were teaching. This was why these women should not be allowed to teach; not because they were women, but because of the content of their teaching. This also explains why Paul advises Timothy as to how old and young women should be living; this was not just general pastoral advice, but was given in the specific Ephesian context of women who were teaching false doctrine, who needed to be redirected to more positive spiritual pursuits. The double reference to "profane and old wife’s' fables" may refer to the dual pressure there was in Ephesus- from paganism and the Diana cult ["profane"], and from Jewish women teaching Jewish fables such as the Eve cult. We have noted this double problem several times in this exposition. It's noteworthy that public recitations were something that women were allowed to participate in. Slave women especially were known to make such recitations to the women of a large household, including the female freewomen. This doubtless laid the basis for the phenomenon [portrayed on some frescoes] of female house churches, with slave women leading the gatherings even when their mistress was present.

4:8 *For bodily exercise is profitable for a little time*- This is in contrast to the need to exercise spiritually (:7). This may well have been one of the profane [pagan] or old wives' fables of :7. Otherwise it is hard to see why Paul would suddenly start speaking about it. Mt. 6:2,3 = 1 Tim. 4:8. The implication is that we aren't to take Mt. 6:2,3 ("they have their reward") as implying that we have *no* reward in this life. We do (cp. Mt. 19:29).

But reverence towards God is profitable for all things- "Profitable" is only used elsewhere in 2 Tim. 3:16 [the Scriptures are profitable] and in Tit. 3:8, where "good works" are "profitable". The disciplines of the spiritual life, of daily Bible reading and good works, carry their blessings in this life too- "having the promise of the life which now is"; and those present blessings are far more than those achieved by physical exercise.

Having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come- There is a

link between the spiritual life lived now, and that which shall eternally be lived. The life which now is, is connected with the life which is to come. Our experience now is the promise of life tomorrow. John's Gospel expresses the same truth in saying that we now have the eternal life- we are living now the kind of life which we shall eternally live. Godliness having the promise of life both now and in the future is a reflection of Christ's teaching that the life of self-denial would have its present as well as future rewards (1 Tim. 4:8; Mk. 10:29).

4:9 *Faithful is this saying and worthy of all acceptance*- Another example of where brief inspired messages from the New Testament prophets were "accepted" as indeed inspired and distributed; see on :6 *The words of the faith*.

4:10 *For to this end we labour and strive*- In contrast to striving in physical exercise to preserve our own lives a bit longer (:8) we instead strive so that "all men" may experience the eternal life now possible. These words are used about Paul's labours in preaching and pastoral work (1 Cor. 15:10; 16:6; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:29). Paul uses the same word to encourage Timothy to likewise labour in the Ephesian church (1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:6). And again, Paul's exhortation was taken to heart; for some time later, the Lord commended the eldership ["the Angel of the church"] at Ephesus for labouring so hard (Rev. 2:3 s.w.).

Because we have our hope set on the living God- The Greek *elpis*, "hope", means certainty, trust. We are certain that God wishes to save all men, as explained under 2:1-6; and so we labour and strive so that this great salvation is shared with all men.

Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe- If we understand this literally, then God is the Saviour of “all men” including Hitler. But the Bible doesn’t teach universal salvation. There’s a difference between being a Saviour- and saving. God gave Israel a “saviour” in the form of Jesus (Acts 5:31; 13:23). But this doesn’t mean that “Israel” were all saved, because many of them have rejected their Saviour. This is the tragedy- that God is a “Saviour” for all men through His Son, but not all men wish to accept that salvation. This verse does not touch on the problem of those who have not heard the Gospel (for whatever reason). Frequently, the New Testament speaks of “God our Saviour” (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3 etc.). Perhaps the emphasis needs to be put on the word “our”. He is *our* Saviour because we have accepted His plan of salvation- but others have not. There is a salvation potentially possible for all- but it is a salvation unaccepted. Rom. 5:18 speaks of how by Christ’s righteousness “the free gift came upon all men unto justification”. But not literally all men will be justified. The “all men” is limited and not universal, because salvation is not universal. Jn. 1:5-11 speaks of Jesus as the light which came into the world, but the darkness preferred to remain in the darkness: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... John... came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, [so] that all might believe through him... He was in the world… yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him". God’s intention was that “all men” in the “world” of Israel might believe. John preached “so that all might believe”. But “all” did not believe. They “might” believe- they had the possibility of doing so, but did not. Note that “the world” here is “His own”- the Jewish world. Clearly “all men” is not to be understood literally. It’s obvious from how “all men” is referred to in the New Testament that the term doesn’t mean literally every single person:

- ‘All men’ thought John was a prophet (Mt. 21:26). But not all in Israel did (Lk. 21:6), and the whole planet definitely didn’t know anything about John

- 'All the Gentiles' are defined as those who "seek after the Lord" (Acts 15:17)
- Paul was to be a witness to "all men" of his vision of Jesus (Acts 22:15)- clearly not every person on the planet; and he speaks of how he had taught 'all men' (Col. 1:28 Gk.- the same words as in 1 Tim. 4:10 "all men")
- We are to live at peace "with all men" (Rom. 12:18)- all people in our lives, not every human being on the planet
- "All Judaea… Jerusalem" were baptized by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:5).

4:11 *These things command and teach*- The commanding *and* teaching may refer to teaching both formally, from the platform, and informally. A church leader like Timothy was not to simply teach from the podium and assume the job was done. The "things" to be thus taught were that we ought to "labour" for the Lord (:10) and do the good works associated with reverence to God (:8). And Timothy was obedient- for some time later, the Lord commended the eldership ["the Angel of the church"] at Ephesus for labouring so hard (Rev. 2:3 s.w. :10 "we labour").

4:12 *Let no one despise your youth*- They surely did despise his youth, but people can only do such things to us if we let them. And Timothy was not to allow them to do this, in that he was not to feel despised, but rather to be strong in the sense of his own mission and significance in the Lord's larger plan. Paul has just called Timothy to do battle with the older sisters who were teaching Jewish fables in the church (:7). For a young man to shut them up was going to be difficult, especially for someone of Timothy's sensitive or weak character. The fact he succeeded shows the power of God's word through Paul and the real possibility of personal transformation and achievement in the Lord's service.

Be an example to those that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity- Any teaching ministry is only effective insofar as the word is made flesh; and this was and is the ultimate power in the Lord's ministry to us. "Purity" carries the specific idea of sexual purity. Paul has commanded Timothy to be a man of one woman in chapter 3, he will go to warn him to deal with the younger sisters "with all purity" (5:2) and will later tell him to flee youthful [i.e. sexual] lusts (2 Tim. 2:22). Putting all this together, it would be fair to assume that Paul perceived a weakness in Timothy in this area. And yet all the same, Paul put him in to the position of eldership, with all the inter-personal contact with females which this required. But he warned him to beware of his weakness.

4:13- see on 1 Thess. 5:27.

Until I come- The implication of how the argument develops could be that Paul intended to give Timothy some Spirit gift which would further empower his ministry, presumably by the personal laying on of hands [as in :14; see note there]. He wrote similarly to the Romans (Rom. 1:11). Until then, Timothy was to focus on his own study and teaching.

Give attention to reading, to preaching, to teaching- The "reading" could refer to Timothy's own Bible study being the basis for his preaching [to the unbelievers] and teaching [of the converts]. But it could equally refer to the public reading of the Scriptures- which was especially necessary in largely illiterate congregations. The same word for "give attention" is used about not giving attention to Jewish fables (1:4) nor false teachers (4:1); but these negative commands must be replaced by a positive giving of attention to God's word and to sharing that word with others. Positive preaching and teaching of God's word, if focused upon, will mean we will

not have mental space to give attention to false teaching. And maybe we are to read this appeal for focus, mental 'giving attention', as the antidote to Timothy's proneness to sexual weakness touched on in :12.

4:14 *Do not neglect the gift you have*- Paul may be intending to give him another gift [see on :13 *Until I come*], but he asks Timothy not to neglect the one he already has. Timothy had desired the office of a bishop (3:1) and had been given the potential power to achieve it. But he wasn't, it seems, using his potential because of his natural weaknesses and the difficulty of dealing with the opposition. Neglecting, not taking seriously, our potential... is one of our most common failings. We have all been dealt talents by the Lord and are to use them, and not neglect them in the ground.

Given to you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you- There presumably had been an inspired, prophetic word from one of the New Testament prophets to the effect that Timothy could achieve his mission in Ephesus. Paul had appointed him as a bishop on the basis of that prophetic word (1:18). The elders had laid their hands on him to empower him. That council of elders may refer to those in Jerusalem [s.w. Acts 11:30; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4]; or it could have been some group of elders who were present at the time that Paul first told him to remain in Ephesus. If the reference is to the elders in Ephesus who were appointed soon after their conversion and before Timothy was appointed over them (1:3), then again we find Timothy in an awkward, embarrassing position. He would have been given power by the elders, who were older than him, and then he was appointed over them. He is told not to rebuke elders but to appeal to them, to carefully consider allegations against them and to honour the elders who deserved it (5:1,17,19). So there were "elders" in Ephesus, and the same word is used in this phrase "council of elders". So he was in a position where he had to rebuke the elders who had given him the power to rebuke them. And the Lord chose a young, shy man, struggling with many weaknesses, for this apparently impossible mission given his personality. And yet he succeeded, as noted earlier several times [e.g. on 3:1].

4:15 *Be diligent in these things*- Gk. 'keep practicing', a present active imperative, alluding to the command to exercise spiritually (:8).

Give yourself wholly to them- Gk. 'be in these things'. His whole being was to be in the things of serving the Lord. Such total dedication is often smiled off as fanaticism, obsession and imbalance. But if indeed we shall live eternally and can help others to, and if the Lord's glory is truly achieved by our efforts- then it follows that we will be "be" them now, for we shall eternally be continually and totally "in" them.

That your progress may be manifest to all- The obvious personal progress of a teacher is the greatest inspiration to those being taught. Otherwise, he or she becomes merely a purveyor of facts and truths which may as well be read in a book. But if the teacher models growth, then the word really becomes flesh and powerful to transform. Such progress also reveals a humility, in that the teacher themselves is a pupil and also on a learning curve. This was quite contrary to the popular conception that a teacher was some static figure passing on truths which had long been held as a kind of conduit.

4:16- see on Dt. 4:1,9; Acts 20:28.

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching- To see ourselves from outside of ourselves is difficult, but the Bible often asks us to do it. This kind of self knowledge is a large part of our growth in Christ.

Persist in this- The sense of keeping on keeping on, of abiding and enduring, are common in Paul's words to Timothy [see on :15 *Be diligent*]. It would appear that Timothy easily gave up and was too quickly swamped by the immediate, just like ourselves.

For by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers- This continues the theme discussed in :6 *Nourished.* Efforts to save others result in our salvation. It could be argued that the Lord's perfection and His own salvation out of death was a function of His devotion to our salvation. We see here the huge importance attached to teaching; it is connected with the salvation of the hearers. The salvation of some is dependent to some degree upon third parties. Illiterate people will simply not hear God's word unless it is read to them; and many who are literate come to that word so burdened with limitations and issues that unless somebody explains it to them, they like the Ethiopian eunuch will simply never understand.

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 5

5:1 *Do not rebuke an elder but exhort him*- See on 4:14. Timothy would have had to discipline some of the church elders, and these were the very ones who perhaps had laid their hands on him to grant him the Spirit gift required to be their bishop. We wince as we think of a man so lacking in self-assurance and maturity as Timothy... having to do this. Truly his ministry, like every ministry, was not easy; and he was empowered hugely in order to achieve something which was so against his grain of nature. It could be argued from the list of different groups now mentioned (old men, young men, old women, young women) that in all cases, Timothy was not to rebuke but to exhort. The natural way that a group leader operates is to rebuke when necessary; but in Timothy's case, given his weak personality and persona, this would just not have worked. And so he was advised to not rebuke but to appeal / exhort / come near to folk who needed to change and be changed. Just in fact as the Father and Son have done with us.

As a father- This again was difficult; the young Timothy, who was despised for his youth, had to act as a father to men older than him. Only the psychological strengthening of the Holy Spirit enabled him to achieve this- the gift bestowed by these elders in :14. We too find ourselves in psychologically and emotionally impossible situations as we do the Lord's work, and require the same mental strengthening. Paul uses the same words to describe how he too charged those under his care, as a father does his children (1 Thess. 2:11). The same words are used of the Father exhorting or entreating the hypocritical *older* son (Lk. 15:28). Perhaps Paul is consciously alluding to this in advising Timothy how to deal with the *older* ones. The older son clearly speaks the language of the Judaists; perhaps in order to discharge his responsibility to stop false teaching by the Judaists (1:3), Timothy had to deal with older men and older women who were distributing the Jewish "fables". Perhaps these were amongst the earliest converts in Ephesus, who had come to Christ as a result of Paul's initial preaching in the synagogue. Therefore their 'age' may be a reference to how long they had been in Christ relative to others.

The younger men as brothers- Timothy was of their age, and yet he was their spiritual elder. He was to emphasize what he naturally had in common with them, to exhort them as their leader but not as their superior, ever remembering that he was an equal brother in Christ as they were. Here again we see a great psychological and inter-personal challenge; which in the internal strengthening and wisdom of the Lord's Spirit, it seems Timothy achieved.

5:2 *The elder women as mothers*- I suggested on 4:7 that there were a group of older women teaching Jewish fables in the church, who had to be stopped. And Paul advises him to go about this by exhorting / appealing rather than direct rebuke. How could Timothy, young and despised for his youth, remove older women from their teaching ministry, and keep them within the church? Only by the wisdom of the Spirit.

The younger women as sisters- The younger women who needed rebuking may refer to the former followers of the Diana cult who had to be removed from their positions of influence in chapter 2. How could Timothy, who seems to have had a particular temptation from women, successfully engage with the younger women and get them to accept his position, and remove them from their teaching positions? For the positive outcome to be achieved which the Lord's later letter to Ephesus suggests, Timothy must have been powerfully blessed to achieve what would have appeared to be psychologically, sociologically and spiritually impossible. And that same strengthening of the Spirit is available to us in similar missions apparently impossible.

In all purity- See on 4:12 *Purity* regarding Timothy's tendency to sexual weakness.

5:3 *Honour widows that are indeed widows*- This section reveals that there was clearly a problem with a group of widows in the Ephesian church. They were living off the church, and yet instead of praying (:5) were giving themselves to sensual pleasure to the point they were spiritually dead (:6). Some of the widows were young and would be best to remarry and have children (:14), other widows were elderly with adult children and grandchildren (:4). These are the same two groups who were giving false teaching. Chapter 2 speaks of the younger women who were acting still like the prostitute priestesses of the Diana cult, claiming that their sexual services empowered the prayers of the men who used them (see commentary there). it was these women whom Paul urged to get on and have children (2:17); and he gives the same advice here (:14). They were remaining single in order to act as the priestesses of Diana but in a Christian garb. And Paul condemns this and encourages them not to see marriage and bearing children as so dishonourable. The older women represented the Judaist problem in the church; they were teaching Jewish fables (4:7). The simple problem was that these widows were financially supported by the church and had time on their hands. Indeed we could go so far as to say that if indeed [as suggested on chapter 2] they were acting like the Diana cult priestesses, they would have been paid money for their sexual services by the men of the congregation. Effectively they were prostitutes, even if the whole system was justified by having drawn up a register of widows and the claim that they were being supported by charity. This level of immorality in the early church ought not to surprise us when we recall that the Corinthians were getting drunk at the breaking of bread service, and there is the implication in Corinthians that there was sexual misbehaviour going on there too. Jezebel is rebuked for teaching the Lord's people to commit fornication. The letter of James suggests grave abuse and

even murder going on in the church. I have seen all this kind of thing happening in churches in the developing world today. So the picture I am painting of Ephesus is not beyond imagination. The fact the Lord doesn't mention this kind of thing in His letter to Ephesus some time later is highly significant; for He does mention such things to other churches. It shows that Timothy's difficult mission did in fact succeed. To reform such an awful situation would seem not at all the mission for a young, insecure, timid man like Timothy. But his success and empowering just shows what can be achieved by the work of the Spirit. Timothy was being asked to differentiate between the genuine widows who really did need support; and these other widows, both young and old, who frankly needed to focus on good works and serving the Lord in family life, rather than the roles they had been adopting. Again we note that it was the content of their teaching, rather than their gender, which was what Paul took issue with.

5:4 *But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show devotion towards their own family*- The presence of the elderly in our lives is in order to teach us something. It is a form of "devotion", the Greek meaning 'worship' (only s.w. Acts 17:23). Again there may be a hint at the idol worship / devotion to Diana- for the word is only elsewhere used about idol worship (Acts 17:23). The Christian equivalent of 'devotion' to idols / Diana was to look after your mum and dad or your granny... and not the grandiose external rituals which passed as 'devotion'. Another track is suggested by the way in which a related word is used about *Jewish* devotion to Judaism (Acts 10:2,7; 22:12). And again... *Christian* devotion was not so external and public, it was all about the daily nitty gritty of caring for your elderly relatives. Perhaps Paul chose this word in order to address the two elements of the Ephesian problem- devotion to Diana on one hand, and to Judaism on the other.

And to repay their parents- The Greek seems to suggest an equal, measure for measure repayment. I have been raised by parents and cared for those parents in their old age. And I have raised my own children. I can therefore comment that in no way is the care for aged parents an adequate or equal repayment for the care they gave you. But Paul says that by attempting to do this, we learn. We learn grace, that were it not for parental grace, we would not have survived babyhood and would not be here today. And we seek to reflect that grace in caring for the elderly within our families. And this learning and response to that learning- is pleasing to God.

For this is acceptable in the sight of God- The language of the acceptability of sacrifice before God. Sacrifice was a part of both paganism and Judaism; Paul is saying that the acceptable sacrifice to Him under Christianity is to care for your rellies.

5:5 *Now she that is indeed a widow and alone has her hope set on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day*- The allusion is to Anna in the temple. The elderly are limited in what they can physically do, but Paul seems to envisage here a very serious and organized prayer ministry, made possible by the widow being materially cared for. That care should come from her family, and if not, then the church. And in response, she should use her time and freedom from secular cares to seriously pray "night and day". This is a wonderful idea for all of us whenever or however we find ourselves indisposed. But it obviously has particular relevance to elderly believers. Regarding widows and prayer, see on :3.

5:6 *But she that gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives*- See on :3. I have suggested that the younger widows were acting similarly to the priestess 'mediators' of the Diana cult from which they had come out. They were in serious sin, and although they had the name of the living Jesus, they were spiritually dead, in anticipation of the condemnation to death they would receive unless they repented. Eph. 4:17,18 was written to the same Ephesians, and urges them to "*No longer* walk as the Gentiles walk... alienated from the life of God", that is, dead. Eph. 5:14 makes the same appeal to these Ephesians- to awake spiritually out of the sleep of death.

5:7 *These things also command, so that they may be without reproach*- The concern seems to be that the surrounding opposition to Christianity in Ephesus, both Jewish and pagan, could so easily use the situation with the widows in order to bring reproach upon the name of Christ and to finally stamp out Christianity in Ephesus. The "things" may be the practical commands regarding how to reform the system of widow support in Ephesus which follow in :8-16. The Greek for "reproach" means literally 'not arrested'. Paul could imagine how the Christians could easily be arrested for things related to what they were doing; they were laying themselves wide open to all manner of accusations and legal problems.

5:8 *But if anyone does not provide for his own family and specially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*- This seems rather an extreme thing to say about someone who doesn't care for their elderly relatives as they might do. And it can hardly be true as it stands, because not everyone is able to provide for their elderly relatives, due to economic, health or geographic reasons. But the statement here makes perfect sense if we accept the reconstruction of the scene as suggested in these notes. Instead of looking after parents, money was being paid to a class of 'widows' in the church who were effectively prostitutes, who claimed they could empower the prayers of the men to be better heard by God (see on chapter 2). This indeed merits the kind of condemnation Paul hands out here.

But then the deep error of ignoring care for parents must still be faced. If we selfishly build up our own possessions through ignoring the needs of others, we have denied the Faith- even if we hold on to a clear understanding of the doctrines. Loving money is erring from the Faith- again, even though we may keep our theoretical understanding (1 Tim. 6:10). It is perhaps intentional that three times in the same section in 1 Tim., Paul speaks of those who leave the Faith; once he speaks of this in the context of doctrinal error (1 Tim. 6:21); the other two references (5:8; 6:10) concern leaving the Faith through being materialistic, whilst holding on to true doctrines. The point is, the one is as bad as the other. The fact the Kingdom will be on *earth* not in Heaven is not just incidental. It means that we *now*, as we live on this planet which will be our eternal possession, will not strive for present possession of it, neither will be swayed by the pressure groups and political groups who only look at the state of the world as it *now* is. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again [because he dies before he can repay his mortgage?]: but the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth. *For* such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:21,22 RV). Exactly because we will inherit this planet gives us strength against materialism; it means that we will be generous; we will not focus our lives upon temporarily buying a spot of land which in any case we will eternally inherit.

5:9 *Let no one be registered as a widow who is under sixty years old*- This is proof enough that the commands being given here were relevant to sorting out the situation in Ephesus and not global commands. We must read the commands about a certain

group of women being silenced in chapter 2 in the same way. The fact he recommends some younger widows to remarry (:14) is also proof enough that "widows" doesn't mean 'all widows'. It may be that single and widowed brethren and sisters made open statements of their decision to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus. 1 Tim. 5:9 suggests there was a specific "number" of widows in the Ephesus ecclesia who were financially supported by the ecclesia. But as noted above, this was being abused and turned into what was effectively prostitution.

Only register those who have been the woman of one man and- This confirms our earlier suggestion that the group supported as 'widows' included some who were sexually immoral, acting [as suggested in chapter 2] effectively as church prostitutes, taking money for acting as the Christian equivalent to the priestesses of the Diana cult, in order to supposedly enhance the prayers of the men they slept with. Note that Timothy and other elders in this church are warned to be the man of one woman (3:2,12)- modelling to these church members the kind of life required of a believer. Thinking it through, "the woman of one man" surely cannot mean that over the course of their lives, they must not have been promiscuous. For surely such sins are washed away at baptism and should not be a reason for not supporting such a woman after she has been baptized and is widowed, being over 60 years old. Rather the logic surely requires that she should not *now* be promiscuous, a woman of many men. This again supports the idea that there was a problem in Ephesus of some female members, even those over 60, being promiscuous. And this is explained by our suggestion on chapter 2 that some of the sisters were offering sexual services supposedly to improve the power of the men's prayers. No wonder Paul tells Timothy to end this system and haul them off the platform.

5:10 *Well reported of for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has used hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has helped the afflicted*- This is not just a random list of good works for a believing woman. I suggest that each of these works are in conscious contradistinction from the behaviour of the priestess prostitutes of the Diana cult. They did not believe in having or therefore raising children; hence Paul tells the younger widows to have children (:14) and in chapter 2 suggests those particular women save themselves from their immorality by childbearing. The Diana cult was fiercely xenophobic- we recall how the appeal was made to the citizens of Ephesus to destroy Paul and his missionary work on the basis that he was bringing their beloved Ephesus into dishonour. The problematic sisters were clearly influenced by these wrong attitudes although they had left the Diana cult. Hence the requirement for them to show hospitality to strangers; and they were to wash the feet of their brethren rather than take money for having sex with them on the excuse they were assisting in the power of their prayers [according to our reconstruction offered in chapter 2]. "Helped the afflicted" may well refer to how Paul went through awful problems with the mob there (Acts 19); the Greek for "afflicted" means literally 'the thronged', which is how it is translated in Mk. 3:9. 1 Cor. 15:32 suggests he may even have been thrown to the wild beasts in the arena there. Those who had ministered to Paul and other persecuted preachers then were thus qualified to be supported. The hint might be that these Christians who were still so influenced by the Diana cult may not have been so forward in coming to his assistance. It is Onesiphorus and not the local believers who is mentioned as ministering to Paul in his great afflictions in Ephesus (2 Tim. 1:18). Paul mentions this in writing to Timothy there at Ephesus.

If she has diligently followed every good work- Notice the double emphasis in this verse alone on good works; and so often in the letters to Timothy. The fact the

Lord later commended Ephesus for their good works in Rev. 2 shows that Timothy's ministry was in that sense successful. He, the weak and unlikely one, took Paul's inspired words at their full weight and implemented them. The same relatively rare Greek word translated "followed [after]" is found soon after, where in :24,25 Paul says that the good works of the faithful follow them to judgment. Whilst salvation is by grace and not works, works will be taken into account in our final judgment and will play a part in forming the nature of the person whom we shall eternally be.

"Good work" is the same phrase as in Eph. 2:10, where we are to do the good works which were "beforehand prepared" for us. "Beforehand prepared" suggests we were prepared for the performing of our good works from a specific beginning point. And that surely was at 'the beginning'. Our entire genetic history, the nature of our early childhood experiences and surrounding family, was prepared so that we would be born with the wiring required to do the works intended. It is often noted of heroes that they were 'born for this hour'; but that is in fact true of us all. To turn away from those works, through disinterest, laziness, wilful lack of perception, self absorption... is to waste so much. We on our side must be prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21); "be eagerly ready [s.w. prepared] unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1). We are to abound in good works (s.w.) because of God's abounding grace to us (2 Cor. 9:8). The good works are therefore a way of life and not some occasional good charitable deeds. We will be 'established' in this life of good works (2 Thess. 2:17); we are to "follow every good work" (1 Tim. 5:10), a strange phrase until we undertsand that the good works were prepared for us ahead of time, and we are to follow after them. We are to be on the look out, prepared, for those good works.

5:11 *But refuse to register younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry*- There is nothing wrong with marrying. Indeed Paul commands it for these women in :14. It would appear that they had entered a voluntary vow to Christ not to remarry- hence the sin. As suggested on chapter 2, actually these young sisters were acting like the prostitute priestesses of the Diana cult, vowing virginity to their god whilst sleeping with the male worshippers and aborting any pregnancies. They had of course left the Diana cult, but were acting in a similar way, instead taking a vow of virginity to Christ- will apparently sleeping with brethren on the pretext of strengthening the acceptability of their prayers, and then receiving money for this from the widows' support fund. This would be a classic example of pagan mentality mixing in with Christianity, and apparent devotion to Christ being mixed with immorality. This kind of thing is far from unknown in the church of today.

5:12 *Having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge*- As there were consequences for breaking the Nazirite vow and other vows under the Mosaic law, so it was and is wrong to vow things to the Lord and then break them. But all the same, the language of condemnation seems rather strong- see on :8. And yet it is understandable if my reconstruction of the situation is correct. To use such a pledge to Christ as an opportunity for immorality, and earning money by effective prostitution in the name of worshipping God and mediating Christian prayers- this is indeed behaviour that has to call for condemnation. If we don't read it this way, we are left with the apparent severity of judging those who pledge singleness to Christ and then feel they want to get married. In 1 Cor. 7, Paul speaks exactly to this situation. He seems to refer to this pledge of singleness when he writes of those who promise to keep their virginity; but Paul says that if even after that, they cannot "contain", then they should marry. Yet here he is saying that such breaking of the

pledge warrants condemnation. I therefore feel justified in resolving that contradiction by seeing in the pledge breaking far more than meets the eye if we just read these words without their context.

5:13- see on Lk. 9:4; Acts 20:20.

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not- The Greek for "idlers" means literally 'not workers'; the compound includes the same word for "works" used in 2:10 about the need for the young sisters to do good "works" rather than dress up as the equivalent of the priestesses of the Diana cult. The antidote to their bad behaviour and immorality was to do works; not that works would save them, but passionate involvement in the Lord's service in practice would preserve them from involvement in immorality. This is actually, reading between the lines, Paul's advice to Timothy regarding his wayward sexual urges. And it is true for all time that the [Biblical] devil finds work for idle hands. One reason why God's purpose operates through human works is that the works are a necessary part of our own spiritual path and development; although the works in themselves are not needed by God nor are they the basis of our salvation *per se*. "They learn to be idlers" can bear the translation "they give to understand / teach"- as they went from "house to house". This is the very phrase used in Acts 2 about the early brethren going from house to house, i.e. from one home group to another, breaking bread and doing Bible study. We can assume that these women were going around the house groups which comprised the Ephesus church, teaching idleness, teaching against good works. The fact Ephesus are commended for their good works in Rev. 2 shows that all this advice really did work for the church and Timothy managed to obey it all successfully. "Saying what they should not" uses *laleo*, a word elsewhere translated 'preach' and 'teach'. And they were repeating gossip and busybody material in the name of teaching. No wonder in chapter 2 that Paul says they should no longer be teachers. But we notice that it is the content of their teaching, rather than their being teachers, which is the burden of his difficulty with them.

By publicly getting a bad name for “wandering about from house to house”, these women were giving opportunity to the Jewish adversaries to “rail against” (A.V. margin) the Christians. Jude 9,10 implies that the Judaizers brought “railing accusation” against the Christians. “Speaking things which they ought not”, recalls Jude 10 about the Judaizers: “these speak evil of those things which they know not”. “Wandering” connects with Jude’s description of “wandering stars” (Jude 13). Diotrephes, one of the Judaizers who was trying to discredit the apostle John and the other apostles, (as the Judaizers did to Paul) is described as “prating against us with malicious words” (3 Jn. 10). “Prating” is from the same word translated “tattlers” in 1 Timothy 5:13 concerning these women. The women going from house to house may imply from church to church, as that is how the word “house” is often used in the New Testament (due to the many house churches then in existence). This is what the Jewish false teachers did; 2 John 7 talks about deceivers or seducers that had entered into the Christian world, i.e. the false brethren “unawares brought in” to the church of Galatia. There are many references to these “seducing spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1) – i.e. false teachers (1 Jn. 4:1) – within the church, to which the church was not to give “heed” (1 Tim. 4:1). That these were Jewish false teachers is suggested by other references to “giving heed” in the context of being watchful against Jewish infiltration of Christianity:

– “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (Mk. 8:15);

– “Not giving heed to Jewish fables” (Titus 1:14);

– "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies' (1 Tim. 1:4) – the source of which genealogies was probably the Old Testament, over which the Judaizers were encouraging the Christians to argue to no profit.

5:14 *I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children*- I have repeatedly connected this with the comment that the young women of 2:15 should quit their effective prostitution and teaching within the church, renounce their vow of virginity which they had copied from the Diana cult priestesses, and have children. And by submitting to the spiritual disciplines which come with Christian family life, they would save themselves from a path which was otherwise leading to their condemnation (5:12).

Rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for slander- These women, as teachers, were clearly capable. Paul encourages these particular women to exercise their abilities in spiritually leading their households. But it could be that Paul is also encouraging them to start their own house groups of believers which they would "rule", instead of going around teaching idleness to the other house groups (see on :13).

The New Testament speaks of households run by women: Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14,40); Nympha (Col. 4:15) and Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). These women were presumably wealthy widows or divorcees who hadn't remarried. We are left to speculate whether they were in some way the 'leaders' of the house churches which met in their homes. Women are described as ruling households in 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4,5. The woman of Prov. 31 clearly had autonomy within the private sphere of the household, even though the husband was the public leader. Seeing Christianity was initially a house-church, household religion, we are left to wonder how much women actually led house churches, especially seeing that the majority of early Christian members appear to have been women. The wall paintings [frescoes] found in the Christian catacombs around Rome are highly significant for our present study. The significant ones for our purposes are the catacombs of Priscilla on the Salaria Nuova, Callixtus on the via Appia Antica, and that of Domitilla on the via Ardeatine. They feature in places scenes of female Christians raising cups, with the inscription *agape* over them. Some show a woman occupying the central place in the meal, with a large cup in her hand, with the other women looking at it intently. Some of the frescoes [there are many of them] show women dressed as slaves doing this in what appears to be a wealthy home. These frescoes seem to me indicative of how groups of slave women formed house churches, and faithfully kept the breaking of bread. Some frescoes show the women sharing the bread and wine with children around the table; one shows a woman holding a scroll, as if she is reading Scripture to the others. One fresco features a woman holding a cup of wine inscribed '*nobis*'- 'for us'. Some frescoes show men in the group, but the woman in the centre, as if she is leading the meeting, or as the host of the household.

Paul encourages younger mothers to "rule their households", using a word [*oikodespoteo*] which would usually be used about the man ruling the house. His implication is surely that in Christ, husband and wife together rule the household, notwithstanding the wife being in submission to her husband.

"The adversary" is not the same word as "Satan", although it may still refer to the Jews seeking opportunity to criticize the. It can mean "an adversary at law" in a legal sense, implying that the Jews could get them in trouble at a Roman court. There's plenty of historical evidence of this.

5:15 *For already some are turned aside after satan*- The Greek for "turned aside" is used four times in the letters to Timothy. Paul knew that some would be turned aside by false teaching (1:6; 2 Tim. 4:4), and he didn't want Timothy to be turned aside by it either (6:20). We see here the importance of Timothy's commission to stamp out false teaching- because this is what it leads to. People listen, and they are led aside from the Kingdom path.

Note that the widows turn themselves aside after Satan – Satan is not necessarily seeking the women. Verses 12 and 13 explain that the widows "cast off their first faith" – something they did themselves. "They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house". It was by their doing this that they "turned aside after Satan' – their evil desires, and the Jewish temple cult. Using the tongue in the wrong way is a result of an evil state of the heart – "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt. 12:34). Their turning aside after Satan involved being "tattlers... and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (v. 13). Thus "Satan" refers to their evil heart. Through profitless talking and not keeping hold of the true spirit of the Word of God, some had "turned aside unto vain jangling" (1 Tim. 1:6). Paul is now pointing out that some of the young widows in that ecclesia had also turned aside for the same reason "unto Satan", or their evil desires, expressed in their idle talking.

The "seducing spirits" of :1 had seared consciences (:2), implying that they were apostate believers. They forbad to marry, "commanding to abstain from meats" (:3), which especially the latter, was the big contention of the Jewish element in the church in the first century. Notice that what is said here about the Judaizers is also true of the Catholics – supporting the idea that 2 Thessalonians 2 is about both Jews and Catholics.

Thus the "seducing spirits" of 1 Timothy 4:1 were the Jewish infiltrators of the church, which were doubtless amongst the "deceivers" of 2 John 7, which 2 John 10 implies were going from house to house (church to church) spreading their doctrine of belittling the person of Christ. These Judaizers "subvert whole houses" (Titus 1:11). Back in 1 Timothy 5:13, the fact that the women also went from house to house is another indication that what they were doing was also what the Judaizers were doing. Thus it is an interesting possibility that when their husbands died, these women lacked spiritual leadership, and therefore turned aside after the Jewish Satan, being influenced by the Jews to undermine the church. Using such apparently innocent members of the church would have been a very effective way of infiltrating. Perhaps there is a reference to this in 2 Timothy 3. This speaks of men within the ecclesia, "having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof" (v. 5), unsound judgment in church decisions (v. 8 A.V. margin). "Their folly shall be manifest unto all men" (v. 9) – at the Judgment, where the responsible appear. They are likened to Jannes and Jambres, who, according to Jewish tradition, were apostate Jews. These false teachers (probably Judaizers), "creep into (i.e. subtly infiltrate) houses (churches), and lead captive silly women" (v. 6). Note how the Judaizers are described as capturing Christians to become infiltrators in 2 Timothy 2:26 and in 1 Timothy 3:7. This view of the women is confirmed by the following two points:

i) Acts 13:50 describes the Jews stirring up "the devout and honourable women and (thereby)... raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas".

ii) There is evidence in profane history that many Gentile women were influenced by the Jews. Thus Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, II, 20.2) claims that when the Jews of Damascus were persecuted, the proselyte wives of the Gentiles living there were also attacked. Josephus describes the Gentile wives of the men of Damascus as "almost all of them addicted to the Jewish religion". William Barclay

says that during the first century “the Jewish religion had a special attraction for a woman... round the synagogues were gathered many women, often women of high social position, who found in this (Jewish) teaching just what they so much longed for. Many of these women became proselytes” (William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 2003) p. 114). That the women Paul refers to were also wealthy is shown by them having time to go around from house to house, instead of having to work.

5:16 *If any woman that believes has widows in her family, let her help them and let not the church be burdened, so that it may help those that are indeed widows*- This appears to be a summary of the commands in this section about widows. But in some MSS, such as those followed here by the NEV, it seems specifically addressed to women. In this case, given our previous reconstructions, it would seem these young women were justifying the payment for their sexual services by saying they were being paid not only for their own widowhood but for their widowed mothers too.

5:17- see on Mt. 7:24.

Let the elders that rule well- There were some Ephesian elders that did "rule well", despite all the problems in the church which we have pointed out. And "the angel of the church at Ephesus" was commended by the Lord for stamping out false teaching and excelling in works. Although it was the loss of *agape* love which was their downfall in the end. We recall Paul's last meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, where he glumly warned them that of their own selves, men would arise destroying the flock at Ephesus; and urged attention to God's word in view of this. I see that warning in the same way as I see God's inspired message that in 40 day, Nineveh would be destroyed. But these expressions of future doom of themselves invite repentance and spiritual effort, which God rewards and takes deep notice of, to the extent that the threatened catastrophes either don't happen or are delayed. And the existence of an acceptable church in Ephesus by the time of Rev. 2 is a proof case of this. The command to appoint faithful elders and pass on the baton to them (2 Tim. 2:2) was therefore fulfilled well by Timothy.

Be counted worthy of double honour- If this has some financial reference (:18 "wages", and see the parallel in 1 Cor. 9:8-10 which is in a financial context), then we should connect it with the preceding comment that the money spent on the fraudulent widows' welfare fund was a 'burden' on the church (:16). Paul states plainly enough that he is not against a paid ministry although he didn't use it himself. But this verse would appear to be saying that Timothy decided what was paid to whom, and there seems the surprising idea of payment according to spiritual integrity. We would rather have expected payment to be simply according to basic living needs, but he does appear here to go beyond that. Presumably his idea was not to offer a financial carrot towards spirituality, but to demonstrate that good service to the Lord was to be recognized and rewarded by the congregation. I am uncomfortable with that conclusion but I find it hard to see any other consistent interpretation. The only alternative I can think of is that the "double honour" may be referent to the money paid to widows- those elders who ruled well were to get double what they were being given. But still the problem remains that it was because of the 'wellness' of their work that they were to be rewarded; and "honour" is not completely relevant to the widows. And see on :18 *The labourer is worthy of his wages.*

Especially those who labour in the word and in teaching- A reference to Bible study and then teaching the results of that study. Teaching is therefore not entertainment, re-casting secular stories or wisdom in spiritual terms accessible to the

congregation; it is to be preceded by study of the word itself. The idea may be that the labour of the elders was not in secular life, but their work in study and teaching was equal to that of secular employment. The Lord commends the "Angel" at Ephesus, presumably referring to the eldership, for "labouring" (Rev. 2:3 s.w.).

5:18 *For the Scripture says*- We find a very significant feature in both the New Testament itself, and in the historical, uninspired writings of the early Christians: *they speak about the New Testament writings as being inspired Scripture just as they speak of the inspired Old Testament writings.* So Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul's letters as being amongst "the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16), i.e. on the same level of acceptance as the Old Testament Scriptures. Here in 1 Tim. 5:18, Paul combines two quotations, one from the Old Testament and another from the Gospel of Luke, and calls them both “Scripture”: " For the Scripture saith ' 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn ' [Dt. 25:4]; and, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire'" (Lk. 10:7). Polycarp, writing in about AD115, combines the Old Testament Psalms and Paul’s letter to the Ephesians in a similar manner: "In the sacred books... as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath’." Some years later, the [uninspired] second letter of Clement (2:4) quotes Isaiah and then adds: "And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" -quoting from Matthew. The first epistle of Clement, dating at the latest to AD95, quotes from many of Paul’s letters and from the Gospels; but very significantly, it doesn’t quote from any of the books which later were rejected at the Councils. So, the ‘new’ writings of the New Testament were accepted on an equal footing as the Old Testament Scriptures, from soon after they were first circulated. Notice that this was all *before* the Councils met to assemble the canon. The books were widely accepted as inspired *before* them! They didn’t give those books an inspired status. It’s also apparent that the ‘new’ books didn’t go through much of a process of being recognized as inspired. They were accepted as inspired immediately. See on 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Jn. 4:1.

You shall not muzzle- The word means literally to render speechless. The idea may be that if an elder was not paid, then they would not have time to prepare their talks for the congregation. The Old Testament contains examples of where the Levites failed to teach the people because the tithes for supporting them were not paid.

The ox when he treads out the corn- The stress may be on the word "when"; the elder must do this if he is to be fed. The treading out of the corn represents the labour in the word which is required before teaching it to the church congregation (see on :17). The corn represents God's word and the treading out the processing of it. And yet in this figure, the ox [cp. the elder] eats some of the corn he processes. This has been a theme of Paul in advising Timothy- that the very process of spiritually feeding others leads to the spiritual benefit of the feeder (see on 4:6 *Nourished up*).

And, The labourer is worthy of his wages- The wages are to be *axios* the worker, appropriate to the quality and amount of work. Hence those who worked "well" were to receive "double" (:17).

5:19 *Do not receive an accusation against an elder, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses*- The way Paul commanded Timothy not to even *consider* a complaint against an elder unless another two or three had been eye-witnesses is proof enough that he expected elders to be slandered from within the ecclesia. The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him. See on Gal. 5:11; 1 Thess. 2:3. The context is the

problematic group of sisters spreading gossip and being busybodies (:13). This kind of thing happens today, with the internet facilitating it. Paul seems to be saying that such gossips should not be 'taken up' or responded to unless there are two or three eye-witnesses.

5:20 *Those elders that sin, reprove in the sight of all*- The "all" may refer to all the elders; the "rest" who are to take warning from the reproof. I say this because there appears to be a parallel in the next verse, where Timothy is charged before or "in the sight of" "the elect angels", who I suggest refer to the eldership. For the Lord addresses them as the Angel of the church at Ephesus in Rev. 2.

So that the rest may also be in fear- Reproof in the sight of others is shame based, which we may be somewhat uncomfortable with. But shame was a hugely powerful component in first century Mediterranean psychology and sociology. And perhaps the "sin" in view was connected to this whole issue of good appearance in the sight of others- which pride to this day is the root of so many sins.

5:21 *I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus*- If the elders were to be reproved in the sight of each other (:20), then who was Timothy as the 'boss' to be reproved in the sight of? The answer to that was 'In God's sight and that of Jesus- as well as of the Angels'.

And the elect Angels- The context in 1 Timothy warns against the Jewish obsession with effectively worshipping Angels. Paul wishes to refocus their attention on Angels in the correct sense. I suggested on :20 that this refers to the elders of the church. But they in turn were represented by literal Angels in Heaven. Hence the Angel of the church at Ephesus in Rev. 2 was [in the context] both a literal Angel and the human elder or group of elders in Ephesus which were represented by an Angel in Heaven. Scripture abounds with reference to this 'court of Heaven', in which individuals and situations on earth are reflected in Heaven, and Heaven's structure is reflected on earth. Angels represent the face and presence of God; the fact they are physically present in our lives means that we should live in a sense of awe and humility at the nearness of God to us. Often this presence of the Angel is used as a means of motivating us to higher endeavour for the Lord. Jacob conceived of his guardian Angel as "the fear of my father Isaac". This then is one of the ways we should fear God- to live in constant respect and awareness of the Angel in our lives. Paul uses the idea of charging brethren "before the elect Angels that thou do these things without preferring one before another" (1 Tim. 5:21), as if to say that the physical presence of the ecclesia's representative Angels should inspire humility and obedience in the running of ecclesial affairs. In a judgment context, Paul charges Timothy before the angels of the elect, i.e. our guardian Angels- as if to say 'They are watching over you now, they will be there again at judgment and look back to your present life; so behave as you should as a man under God's judgment'.

The present nature of the judgment ought to powerfully motivate us. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things..." (1 Tim. 5:21 AV) is full of judgment language: before God, Christ and the Angels of the elect (i.e. our 'guardian Angels'). 'Before God' is the language of the judgment in Mt. 25:32; Lk. 21:36; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5. It's as if Paul was reminding Timothy that he was present before the judgment already, and should therefore be obedient. 2 Tim. 4:1 makes the link even more apparent: he charged Timothy to preach as being before (Gk.) both the Father and Son, who *will judge* the living and dead at His appearing. Because we

effectively stand before the judgment seat now, therefore preach now, because preaching is one of those things that will be taken into account at the final judgment day (Lk. 12:8). As men being before the Lord's throne, who will be finally judged just as we are now being judged, therefore act according to the principles which we know will lead to acceptance then.

That you observe these things- The same word is used to Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:14, where he is again told to 'keep / observe these things" "by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us". The Holy Spirit or mind is an internal power, working "within", in order to empower obedience. But like Timothy, we must be exhorted to make full use of it rather than attempting to be obedient in our own strength.

Without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality- This was so hard for Timothy without the spiritual strengthening just alluded to. There were many different interest groups within the church, Jewish and pagan. Timothy the timid and young had to deal with older people who were teaching wrong things and shut them up. Timothy the afflicted with sexual lusts had to tell attractive young women to get married and have children. It would've been so very easy to act with partiality. He needed the psychological Holy Spirit strengthening mentioned under *Observe these things* in order to achieve this.

5:22 *Lay hands hastily on no one*- This is in the context of elders, who like Timothy were appointed by laying on of hands. He is being told not to appoint anyone hastily, in chapter 3 he has been warned to give deacons a probationary period before appointing them. We can infer that Timothy was liable to over hasty and naive decision making. Again, the fact his mission succeeded was and is a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit working within such a weak young man; see on :21 *Observe these things.*

And do not participate in other's sins. Keep yourself pure- It would be fair to say that the church at Ephesus, including its leadership, was in a very bad moral state. It would've been a big temptation for someone as weak minded as Timothy to justify bad behaviour because the other elders were doing it. Paul has just spoken of the "sin" of elders (:20), and the "others" of :20 would seem to be the other elders. So Timothy, the newly appointed elder, is being told not to participate in the sins of the other elders, but rather reprove them (:20). *Koinoneo*, "participate", is from the common word family for 'fellowship'. We are not to fellowship the sins of others in the sense of not participating in them by doing them- Timothy was to "Keep yourself pure", with the emphasis on "yourself". Not fellowshipping other's sins clearly here doesn't mean 'cast them out of the church as individuals'. The fact the Lord positively addresses the eldership at Ephesus in Rev. 2 is a testament to the power of Timothy's example; he turned around that church by obedience to Paul's inspired advice and commands, rather than by throwing the offenders out of the church. Significantly, Paul doesn't tell Timothy to do that- despite the errors being serious indeed. As has been witnessed so many times, the problems aren't ultimately resolved by throwing people out and 'breaking fellowship' with them.

5:23 *No longer drink only water; instead use a little wine for your stomach's sake*- A theme of the Timothy correspondence is that Timothy is indeed obedient to Paul's inspired commands- and therefore ultimately his ministry succeeds. He was clearly aware that Paul was concerned that he might abuse alcohol; for Paul commands Timothy not to be given to much wine (3:3). It seems Timothy took this to the extreme and would not touch any alcohol. Such total abstinence was rare in first century society, so we can assume Timothy adopted this position from purely spiritual reasoning. Seeing alcohol was one of the most commonly available medicines for

stomach and other ailments, this meant enduring much suffering. And Paul doesn't believe that stoic suffering for the sake of it is required; rather he wants Timothy to be active and useful in the church. And to that end he had been given the gift of the Spirit within him, i.e. in his mind, within his psychology (2 Tim. 1:14). But he had to allow himself to "be strengthened in the grace [gift- of the Spirit] that is in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:1), to "stir up the gift that is [with]in you" (2 Tim. 1:6). It was only due to doing this that [according to the Lord's later letter to the Ephesians] his ministry succeeded in the areas he was charged with [inspiring good works and shutting down false teachers].

"No longer" may be alluding to the way that in Roman culture, wine was only to be drunk over the age of 30. Adam Clarke quotes ancient writers to this effect, "among the Romans, no servant, nor free woman, nor youths of quality, drank any wine till they were thirty years of age". Timothy is here described as a water drinker- although surely he drunk things apart from water. This is a technical term for a young person, not old enough to be seen as fit to drink wine, or not at the age when wine was considered necessary for the male metabolism. Perhaps Timothy had passed that age, although he is still called a 'young man' (1 Tim. 4:12). This could be a way of telling Timothy to 'grow up'. We get the same impression when Paul tells him to "flee youthful lusts". And in our age, too many adults are living the psychological lives of overgrown adolescents. This command is given at this point because Timothy is being called upon to discipline others and to be a leader of men; and he had to show himself mature to do this. This better fits the context- which is of Paul's personal appeal to Timothy, "keep yourself pure" (:22), lest all the focus upon judging others' spiritual qualifiations led him to ignore personal spirituality. So I suggest in terms of structure that :22-25 is Paul's specific personal advice and comfort to Timothy, although not solely; for the reference to "sins" clearly connects with the previous commands about dealing with and awareness of others' sins.

And your frequent infirmities- We continue to get the picture of Timothy as weak both physically and in personality. To be given such a demanding, stressful commission, when stomach problems are often connected to nervous strain, means that his obedience and success is the more noteworthy. And it is a testimony to the internal, psychological power of the Holy Spirit within Timothy which empowered him mentally to pull through it.

Consider Timothy's weaknesses, both directly stated and implied:

- He first of all flunked the calling to remain in Ephesus (see on 1 Tim. 1:3)

- The commands concerning bishops were firstly Paul's commands to Timothy (see on 1 Tim. 3:14,15). The suggestion would be that Timothy needed to pay attention to things like not womanizing and being a solid family man

- Liable to be taken in by the Jewish myths pedalled by the old Jewish sisters (1 Tim. 4:7; 6:20)

- Easily discouraged by older people despising his youth, needing encouragement to set a good example (1 Tim. 4:12)

- Liable to neglect his gifts, not using his full spiritual potential (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6,14; 4:5 "make *full* proof of your ministry")

- Needing to take heed to himself (1 Tim. 4:16)

- Tempted to show partiality (1 Tim. 5:21) and to do the sins he saw other elders doing, being easily led (see on 1 Tim. 5:22)

- Frequently ill with stomach upsets (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul says that he himself had to work as a tentmaker in order to meet the needs of Timothy whilst Timothy was

with him; he had to work because of Timothy's weakness, mentally or physically, because he was unable to work to make himself a living (see on Acts 20:34).

- Often in tears (2 Tim. 1:4)

- Being a fearful person rather than a positive one (2 Tim. 1:7)

- Fearful of suffering and having to identify with Paul from fear of persecution, easily embarrassed by association with Christ (2 Tim. 1:8), needing encouragement to "endure hardness" and have a disciplined mind and life (2 Tim. 2:3)

- Weak and needing to be stronger (2 Tim. 2:1)

- Easily caught up in secular things (2 Tim. 2:4) and to try to take spiritual shortcuts around the difficult inevitabilities of the true Christian life (2 Tim. 2:5)

- Needing to flee sexual lusts (2 Tim. 2:22), even though he was a married man with children, according to 1 Tim. 3. He had to be exhorted to "purity" (1 Tim. 4:12), the word carrying the specific idea of sexual purity. Paul commanded Timothy to be a man of one woman in chapter 3, and warns him to deal with the younger sisters "with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:2). Putting all this together, it would be fair to assume that Paul perceived a weakness in Timothy in this area. And yet all the same, Paul put him in to the position of eldership, with all the inter-personal contact with females which this required. But he warned him to beware of his weakness.

- Needing to be constantly reminded to "continue" and not give up, as he was near to doing (e.g. 2 Tim. 3:14).

All these issues could have been the result of being a 'rich kid'. 2 Tim. 3:16 says he was taught to read from the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). He was very blessed to have both a mother and grandmother to raise him; for female mortality was very high in the first century world. And the vast majority of the Roman empire was illiterate. So Timothy had advantages from birth which put him in a favoured minority. But this is no reason to despise him; he was made strong out of the weaknesses associated with his background.

Yet out of all this weakness, Timothy was made strong and according to the Lord's letter to the Ephesian church, he achieved his calling to stamp out false teaching, purify the eldership, and encourage the doing of "good works". Perhaps he did it so zealously that the church ended up lacking the *agape* love for which finally it was condemned. But so far as his obedience to his particular ministry goes- he succeeded. Out of such weakness.

5:24- see on 1 Cor. 4:5.

Some men's sins are evident, preceding them to judgment- The sins in view are surely those of the elders just mentioned (see on :20 and :22). Paul is saying that although some sins are open and need to be rebuked openly, Timothy should be aware that there are many other secret sinners around whose sins he may never know about in this life. He was not to judge the evident sinners on a basis which assumed everyone else was innocent and had no secret sins. And that is important to be aware of in church life today too. Any church discipline is only dealing with the evident sins. And those evident sins will in any case be dealt with by the Lord's judgment; any rebuke we may give is not therefore to be seen as equivalent to His judgment.

Although the advice in :24,25 is appropriate for dealing with people within a church, it could be that Paul is also encouraging Timothy personally here, as he is in :23. Verse 23 is Paul directly addressing Timothy, and :24,25 may be the same. In which case Paul is encouraging Timothy that one tendency of a pastor is to not admit secret sins. But he must realize that these too would be judged. And another tendency is to feel that good works are never appreciated. And the comfort is that they will be

given full weight at the day of judgment. Both sin and good works go before us, as a herald, to judgment. Judgment is not therefore the point at which books are opened and information considered for the first time by the judge. Our behaviour is already 'there'. We live now under judgment. "God *is* the judge" now. In the light of the cross, we are revealed even now to God and to ourselves, if we allow the cross its intended effect.

But those of others follow them there later- The Greek could equally mean 'Those of others accompany them there'. The idea being that some have sins which they quit, which go before them to judgment; other men are accompanied by their sins to judgment. The idea would be, in the context of open rebuke in :20, that the motive for bringing out another's sins to the light is so that those sins do not follow him to judgment later, but are openly made evident now.

5:25 *Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden*- The idea may be that in seeking to inculcate a culture of good works, Timothy should be aware that some good works are not "evident" not, but will not be hidden at the day of judgment. For then, according to the Lord's parable, He will openly go through the good deeds of the accepted; their feeding of the hungry, clothing the naked etc. Nothing then will be hidden. Timothy's mission of encouraging good works was recognized as successful by the Lord's letter to the Ephesian church in Rev. 2. But Paul is encouraging Timothy that it would be hard for him to judge his own success, because good works are not always evident. The same phrase is found in Mt. 5:14, to which Paul likely alludes; the good works of the city set on a hill "cannot be hid". But Paul would then be interpreting this as meaning 'cannot be ultimately hidden because they will be displayed at the day of judgment'. Here we have the final answer to the human desire for recognition of works. They will not be hidden from God and although salvation is by grace alone, our works will also be openly rewarded and will not remain hidden. The hours of silent effort and patience with difficult situations and people will not remain hidden. The times when 'Someone around here has to be the Christian', and that person was us... will all be somehow openly displayed. It is part of our human wiring to want recognition. But we don't get it much in this life, indeed no good deed goes unpunished; those helped so often complain and bite the hand which fed them. Yet we naturally long for recognition. The composer whose music is never performed longs for his work to be appreciated. The housewife and young mother longs to be thanked and valued. Thankless service for others is found to be one of life's cruellest cards. And without faith and the perspective of the judgment and the eternal consequence of the Kingdom, we will live in frustration over this, and will never get that appreciation and recognition. This is an example of where God "has set eternity" in the heart of man, a longing and wiring which which will only find resolution in the life of faith which leads to eternity. Our longing for perfect relationships is another example.

However, the "otherwise" could mean '*bad* works'; the comfort being that secretly committed bad works will all the same be judged, and Timothy should not worry unduly about the bad works which he could not detect or find enough evidence to openly rebuke. Again, in this case, we see Timothy's tendency to overly worry.

For the righteous, our acceptability before God now is related to our acceptability with Him at judgment day. Our good works are manifest before we reach the judgment, which will manifest them again (1 Tim. 5:25). Thus David reflected on the experiences of his life: "Thou hast made my judgment; thou satest in the throne judging right... and he shall judge the world (at the second coming, through Christ, Acts 17:11) in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness"

(Ps. 9:4,8 A.V.mg.). This shows the continuity between God's attitude to him in his mortal life, and God's attitude at the coming judgment. If Christ is glorified by us now, we will glorify Him in that day (2 Thess. 1:10,12).

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Let all that are under a yoke as slaves*- This reads rather strangely, because a slave was axiomatically under a [AV "the"] yoke. It appears to be saying the same thing twice. And there is no evidence that 'under the yoke' was a common term for slaves in New Testament times. Perhaps the idea is to remind slaves that actually they were under the yoke of Christ, which is "light" (Mt. 12:29,30). Whatever slavery we may feel under, perhaps in our working or domestic lives, we can remind ourselves that ultimately we are under slavery to the Lord Jesus, and His yoke is light. But Acts 15:10 and Gal. 5:1 speak of those under the yoke as being those in bondage to the Mosaic law. Perhaps Paul is addressing the delicate question of how a slave was to behave if he came to Christ but was under the yoke of Jewish law because his master was Jewish. This was likely a live issue in Ephesus because the church there began with Paul making converts from within the synagogue. He does not urge rebellion against those masters or sticking on points of principle; but rather to treat these masters as Christ and thus get higher than them (see next comment).

Regard their own masters as worthy of all honour- This is a clever word play. The Greek translated "regard" is elsewhere translated as the noun "Governor" (Mt. 2:6; Acts 7:10), "he that is chief" (Lk. 22:26), "chief speaker" (Acts 14:12), "chief men" (Acts 15:22). By regarding their masters as "worthy of honour" because they were to serve them as they served Christ- who alone is the One "worthy of all honour"- they were effectively masters of their masters. It recalls the spirit of the Lord's command to offer to take a Roman soldier's bags another mile when asked. Those treated as low become the high by their Christian attitude. Let's remember that many slaves were abused by their masters; not even their bodies belonged to themselves. Sexual abuse was common. Yet never does Paul tell slaves to refuse the sexual demands of their masters. And slaves, according to contemporary references to Christianity, formed a large percentage of Christian congregations. This is not to say that the moral teaching of Christianity in this regard was not to be taken seriously- to refuse such demands and face the consequences was clearly the highest level to be taken by a Christian slave. But Paul in this matter surely makes a concession to human weakness and the nature of human situations, which the letter of the law could never accommodate. The way of Christ however elevates the drudgery of slavery and dead end situations, of the type faced today by many in effective slavery to minimum wage employment, abusive employers or very claustrophobic, limited domestic situations.

So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled- "Reviled" or "blasphemed" is exactly what the pagans in Ephesus had accused Paul of doing to Diana (Acts 19:37 s.w.). Clearly the pagan opposition were looking for every opportunity and reason to do the same back to the God of the Christians, whose name they carried by baptism. Paul makes an assumption here, in warning believing slaves to act faithfully before their unbelieving masters, lest the doctrines of God be blasphemed by them. Paul takes it as read that the slave would have taught the doctrines of the faith to his master, and therefore any misbehaviour by him would cause those teachings to be mocked. He assumed that radical preaching would be going on. And again in Tit. 2:5, he writes that wives should behave orderly so that

“the word of God be not blasphemed”. He assumes that all believing men and women would be preachers of the word, yet if the wives were disorderly in their behaviour they would bring mockery upon the message preached. Paul so often in writing to Timothy expresses concern about the disrepute possible in the eyes of outsiders. Clearly there was a conscious effort to destroy the church in Ephesus through legal procedures, and so care had to be taken not to give genuine reasons for this to happen. Further, Paul had entrusted Timothy with a teaching ministry, and bad behaviour amongst the converts would mean that his teaching would be "reviled". The message preached was therefore backed up by the behaviour of those who believed it. Conversions are not often won by the simple attraction of the message of itself; that word is made flesh in the eyes of the world by those who believe it. "The teaching" would be reviled if those hearing it behaved in a way which invited mockery. So the teaching and the example of the believers of that teaching are parallel.

6:2 *And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brothers*- Why should a Christian slave despise his believing master? Perhaps because slavery was so obviously wrong; a Christian master should not participate in the style of slavery then practiced. The master should release his slave- because that is just the language used of what Jesus did to all in Him. He released us from slavery, redeeming us from it, paying the price of manumission whereby a person could be bought out of slavery. But for whatever reason, these believing masters hadn't responded as they might. The Lord had warned His followers to “despise not” the ‘little ones’ (Mt. 18:10). Paul picks up this phrase here in warning servants not to despise their masters who were brethren; the implication that they were to treat those wealthy but perhaps not very spiritually mature masters as ‘little ones’, with all the patience this would require. The command is not to despise them; but we might think that the dominant emotion in this case would be anger. Yet Paul focuses on not despising because his point is that we must respect others because of their status in Christ; every believer in Him should be respected by us. We must ask whether our churches are places of respect, or whether various strata of respect and acceptance have robbed them of the spirit of mutual respect which ought to characterize the communal life of God's people.

But rather serve them because those whom they are serving are believers and beloved- The reference to "beloved" invites connection to Christ who is "the beloved"; just as unbelieving masters were to be given "all honour", i.e. served as Christ, to whom alone "all honour" is due. In any difficult relationship with a believer, however abusive to us we consider them to have been, no matter how much better we feel they ought to be able to do in their relationship with us, let us remember that 'God loves this person'. They are beloved. So much so that He gave His only begotten Son for them. Some MSS, followed by the AV, add here: "Partakers of the benefit", literally, 'partakers in the good deed', referring surely to the cross. The Lord died not only for me. But for those who name His Name whom I consider to have abused me. We cannot condemn another believer, so we are to presume their acceptance by the Lord. This will mean that they have partaken in the benefits of His death, just as we have. This is so easy to write, but it was equally difficult for first century Christian slaves being abused by their Christian masters.

Teach and exhort these things- The idea is of comfort, and the message to abused slaves was indeed a comfort.

6:3 *If anyone teaches a different doctrine*- Paul's opening charge to Timothy at Ephesus was to stop false teaching (1:3). From those who taught different teaching,

Paul says that Timothy is to "withdraw thyself" (:5 AV- although omitted in some MSS and NEV). Timothy was to distance himself from such teachers, which is equivalent in 1:3 to not allowing them the platform. This little phrase "withdraw thyself" has been much abused in closed table communities to mean that we are to withdraw ourselves from anyone who differs from us on some matter of understanding or practice. But the context here, and the parallel with 1:3, is that the persons in view should not be allowed to teach. Who takes bread and wine is one issue, and does not ultimately affect anyone much. But who is allowed to teach is another issue altogether. The "different doctrine" or teaching references the teaching about the possibilities for slaves in :1 and :2. We can imagine that the teachers were also materially wealthy and may have been those referred to as the "believing masters". We can assume that they would have been tempted to not agree with the teaching of :1 and :2, and not to teach it- despite the simple command at the end of :2 to teach these things.

And consents not to sound words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ- The teaching in view is that about slaves and masters in :1 and :2. To disagree with what Paul has said would be to disagree with the words of the Lord Jesus. This could be because Paul's inspired words were effectively the words of the Lord Jesus, although in that case we wonder why the reference is to the words of Jesus rather than of God. Or Paul may mean that the teaching he had just given was a repetition of the essence of the *logos*, the essential idea, of the Lord Jesus. He may not have been quoting recorded words of the Lord Jesus (although maybe he is alluding to words of Jesus which were then well known but were unrecorded in the Gospels)- but in any case, Paul was repeating the *logos*, the word or essential ideas, of the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

And to the doctrine which shows reverence towards God- The teaching or doctrine in view is that of :1 and :2 which have spoken of the need not to bring God's Name to disrepute; and to reverence / respect people because God is working through them and they in a sense represent Him. But "reverence towards God" is the word for "Godliness" which often occurs in 1 Timothy; and it occurs in this context in :5, where these alternative teachers are portrayed as men teaching "that reverence towards God ["Godliness"] is a way of gain". They didn't want to teach things like those in :1 and :2 because they used their teaching as a way of gain. So far in this exposition I have suggested that there were female teachers in the church who were acting like the female mediators of the Diana cult, and taking money for their sexual services to brothers in Christ by getting money from the church for their services under the front of the widows' support fund. And here we find Timothy again being told to remove some from teaching- and again money is involved. These people were using 'Godliness' to get gain for themselves and were abusing their teaching ministry to that end. It sounds like the same group. It was doubtless with this money that the women could dress themselves up with such expensive and provocative clothing in 2:9,10.

6:4 *He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words*- This is the warning of chapter 1 repeated now at the end of this first letter. Those who 'know nothing' are those of 1:7: "They neither understand what they say, nor what they confidently affirm". They did of course know something theoretically, for they were teachers. But in real spiritual essence, they knew nothing. They were "bereft of the truth" (:5), which is Jesus and the great, real salvation in Him. All else is insignificant. The obsession with disputing and arguing about words frankly sounds like elements of many small time Protestant groups in their neo-

Judaism. And the fruit of that attitude is the same- envy, strife and division. "Obsessed" translates a word meaning 'to be sick', in the sense of vomiting. That is what all the disputes and arguments amount to- vomit. The only time Paul uses the term 'arguments over words' again is in 2 Tim. 2:14, where Timothy is told that he must still stamp out this attitude. I have mentioned several times that the Lord's assessment of the church at Ephesus in Rev. 2 is such that we can conclude Timothy's charge was carried out successfully by him; for they are then commended for not having false teaching. But the way Paul has to repeat these charges about not allowing false teachers suggests that this was not so easily achieved; in the gap between the two letters, Timothy had not made total progress. His final success is therefore the more noteworthy and commendable.

From which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions- We see here the importance of having a good teaching ministry. The congregation become this way according to the kind of teaching they are receiving.

6:5 *Wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth*- The word can mean 'meddlings' and is used about being a busybody. Although a different word is used, this is the very accusation made about the female false teachers of 5:13. Again we get the impression that the same group of teachers are in view; the women and their male supporters, teaching a heady mixture of Jewish and pagan [Diana cult] heresy.

Who suppose that reverence towards God is a way of gain- See on :3 *To the doctrine*.

Some MSS and AV add "From such withdraw thyself". See on :3.

6:6 *But reverence towards God with contentment is great gain*- In chapter 2 and elsewhere, Paul urges the false teachers to settle down into Christian family life and where appropriate, have children. We note that he doesn't tell Timothy to cast these people out of the church. He wants their salvation. And from personal experience I would tend to think that the "Godliness with contentment" which is "great gain" is a reference to a Christ-centered family life which is not focused upon getting personal wealth and success nor leadership in the church.

6:7 *For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out*- This is a quote from Seneca, contemporary with Paul. The Bible is full of allusions to contemporary literature and wisdom, approving some of the ideas and deconstructing others. Some of the Bible's most difficult passages are likely difficult to our eyes because they are alluding to material we are unaware of. For the Bible is written *for* us but not directly *to* us in our generation. The fact we cannot take anything material with us is proof enough that any amassing of personal wealth is for this life only. The deception of wealth is the idea of permanent ownership of property, in various forms. But the permanence is only until death. The opening "for" connects with the idea of 'gain'. Overall in life, we gain nothing. We start and finish with nothing, so why stress about 'gaining' as we pass through the life process. Ps. 49:17 may be in view: "For when he (the rich man) dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him". In saying this, Paul is alluding to how Job faced up to the reality of our condition by saying that we entered this world naked and return naked (Job 1:21). Paul is saying that we are all in Job's position, facing up to the loss of all things, and should count it a blessing to have even clothing. We need not pass through Job's experience if we learn the theory. Solomon says the same in Ecc. 5:15, but only after passing through the wealth experience. It is our wisdom to absorb this principle without having to be dragged through a hedge backwards to make us realize its truth.

6:8 *But having food and covering we shall be content*- The reference may be to God's provision of these two things, food and clothing, to Israel in the wilderness. Their journey towards the promised land is a common prototype of our path towards the Kingdom. Note that there is no promise of a stable place to live; Paul himself had "no certain dwelling place" and neither did Israel in the wilderness. So much angst goes with the question of property ownership. But the promise we can take comfort from is that we ourselves shall always be provided with food and clothing.

6:9- see on Lk. 5:7.

But they that are intent on being rich- Paul had thought deeply about the parables. He doesn't just half-quote them in an offhand way. For example, Mt. 13:22 says that riches choke a man's response to the word. 1 Tim. 6:9 warns that those who *want to be rich* are choked by their *desire* for riches. Likewise Paul saw the rich man of Mt. 19:23 as actually one who *wanted* to be rich (= 1 Tim. 6:9,10). So Paul had thought through the parable. He saw that possession of riches alone wouldn't choke a man; he saw that the Lord was using "riches" as meaning 'the desire for riches'. And because "riches" are relative and subjective, this must be right. And therefore the Spirit was able to use Paul's deductions. My point is that the Spirit *could* have used just anyone to write (e.g.) 1 Tim. 6:9. But it was no accident that God chose to use a man with a fine knowledge and appreciation of His Son to be His pen-man.

Fall into a temptation and a snare- Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (6:9). He mentions the snare of the devil again in 2 Tim. 2:26. In the immediate application, the 'devil' referred to the enemy of the church which surrounded them in Ephesus- a combination of Jewish and pagan powers who were eager to trap the Christians by accusations regarding financial and moral matters in order to close down the church. The clear influence of the Jewish Eve cult and the pagan Diana cult indicates that this snare was very real. Yet the Ephesian church survived, for the Lord wrote a letter to them in Rev. 2. Again we sense that Timothy's difficult ministry was successful, for despite all this surrounding desire to snare and strangle the church to death, it survived.

The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and *unexpected* destruction. The unexpectedness of the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry. But there is another, even more telling Biblical usage of the "snare". The day of the Lord will be a snare to the unsuspecting worldling, who will suddenly find that the Lord has come and destroyed him (Is. 8:14; 24:17,18; Jer. 50:24; Lk. 21:35). Yet the materialistic believer falls into the snare of riches here and now. Surely the point is that our attitude to riches is a preview of the judgment; the materialistic believer has condemned himself, right now. Not only does such a man fall into the devil's snare, but he pierces himself through with sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10),

which is the language of crucifixion. This connection suggests a powerful logic. We face a cross either way; either the cross of the Lord Jesus, with the matchless eternity it heralds; or the cross, the twisting, unsatisfied pain of a life devoted to material advancement, which finally results in the darkness of rejection.

And many foolish and hurtful lusts- The lust for wealth spawns many other lusts, for the things which can be done with wealth or for things which are thought to lead to wealth. Hence :10 says that the desire to be wealthy is the root of all evil.

Which drown men- The word is only elsewhere used about the disciples almost drowning because they overloaded their boats with fish (Lk. 5:7); which Paul saw, through this allusion, as rooted in a desire to be wealthy. The fish were given by the Lord, all the same; He could give or not give them, but by giving them, the disciples almost drowned.

In destruction and condemnation- Quite simply, men will be condemned at the last day because they wanted to be rich in this life. This is a sober warning.

6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*- We could read the "all" literally, as if all evil can be traced back to a love of wealth. Or we can read these "kinds of evil" as referring to the "many foolish and hurtful lusts" of :9 which arise directly or indirectly from a desire for wealth. In the context of Ephesus, Paul's reference to love of wealth would apply to the women / sisters receiving money for sexual services to brothers, taken under cover of spirituality from the widows' relief fund. "Love of money" is literally 'love of silver'. Again in the context of Ephesus, we recall that the images of Diana were made of silver; and it was the guild of silversmiths who raised the persecution against the early church in Ephesus and sought to have Christianity banned. Their literal love of silver led them to "all kinds of evil". But those materialistic ones *within* the church were in essence no better than those in the world outside who were persecuting them.

Which some, by seeking for, have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows- The Greek translated "pierced themselves through" is related to the verb 'to crucify'. We are asked to crucify ourselves, to give up the brief materialism of this life. Yet if we refuse to do this, we still pierce ourselves through, we crucify ourselves, with the pain which comes from a mind dedicated to materialism and self-fulfilment, a life devoted to reaching the end of a rainbow. So what is the logical thing to do? It's crucifixion either way. The idea of piercing self through with sorrow is actually a direct quote from the LXX of 1 Kings 21:27, where Ahab was pierced with sorrow as a result of his coveting of Naboth's vineyard. And yet when Naboth was dead, Ahab tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, in sorrow for what he had done (1 Kings 21:16 LXX- omitted in the AV); but these very words are used in describing how when Ahab heard the words of his condemnation, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth (21:27). His sin brought him to tear his clothes, just as he did when his condemnation was pronounced. In his seeking for happiness he pierced himself through with the sorrow of condemnation. Quite simply, people who are bent on getting wealthy are not happy. Wealth

6:11 *But you, o man of God, flee these material things*- The call to flee suggests weak minded Timothy was tempted by material things.

And instead pursue after righteousness- There must always be something positive in place if we decide to flee sin. The fleeing from must become a pursuing after. Paul repeats this idea in 2 Tim. 2:22- flee youthful [sexual] lusts and [instead] follow after the same positive attributes.

Reverence towards God, faith, love, patience, meekness- To aspire to meekness is the acme of spiritual endeavour.

6:12- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Lk. 13:24.

Fight the good fight of the faith- In 2 Timothy, Paul urges Timothy to accept the disciplined life of a soldier, as if Timothy was naturally weak minded and not well disciplined; we recall the command to him to have his children more firmly in order in chapter 3. Paul uses the same words in saying that he has "fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7), unashamedly and consciously setting himself up to Timothy as an example. This is possible to do, without pride and any self affection, if truly we live in integrity before God and man.

Lay hold on the everlasting life- We can experience eternal life by starting to live now how we shall eternally live. Hence the Lord in John's Gospel speaks of having eternal life now. Paul goes on to write of how the wealthy can lay hold on everlasting life (:19 s.w.) by giving away their wealth in the Lord's service. But Timothy was to be their example of laying hold on the Kingdom life right now. We are frequently spoken of as having been 'laid hold of' by the Lord; and we are to respond by laying hold of the things of the Kingdom as firmly as He has taken a grip upon our lives.

Whereunto you were called and did confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses- The confession was perhaps related to confessing that we have been called to eternal life, and have taken hold of that offer and will try to live that eternal life now. This was such a fundamental idea that it was part of some unrecorded "good confession" which was presumably declared by baptismal candidates (s.w. Rom. 10:9,10 "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus... confession is made unto salvation"; "the obedience of your confession" of the Faith, 2 Cor. 9:13). We note that such materials have not been preserved for us- so that we would not slavishly hold to any form of words. For a confession of faith by its nature is personal and unique. Yet the confession before witnesses may not necessarily refer to Timothy's baptism, but rather to the time when the elders, the "many witnesses", laid hands on him to grant him the Holy Spirit for his ministry (4:14). The Greek for 'confess' means essentially 'to agree'; the agreement was therefore regarding the reality of the hope of eternal life, and Timothy's promise to live that eternal life now and fight for the faith. The "*good* fight" he was to fight connects with the *good* confession he had made.

6:13 *I urge you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate made the good confession*- Timothy's confession was one of faith and commitment to the life and work appropriate to e belief that God really will give life to all in His Son. And the essence of that confession of devotion and faith in the life to come was seen in the Lord's confession before Pilate.

Paul speaks with pride of how the Lord Jesus "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). Paul's saying: 'Lord Jesus, your self control, your strength of purpose, was great. I salute you, I hold you up to Timothy as the supreme example'. As He witnessed in His ministry, so must we (Rom. 2:19 cp. Mt. 4:16). As He witnessed before Pilate, so must we witness (1 Tim. 6:12,13).

6:14 *Keep the commandment without stain*- Which charge or commandment? Presumably here at the end of the letter, Paul is summarizing and referring back to his opening charge to Timothy to remove false teachers and inculcate good works, with love as the intended end result (1:3-5). Yet in the immediate context, the charge / commandment might be that to which Timothy had given a good confession (:12); which would suggest his 'good confession' was not at his baptism but rather in agreement to the commission given him to care for Ephesus. The sentence as it stands can be read two ways- either the commandment itself was to unstained; or Timothy

was to keep the commandment without stain. The question is whether "without stain" refers to the subject or object of the sentence, and in my judgment of the Greek it refers to keeping the commandment itself unstained- until the Lord's return. This could only be achieved by handing on the commandment / charge to maintain pure doctrine to faithful men of the next generation (2 Timothy 2:2). If Paul meant that Timothy was to keep the commandment until the Lord returned, then it would mean that Paul expected the Lord's coming to be within Timothy's lifetime. And indeed Paul does write like that and in other places he does appear to make that assumption- as we all should live in the hopeful expectation of the Lord's imminent return.

Without reproach- Timothy as the bishop at Ephesus was to be without reproach (3:2). This strengthens the impression that "the commandment" was the command to Timothy to take care of Ephesus.

Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ- See on :14 *Keep the commandment*.

6:15 *In due time He shall reveal him, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords*- Caesar was seen as king of many subject kings, Lord of many conquered and inferior lords. In this we see the radical challenge of 1 Tim. 6:15,16: that Jesus Christ is the *only* potentate, the Lord of Lords, the King of all Kings. The RV margin brings out the Greek even more radically: “them that rule as lords”- those who think they are lords when compared to the Lord Jesus they are nothing. Many of the terms used in relation to Caesar worship are deliberately used in the New Testament and redefined in an exclusive Christian context, setting the Christian view of them up against any other use of them, and insisting upon it as the only valid meaning of the term. Thus ‘*evangelion*’ was a well-known concept. It meant the good news of victory, and the corresponding duty to make thank and praise offerings for it. The Imperial Cult used the word for announcing Caesar’s victories, his birthdays, his accession to power, his granting of *salvation* to his people… Mark’s Gospel especially uses the word *evangelion* in a way which sets it up in contrast to the way it was used in the Imperial Cult. It is the good news of the birth, victory, resurrection and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and the *evangelion* calls men and women to make self-sacrifice in response to it. It has been noted that "King of kings and Lord of lords", along with the surrounding couplets, are rhythmical. They are likely a quotation from some early Christian liturgy- a hymn or prayer. This means that such radical challenge of the Caesar cult and the Roman empire would have been a regular part of church life; just as we should be constantly aware of our radical collision course with the spirit of this world.

When Paul exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn’t just some literary flourish. It is embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare. 1 Tim. 6:6-14 concern this; and then there is the passage about Christ’s exaltation (:15,16), and then a continued plea to share riches rather than build them up (:17-19). Because He is Lord of all, we should quit our materialism and sense of self-ownership. For we are His, and all we have is for His service too. And the principle of His being Lord affects every aspect of our spirituality. Dennis Gillet truly observed [in *The Genius Of Discipleship*]: “Mastery is gained by crowning the Master as Lord and King".

6:16 See on Ex. 32:30-32.

Who only has immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable- This may be a final swipe at the Diana cult, which taught there were thousands of immortal gods; and of

course they lived in the Artemisian temple at Ephesus, rather than "dwelling in light unapproachable". And it is also for sure a swipe at the imperial cult, which claimed that many of the dead emperors of Rome had been deified and were now immortal.

Whom no one has seen, nor can see. To whom be honour and power eternal. Amen- This likewise is a contrast between the one true God, and the pathetic idea of a god who is a visible idol like the Diana statue or the silver images made of her.

6:17 *Instruct those that are rich in this present world*- The connection between wealth and world continues the theme of :7. We come into this world naked and exit naked. Any wealth is only for this present world- and we who have the sure hope of eternity are looking for the world to come.

That they are not proud, nor have their hope set on the uncertain riches; but instead on God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy- The same Greek phrase for "not proud", "be not high minded", is used in Rom. 11:20 about those who think they are spiritually superior to others. And so perhaps the idea was that the wealthy liked to think their wealth was a result of their spirituality, and therefore they despised the poorer brethren. And Paul directly warns against any such thinking, the like of which is seen so much in Pentecostal circles. The rich fool was not read by Paul as referring to some Hollywood millionaire; he saw that character as being in the ecclesia (Mt. 19:21 = 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

6:18 *Let the rich do good, that they be rich in good works*- The true wealth is in giving away rather than accumulating.

Ready to distribute- "Ready" suggests Paul is not envisaging selling all and giving away. The rich should be "ready" to share, rather than looking for reasons not to.

Willing to communicate- Literally, 'to fellowship'. Fellowship is not an on paper agreement based on dry theology. Fellowship in practice means sharing wealth with others.

6:19 *Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation*- The Spirit describes our final redemption as our "soul" and "spirit" being "saved"; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5). This means that our spiritual development in this life is directly proportional to the type of person we will be *for evermore*. If, for example, we develop a generous spirit now, this is "a good foundation" for our future spiritual experience (1 Tim. 6:19). This is a stupendous conception, and the ultimate fillip to getting serious about our very personal spiritual development. Our mortal bodies will be changed to immortal, Spirit nature bodies according to the Spirit which *now* dwells in us (Rom. 8:11 Gk.). The attitude which we have to the Lord Jesus *now* will be the attitude we have to Him at the day of judgment (Mt. 7:23 cp. Lk. 6:46). So the wealthy who give their wealth away are not buying a place in the Kingdom for themselves, but who they eternally will be shall eternally reflect the generous character they developed in this life. In this sense they have 'laid hold' on the eternal life; they have begun to live the kind of life which we shall eternally live.

Against the time to come- They have 'laid up in store for themselves' spiritually, in that the future day ["time to come"] which in is subconsciously in the mind of all savers, hoarders and folk rich and poor... is going to be revealed as the day of judgment. Those who have given away wealth [so that they are left at a real minus, and not simply being generous in ways they wouldn't notice]... have laid up a store of wealth for *that* day.

That they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed- God richly gives things to *all of us*, Paul says; and by our being "liberal and generous [we] thus lay up for [ourselves] a good foundation for the future, so that [we] may take hold of the life which is life indeed". "The life which is life indeed" is not the lower middle class striving-for-security life of slowly saving and occasionally splashing out on something, building, building up, watching the interest slowly grow, worrying about inflation and the possible need for a new boiler or roof… Much as those things are all part of our human experience in this age, they're not "the life which is life indeed". That life begins now, in a counter-instinctive going against the grain of being generous.

6:20 *O Timothy, guard*- We sense from Paul's emotional appeal that Paul really feared Timothy was not going to hold on, and would allow his weaknesses of character to dominate, with the result that the truth of Christ would be lost in Ephesus. The Lord's letter to the Ephesians some time later shows that Timothy did hold on and discharged his commission. The only problem was that all the emphasis on good works and maintaining purity of teaching was achieved without *agape* love- and this was why the Ephesian church was finally reprimanded. But from the point of view of Timothy's calling and mission- he fulfilled it, and out of weakness was made strong.

That which was committed to you- Paul urges Timothy a while later to guard or keep what was committed to him, i.e. the charge of 1:3,4 of maintaining true teaching and good works in Ephesus, "by the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells within us" (2 Tim. 1:14). Given Timothy's weaknesses of personality, the only way he could have achieved his calling was by internal psychological strengthening. And that is exactly what the Holy Spirit / mind "which dwells *within* us" is all about. It works within the human mind. The ability to do miracles etc. was not in view. And Paul uses the same idea about keeping what the Lord committed to us in saying that the Lord is able to guard / keep what *we* have committed *to Him* (2 Tim. 1:12). He has committed His work to us to do, and we have committed our lives to Him. We have undertaken to be totally taken up with His work, and thus we have staked our entire lives and future on His existence and real working with us. There is thus an indescribable mutuality between God and man if we are committed to what He has committed to us.

Turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of false knowledge- Again we see a connection with the opening of the letter, where Paul has noted that some have 'turned away' unto vain ideas; and Paul urges Timothy to likewise 'turn away' these ideas, perhaps in practice by not granting a platform to those teaching them. The idea is not just that Timothy personally should turn away from such babblings, but should himself turn those babblings away- by stopping them being taught, according to his charge in 1:3,4. Again we note that Timothy was being asked to stem a tide which the prophetic word had said would not be turned away- for in the last days, men would depart from the faith (4:1), and be turned away unto fables (2 Tim. 4:4). But Timothy was asked to bravely still battle that tide of apparent inevitability. Just as Moses prayed for the destruction of Israel not to happen. And it succeeded; for the Lord's summary of the Ephesian church in Rev. 2 stated that they were doctrinally intact. "False knowledge" is *gnosis*, possibly a reference to incipient Gnosticism, but more likely a criticism of the mentality which is alive and well to this day in the internet generation: 'I know something you don't, I've got access to sources you don't have access to... so do what I say'. The immediate reference would have been to the Jewish fables taught by the old Jewish women, and the nonsense connected with the

cults of Eve and Diana which Timothy had to engage in chapter 2.

6:21 *Which some professing*- The female false teachers of 2:10 had 'professed Godliness' at their baptismal confession; and yet it seems they had also made some profession / confession to the Diana cult, and had seriously erred from the Christian faith as a result.

Have erred concerning the faith- Another connection with the opening section of the letter, where Paul notes that some have 'swerved' (1:6). "The faith" is a path, a road with an end point- spiritual mindedness, the imitation of Christ, resulting in eternity in God's Kingdom united with Christ. Smart ideas, philosophies, Jewish fables etc. all cause people to swerve from that path. 2 Tim. 2:18 uses the same word in giving concrete examples of those who have 'erred' by saying that the resurrection has already come- first century form of the Preterist heresy which is rife today. Those who hold false doctrines have "missed the mark concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 6:21 RVmg.). The true faith has an aim, a mark to which it aims. A false 'faith' misses that aim. "Profane and vain babblings... increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:16)- they precipitate a downward spiral of practical behaviour.

Grace be with you- The word *charis* means literally 'the gift', and refers surely to the internal gift of Holy Spirit strengthening commented on under :20 *Guard that...*

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2 TIMOTHY

2 TIMOTHY

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it,

respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus*- Paul begins by saying he has been called to be a sent out one, and then a few verses later backs it up by repeating that he was appointed to be an apostle (1:11). The same pattern is to be seen in 1 Timothy; the opening verse speaks likewise of how he is an apostle (1 Tim. 1:1), and then 1 Tim. 2:7 says he was indeed appointed as an apostle. Perhaps Timothy was beginning to doubt Paul's credentials, and this was a factor in Timothy's lack of full devotion to his ministry? Or perhaps Paul is urging Timothy to follow his own example of commitment to the calling he had received. For the letters to Timothy suggest that Timothy needed to be stirred up to continue responding to the calling received.

Through the will of God- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understood the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

According to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus- The promise of life is referred to in 1 Tim. 4:8 as concerning both life in Christ now, and the eternal form of that same life which is yet to come. Likewise in John's writings, eternal life is the promise we have (1 Jn. 2:25), and also our present experience. We have the eternal life

in that we through the spirit of Christ can live now the kind of life which we shall eternally live.

1:2 *To Timothy, my beloved child. Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord-* Although Paul had not converted nor baptized Timothy, he had played a huge formative part in his spiritual life, to the extent he could address him as his child in the faith. This is the significance of the relationships we an build up now through our spiritual interaction with and efforts for each other. Paul's increasing perception of sinfulness is shown by the way in which in his earlier letters he uses the greeting "Grace and peace"; but in Timothy and Titus, his last letters: "Grace, *mercy*, and peace...". He saw the overriding, crucial importance of God's grace and mercy, and he wished this on all his brethren.

1:3- see on Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 3:18.

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of you in my prayers, night and day- How could Paul "thank God" that he remembered Timothy in prayer? "Thank" here translates *charis*, the usual word for gift or grace. Paul expresses his thanks in this way because he wishes to acknowledge that his feelings for Timothy are maintained by God's grace, the gift of the Spirit within. Perhaps Paul is here alluding to Anna as his model for continual thanksgiving (Lk. 2:37 = 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3). The language of constant prayer cannot mean that we are literally on our knees 24/7. It refers rather to how our spirit and His are united. It speaks of an incredible personal bonding in prayer between the Creator and each, specific one of His creatures. Only through our will, our essential person and spirit, becoming united with God's can it be possible to live a life of prayer, whereby we are praying without ceasing, constantly, every moment (Rom. 1:9; 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:13; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3). Our life, our person, our spirit, our being, is read as a prayer to God.

Paul claims that the Jewish forefathers served God with a pure conscience (2 Tim. 1:3 NIV). Yet the Jewish fathers, dear Jacob particularly, must have had plenty of twinges of guilt over their years. Indeed, all the Jewish fathers had a bad 'conscience' because of their sins (Heb. 9:9; 10:2). Surely Paul must mean that they had such a firm faith in forgiveness that *in God's eyes* they had a pure conscience.

1:4 *Longing to see you, remembering your tears, wanting to be filled with joy for you-* The tear stained cheeks of Timothy were such a haunting memory for Paul because he perceived Timothy's weakness and his heart bled for his protégé. Timothy had not attained the Christian joy which Paul knew was potentially possible for him; and he so wished the spiritual growth of Timothy in this respect. We too should long for the spiritual maturity of others; to not feel that way is to be spiritually selfish. Being "filled

with joy" is an expression used specifically about the filling of a believer with joy as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit (Jn. 15:11; 16:24; Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13). Paul wished for Timothy to open himself up more to the work of the Spirit, and this would lead to Paul feeling that fullness of joy in Timothy within himself. As explained more fully on 1 Cor. 5:4, the Spirit in Paul found connection with the Spirit in other believers, thereby creating "the fellowship of the Spirit". In this way, the joy of Timothy would be Paul's joy, just as the joy of Titus was his joy (see on 2 Cor. 7:13).

1:5 *I am often reminded of the sincere faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded dwells in you also*- Faith can become just vague hope for something better, rather than a "confident assurance", a seeing of the unseen. Paul's reference to "unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5 AV) as the goal of personal and ecclesial life would suggest that he realized the temptation to have a fake, feigned faith. See on Jn. 8:30. The faith "in [within] you" connects with the gift "in you" (:6).

1:6 *Because of this I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands*- Because Paul knew that Timothy had faith (:5), he encouraged him to use the gift of the Spirit within him to greater potential. That same gift had been given to the Corinthians, as they are often reminded, but they were still "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). Likewise Timothy is being urged to use to the full the potential created by the Spirit gift within him. That gift or *charisma* was "in you", within Timothy, and refers to the same Spirit gift in the heart which is given to all believers. Yet that gift could be given multiple times; not just at baptism, but also through the laying on of hands of believers like Paul.

1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and a disciplined mind*- The "us" suggests this is a general reference to the gift of the Spirit to all believers, and doesn't reference any specific gift given only to Timothy. Likewise :14 speaks of the gift of the Spirit "which dwells in *us*". The reference is to an internal gift, within us, and not to miraculous gifts. See notes to this effect on :4,5 and 6. The same words for 'giving' and 'Spirit' are found in describing the gift of the Spirit given at baptism (Acts 5:32; 8:18). They are likewise found in Rom. 5:5, which speaks of God's love being "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us". The domain of operation of this Spirit gift is clearly within the human heart or mind. Likewise the same words for gift and Spirit are found in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5: "Who has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit *in our hearts*". This gift can be given at points after baptism- hence Paul prayed for the baptized Ephesians that God would "Give you... to be strengthened with might by His Spirit *in the inner man*" (Eph. 3:16). The gift of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8) results in our internal awareness, *within us*, that the Father and Son are abiding with us and we in them (1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13).

"Because you are sons (already born again through response to the Gospel), God has *sent forth* the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). We become sons of God by birth of the Spirit as promised in the word of the Gospel (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18), and therefore God sends this Spirit of Sonship into our hearts. Notice that the prerogative in this is with God, not us. Likewise Paul prayed that God "may *give* unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:17,18). The gift of the Spirit didn't mean that Timothy would not be fearful, or be loving and disciplined. But he, as all of us, had been given that Spirit. It is for us to allow the path of the Spirit in transforming our spirit; and Timothy's fearfulness and lack of mental power meant that he had not let the Spirit act as he could have done. Likewise the Corinthians were given these Spirit gifts but remained "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1); they failed to allow the Spirit gift to work within them.

1:8- see on Rom. 1:16.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but suffer hardship for the gospel according to the power of God- The possession of the Spirit within us is an earnest or guarantee of the Lord's abiding with us and of our future salvation. Therefore Timothy was to be unashamed of testifying for the Lord Jesus and suffering because of it. According to the power / spirit of God, the gift within, Timothy was to not be ashamed but "suffer hardship". His weak nature seems to have found "hardship" hard to endure, for the word is used repeatedly (2:3,9; 4:5). Clearly the Lord chooses those who are least humanly qualified for the job required; but the example of Timothy is that he was strengthened through the Spirit to achieve what was so hard for him. His sense of 'shame' was surely before the church- for he was called to take in hand a belligerent and forceful opposition in the Ephesian church. So being ashamed of Christ's words doesn't just apply to not speaking up for the Truth when someone invites us to a topless bar after work. It's equally true, and the punishment for it just the same, in the context of not speaking out Christ's word in the ecclesia, to our very own brethren (Mk. 8:38 = 2 Tim. 1:8).

Paul was clearly frustrated by imprisonment, and laments his bonds and limitations. But he saw himself as the Lord's prisoner; even the most oppressive of circumstances are under His control and can be endured 'as unto Him'.

1:9- see on Eph. 2:6.

Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal- The allusion is to the salvation of Israel out of Egypt- although they were still able to fall from that 'saved' position. Natural Israel was called out of Egypt by their

Red Sea baptism to be “a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). After our baptism, the members of spiritual Israel likewise receive “a holy calling” (2 Tim. 1:9). After baptism we “become slaves of… holiness” (Rom. 6:19,22 and context). Our calling is according to God's purpose- the same words and argument as used in Rom. 8:28; 9:11. Paul there cites the whole concept of calling as the great example of grace. The fact God's "purpose" means some are called and some aren't is a parade of grace (Rom. 9:11). Instead of getting caught up on the imponderables about those who are not called, the fact we have been called and are in God's purpose should be read as His grace being poured out upon us. We know we are called because without doubt we have heard the call to the Kingdom. But this calling was in fact given to us in Christ from infinity- "before times eternal". This is mind-blowing- that God's plan to save us was given for us not just at the creation of the world, but from some infinite point before time existed. To say 'from the beginning' would be to miss the wonder of it.

1:10 *But has now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*- The plan to save us which was made from infinity 'back' (see on :9) was actualized by the death of the Lord Jesus. What had been for so long in God's mind for us has now been revealed to us. It would be tragic indeed to shrug it all off as unimportant or exaggerated in wonder. There is no immortality for any of us apart from "through the Gospel"; it was the Lord Jesus who brought our immortality to the light of real possibility. This not only means that there is no immortal soul; our immortality, on a personal level, is the context of :9. And this plan from infinite time (:9) had as it were been in the dark, but in Christ, it was brought out into the light of day. The "appearing of our Saviour" refers both to His appearing to abolish death on the cross, and also to His appearance in glory at the last day, when in reality death shall be abolished. This is the "that day" referenced in :12.

Paul says that Jesus has "abolished death" in that death as the world has to face it, final and total death, does not happen to us in Christ. This is why those who truly follow the Lord will never taste of death (Jn. 8:51,52); everyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die (Jn. 11:26). It really is but a sleep. I know the hard reality of the loss still hurts, still registers. But in the end, because He abolished death in Himself, so has He done already for all those in Him.

1:11 *Of which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher*- The wonder of extending the grace of God's calling to others is compelling. All who hear are surely called, and despite the masses of those not called [and all our curious questions about them], the wonder is that all those called had a wonderful eternity planned for them from before infinity (see on :9). These reflections are a great motivation to preach and teach these things to others.

1:12 *For which cause I suffer also these things. Yet I am not ashamed*- Paul is asking Timothy to copy his example of suffering hardship and not being ashamed. The wonder of being saved, and knowing that all our witness work is extending the calling to others and bringing them to the real possibility of eternal life and glory to God... all this empowers us to suffer and not be ashamed for the sake of the Gospel.

For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard what I have committed to him against that day- As we along with Paul have committed our "all things" to Him, so He commits the "all things" of the Gospel to us (2 Tim. 1:12 cp. 14; 1 Tim. 6:20). There is a mutuality here between us. But some manuscripts offer an alternative, to the effect that He is able to guard what *He* has committed unto *me*. The gift of the Spirit, through which God's power / ability ["is able"] operates, will enable us to hold on to the ministry we have received from Him. And Timothy is then urged in :14 to use the power of the Spirit to maintain the ministry which *he* had received.

"I know Him" clearly speaks of relationship, rather than mere theological awareness, no matter how pure. It is the knowledge of Jesus, the mutual relationship with Him, knowing His presence in the Spirit, which makes us not ashamed. "That day" is the appearing of the Lord Jesus at His return, when death shall be abolished (see on :10). Paul's persuasion that he would be 'guarded' until that last day is another way of saying that he knew that he really now had the Spirit as an earnest / guarantee of future salvation. For His 'ability', *dunatos* ("able"), is through the *dunamis* of the Spirit which we have been given.

1:13 *Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*- The "pattern of sound words" could refer to some defined body of teaching which Paul had passed on to Timothy. The problem with any such 'statement of teaching / faith' is that it tends to be held in anything other than love or faith. As soon as definitions and boundaries are potentially established, there arise disputes, lack of love and an associated loss of faith. Hence the urge to hold this form of sound teaching in faith and love.

1:14 *That good thing which was committed to you guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us*- See on :7. The "good thing" may refer to the prophecies committed upon Timothy to "war a *good* warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). The reference may be simply to his calling to the ministry at Ephesus. Just as Paul had been given a ministry which the Spirit empowered him to fulfil (see on :12). The only other time we read of the Spirit dwelling in us with tis Greek phrase is in Rom. 8:11 "His Spirit that dwells in you". As here, the Spirit is operative *within* the human mind and person. No reference to the miraculous gifts, but to the internal gift of the Spirit which is promised to all believers for all time. The Spirit likewise distributes to each believer a ministry, a role or part within the body of Christ; and the same Spirit empowers us to maintain it.

1:15 *This you know, that all that are in Asia turned away from me. Of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes*- Paul lamented on his deathbed that all the believers in Asia had turned away (2 Tim. 1:15; Gk. *apostrupho*, to apostasize). But at roughly the same time, the Lord Jesus wrote to seven ecclesias in Asia, commending some of their members for holding on to the Truth. Paul was a man of great love, who really tried to see the best in his brethren, having been touched by the grace of God. He even would have given up his eternal life, so that the Jews would be saved (Rom. 9:3 cp. Ex. 32:32). But even Paul, in the time of his greatest spiritual maturity, thought that all the Asian Christians were apostate; when in the Lord's eyes, this wasn't the case. As noted on Galatians 1, it would seem that Paul over personalized issues; their turning away from him he took as a turning away from the Lord, when the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 show this was not the case. We too can take the lesson, that personal fall out with ourselves doesn't mean that a believer is no longer with the Lord. The names Phygelus ["fugitive"] and Hermogenes ["born of Hermes"] may be code words, nick names created so as not to allow the naming of specific individuals for reasons of security. Perhaps Phygelus was seen as a fugitive slave on the run from the Lord Jesus; and Hermogenes had returned to the worship of Hermes.

1:16- see on Mt. 5:7.

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain- The family [or house church?] of one faithful individual were blessed for his singular kindness and grace shown to Paul. Blessing [and the reverse] often comes upon third parties as a result of the spiritual position of another. Thus the paralyzed man was forgiven his sins for the sake of the faith of his friends (Mk. 2:5). Association with prisoners has never been an easy thing to do, and Onesiphorus was unashamed of association with Paul. The implication could be that the Rome ecclesia generally were ashamed of such association. This brother's example was cited as an encouragement to Timothy whose sensitive, timid spirit was concerned at being ashamed for the Gospel and of Paul personally (:8).

2 Tim. 1:16 records Paul praying that the Lord would *give mercy* to the house of Onesiphorus; yet the same phrase is used in :18 about receiving mercy at judgment day. Here it seems that the whole household of Onesiphorus is to be granted mercy, at that day, because of his faithfulness. Does this imply that some will be in the Kingdom only due to the efforts of a third party?

1:17 *But, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me*- This diligent searching and finding surely takes us to the Lord as the good shepherd doing just the same for the lost sheep. Perhaps Paul means to imply that he was spiritually weak and needed the refreshment and 'finding' due to the efforts of this brother.

1:18 *(The Lord grant to him that he find the mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he gave service to me at Ephesus, you know very well*- Paul obviously thought that his prayers and wishes for Onesiphorus could affect the outcome of the judgment seat "in that day" for him. If we really can affect the eternal destiny of each other, and Paul's letters, prayers and example show that we surely can- then we should like Paul be constantly in prayer and concern for each others' path towards the Kingdom.

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

2:1 *You therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*- Having exhorted Timothy to be strengthened in the Lord, Paul speaks of how the Lord has strengthened *him* in his last court appearance (2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17). "Grace", *charis,* often refers in the New Testament to the internal gift of the Spirit which is given to all believers. It was given to the Corinthians, but they were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). We must allow that gift to work. Paul has urged Timothy about this elsewhere- see on 1:14. And here Paul is stating it explicitly; Timothy [as all of us] is to allow the strengthening process. We lack the iron in our soul to force change to any significant extent; but the way to progress is an opening to the superhuman strengthening of the Spirit which is already potentially at work in us. It's tragic that so many are so nearly there- but will not allow the Spirit to work. This can be due to pride in their own strength, and because of theological denial of the work of the Spirit.

2:2 *And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, you are to commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*- Paul wanted Timothy to fulfil his ministry, and that required more than Timothy personally remaining strong to the end. If we take seriously our calling, we realize we have goals to achieve which are beyond us personally. We need to think ahead to a future generation, to rope in others to help achieve the goals. The Lord's later letter to Ephesus, where Timothy had his ministry, would indicate that for all his timidity and weakness, Timothy did actually achieve his goals. For in a later generation, there were still "faithful men" in that church.

2:3 *Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*- Paul tells Timothy to "endure hardness" and "endure afflictions" in the Gospel's work, and then goes on to use the same Greek word to describe how he himself 'suffered trouble' in the same work (2 Tim. 2:3,9; 4:5). He sets himself up as a role model for Timothy, his child in the faith (:1). He seeks to draw a parallel between himself in a Roman prison, and Timothy doing his ministry in Ephesus.

2:4 *No soldier in service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he may please whoever enrolled him as a soldier*- There is nothing morally wrong with the pragmatic things of this life; but they can so easily entangle us and take us away from our focus on the Lord Jesus and His service. This is to be paramount. Problems with a leaking roof can take us far away from the Lord's service... The one who enrolled Timothy as a soldier could refer to God who called him to the service of His Son. But we suspect Paul has himself in view, as the one who introduced Timothy to ministry. And again we see Paul's tendency to over personalize things, as noted on 1:15. Personal loyalty to Paul meant, it seems, far too much for him. Much of his

angst in dealing with the Corinthians, especially in 2 Corinthians, hinged around this issue of expecting personal loyalty.

2:5 *And if also a man competes in the games, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules*- We can have an appearance of spiritual progress towards the crown, as did the man who quickly built his house on the sand. But it was the man who perhaps didn't finish his house (we are left to imagine) but who had hacked away at the rock of his own heart, striving to seriously obey the *essence* of his Lord's words, who was accepted in the end. We can deduce that Timothy was tempted to take short cuts in his ministry; and Paul urges him to see his ministry at Ephesus as a work which had to be done according to principles, rather than meeting each issue *ad hoc*. "According to the rules" is literally 'according to the law', and Paul consistently argues against keeping any legal code as the basis for salvation. I suggest that he is putting a simple riddle to Timothy, and he gives another in :6, concluding in :7 that Timothy should "consider" these things and the Lord will give him understanding as to Paul's sense. He may be saying that although we are no longer under law, this doesn't mean that we are without principle in any sense; and likewise in :6, Paul wishes Timothy to understand that "labour" is still required- but as a response to grace and faith in the fact we shall be saved by grace. So he is inviting him to not go too far in thinking that freedom from the Mosaic law means no guiding principles or labour at all. Hence he urges Timothy to the disciplined life of a soldier (:3,4). Maybe Timothy had gone too far in not having any principles at all guiding him.

2:6 *The husbandman that labours must be the first to partake of the fruits*- I suggested on :5 that this and :5 are riddles Paul is putting to Timothy, with the invitation in :7 to consider them and let the Lord guide him to understanding. The ending of the Mosaic law didn't mean that labour is not required- although in response to grace. If Timothy laboured in trying to help spiritual fruit to develop in Ephesus, he would partake in the fruits of it. We too receive blessing from trying to help others towards spiritual fruitfulness. But the riddle includes the obvious connection with the fact that according to 1 Cor. 15, the Lord Jesus partakes of the firstfruits first. And Mt. 21 is clear that the Jewish leadership were the husbandmen who had been fired and replaced with new husbandmen; timid Timothy was therefore invited to see himself as directly replacing the Jewish rabbis and synagogue leadership, who were behind the effort to undermine the Christian mission in Ephesus. Yet "My father is the husbandman" (Jn. 15:1). God works through our efforts in bringing forth spiritual fruit in others. And the Lord Jesus clearly identified Himself with the husbandman in His parable of Lk. 13:8. His labour involved spreading manure around the tree of Israel. This humbling work was required of Timothy, and he would be manifesting the Lord Jesus in such work.

2:7 *Consider what I say. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things*- As noted on :5 and :6, this applies to the two riddles Paul has given Timothy to think about in the preceding two verses. Our obedience leads to greater obedience, in an upward spiral. The dynamic in this spiral is God's spirit. It is through the Spirit that God draws near to us if we draw near to Him (James 4:7,8). This is neatly summarized in 2 Tim. 2:7: "Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things". Thus our freewill 'considering' will result in the Lord adding to our understanding even more that we could ever achieve unaided. 'Considering', literally 'exercising the mind', is one thing; but the Lord will act directly on the human heart to bring about greater "understanding". And that is taught in Col.

1:9; 2:2, where the ministry of the Spirit leads to a filling of believers with "understanding". Clearly the Lord is prepared and eager to act directly upon the mind of believers. Yet too many in conservative circles have left things at just 'considering' Scripture, resistant to the extra element of the Lord adding understanding to their mental gymnastics with Scripture.

2:8 *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to the gospel I preached*- Paul appeals for Timothy to take a Christ-centered approach. Knowing that he is under attack as a charlatan, he emphasizes that his Gospel was what as it were resurrected Christ from the dead. In our hearts, the Lord remains dead until the Gospel reveals His resurrection to us. "Remember" is a similar idea in Greek to the word used for "Consider" in :7; it implies the exercise of the mind. The most basic truths of the Gospel and their implications can easily be forgotten or become swamped in significance by all the *angst* which goes with grappling with church politics.

2:9- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

Because of this I suffer hardship, even to bonds, as a criminal; but the word of God is not bound- "Suffer hardship" is the same word as used in encouraging Timothy to do the same in :3. Paul is encouraging Timothy to take himself as a pattern to himself. "A criminal" is the word only elsewhere used about the criminals crucified with the Lord, and "bonds" is used of the binding of the Lord at that time, both immediately before and after His crucifixion (Mt. 27:2; Jn. 19:40); Paul sees in all his sufferings a fellowship with the Lord in His time of dying. He deeply resented his "bonds" and, by implication, the limitations of freedom they imposed upon him. He realized however that he was "bound in the Spirit"; his bonds were of the Spirit rather than simply of men (Acts 20:22). And yet through his prison experience, he came to write the letters which have had such major significance. Our limitations likewise can be used by God for far wider things than we can ever realize at the time. Paul never once hints that he perceived that his letters were going to have significance for millennia to come; and that is the wonder of the lesson to us. What we experience as a limitation of freedom, as intense frustration, can be used by the Lord for eternal significance in ways we can never understand at the time. The word of God, the basic Gospel of :8, is unbound- perhaps Paul perceived that his bonds, his limitations, were playing a part in a wider unbound experience. In Col. 4:3, Paul had asked for prayers that he could be given an opportunity to spread the Gospel despite being in bonds. Perhaps he is saying here at the end of his life that in fact this had worked out; for in chapter 4 he writes of how the Gospel had spread and become "fully known" through his bonds (4:17). If we pray for opportunities to preach we will be granted them. Let's pray daily for meetings with people whom we can witness to successfully.

2:10 *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, so that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory- Their* salvation was dependent upon *his* enduring. And therefore he endured for their sakes. Paul as noted above has been seeing his sufferings as part of the Lord's sufferings; and His suffering led to our salvation, just as our sufferings likewise play a part in the salvation of others, if we are suffering in and with Him. Salvation is "in Christ"; not in any particular ecclesia or fellowship, but through being an active part of His body in the Biblical sense. See on Eph. 2:6. Paul "endured", he held on himself, for the sake of the elect. And likewise the Lord Himself died above all *for us*, His desire for *our* salvation lead Him to endure for Himself. And on a mundane level; the husband who does his Bible readings a second time for the sake of his wife or children or because a

brother has paid an unexpected visit... this kind of spiritual effort for others keeps us going ourselves. See on 1 Thess. 3:8. All this opens up a fuller understanding of 2 Cor. 4:17- our sufferings lead to an eternal weight of glory "for us", in the plural.

2:11 *Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him*- "The saying" would refer to one of the pithy "faithful sayings" which the New Testament church committed to memory. These would have been especially valuable for the illiterate. Paul has explained that our sufferings for others can play a part in their salvation, if our sufferings are part of the Lord's crucifixion sufferings. So he is giving another dimension to the well known truth that we are to die with Him; our death is not isolated from His death, and our sufferings are not isolated from His- if we are baptized believers "in Him". And so it shall come to pass that because He lives, we in Him shall live also; His life becomes ours, both now and eternally. The tense of "we died with Him" surely alludes to baptism, the one-time moment when we died with Him.

2:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

If we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he also will deny us- The allusion to death with the Lord in baptism in :11 must be tempered by the fact that we must also "endure". Paul has just written of enduring all things for the sake of the chosen (:10), so that they may be saved. By writing here that thereby *we* shall also reign with Him, Paul has his mind on the fact that our endurance in Him can lead to "we", others, not just himself, reigning with the Lord in glory. On the other hand, our denial of Him can lead to Him denying us- not just us personally, but our failure can lead to others likewise being denied at the last day, for we all have more influence upon others than we realize. Paul was clearly alluding to Peter's denials- and the grace shown by the Lord. For He will not automatically deny those who deny Him, but works instead for their restoration. This could however be read as a question- if we deny Him, will He deny us? And the answer is no, according to :13.

2:13 *If we are faithless, he abides faithful. For he cannot deny himself*- "Faithless" in Greek more suggests a loss of faith. This was and is at the root of denying Him; for losing faith is here paralleled with denial. The faithfulness of God is hard to understand unless we understand it as faithfulness towards us. Unlike the tendency in human relationships, God will not break His hope, faith and love toward us in response to our withdrawal of them toward Him. He does not mirror our behaviour towards Him; and we should seek to be like Him when we encounter withdrawal of relationship towards us from others. 'He', "Himself", stands for total commitment to His people throughout their lives, and He will not deny His fundamental self.

2:14 *Of these things put them in remembrance, instructing them in the sight of the Lord, that they do not fight about words, to no profit, to the catastrophic destruction of those that hear them*- The "them" in view appear to be the teachers at Ephesus. The fact the Lord later commends this church in his letter to them indicates that Timothy successfully obeyed Paul's command here. The teachers were to be redirected towards the basic issues of the Gospel and the implications which arise from it, rather than using their teaching ministry to provoke profitless arguments about words and meanings. Such teachers would lead to the eternal destruction of those who heard them. And this is a profound warning to those right wing groups whose teachers have filled them with third hand garbled stories about "the original Hebrew actually means..." whatever, and demanding everyone accepts their particular peculiar take on

a matter of semantics. This warning was especially required in Ephesus, which was under attack from Judaizers who would have insisted that they had superior knowledge of the Hebrew language, and would easily have dominated the Gentile audience with various arguments about Hebrew words. The wicked will be "overthrown" in the final condemnation (2 Pet. 2:6)- but this is the very same word used for 'apostasy' or 'subversion' (AV) or "catastrophic destruction". If we apostatize, we are overthrowing or condemning ourselves and others ahead of time. Israel in the wilderness "rejected" the land- and so they didn't enter it (Num. 14:31 RV).

2:15- see on Mt. 7:24.

Exert yourself, to prove you are pleasing to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling correctly the word of truth- The AV "Study to show thyself..." has been tragically misunderstood as meaning that Bible study makes us pleasing to God. But that is a result of misreading "study"- in the days of King James it means 'to try', and that is the idea of the Greek. For not all are Bible students nor have the apparatus to be that. The context of :14 is specific commandment to the teachers within the church. They were workmen, working on the church of God, and their work with others would be examined at the last day. And they would be ashamed if those under their teaching are given the shame of condemnation. Effort must consciously be made to build up others. We must 'rightly divide', or cut straight, the word of truth in our preaching of it. The LXX uses the same word in Prov. 3:6: "He will make straight your paths". We are to offer people a clear, straight way to the Kingdom; to span that gulf between the word of God and the mind of man. "The word of truth" refers to the basic Gospel, according to the context, which Paul has redirected their attention to. By involving their audience in strife about semantics and words, they were not using the word of truth correctly. The whole of Paul's exhortation to zealous service in the ecclesia in 2 Tim. 2:15-20 is based on the returned exiles, confirming that they are indeed 'types of us'; and the teachers are the manual workers, slaving away to build up Zion:

2 Tim. 2	Nehemiah
"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use" (:21)	"I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates… thus cleansed I them from all strangers" (Neh. 13:22,30). Also a reference to the cleansing of the Jews from mixed marriages.
"A workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (:15)	The workmen rebuilding Zion
"The foundation of God standeth sure" (:19)	The laying of the foundation stone
"The Lord knoweth them that are his" (:19)	The spirit of Is. 44:5- that although at the time of the restoration not all knew their genealogy, they were accepted in

	any case, being surnamed with the Name of Jehovah and that of Jacob
"A great house" (:20)	The temple (1 Chron. 22:5)
"Vessels of gold and of silver" (:20)	"Vessels of gold and silver" (Ezra 5:14)

2:16- see on 1 Tim. 6:21.

But shun profane babblings of false teachers; for they will result in progressive ungodliness- The preceding verses have taught Timothy how to teach the teachers; so the shunning would mean not allowing the false teachers to teach. Their "babblings" referred to the endless striving about the meaning of original Hebrew words, profitless arguments about semantics, words and meanings (:14). It's simply not true that just teaching something about the Bible or Biblical words will lead to spiritual growth; these teachers with their emphasis upon semantic games actually elicited increasing ungodliness in the behaviour of the flock. This is because the need to act and think in a Christ-like way, denying the flesh, is excused by instead focusing upon semantics and hyper interpretation of original words and phrases. And this has been witnessed in so many groups, who have focused upon 'doctrine' and supposed intellectual purity of interpretation- whilst in private life being so far from the spirit of Christ in daily thought and living.

2:17 *And their word will eat away like a cancer. An example would be Hymenaeus and Philetus*- The "progressive" nature of ungodliness (:16) elicited by their wrong usage of "the word of truth" is likened to the spreading of cancer. Teaching has a real effect upon listeners; we may assume that everyone dozes through Bible studies and teaching, but in fact something- a lot- goes in. Especially in illiterate societies, the word preached by the teacher is their only access to God's word. The Greek *gangraina* refers to gangrene, leading to the loss of limbs, and spreading from one infected limb to damage the whole body. Paul surely had in mind the overall damage to the body of Christ by losing some who had been taken away from the body by the gangrene of false teaching. Hymenaeus had been "delivered to satan" for blasphemy in 1 Tim. 1:20- but had not been corrected, apparently. The orthodox view of Satan as a cosmic being falls right down in the light of this. The Lord's commendation of Ephesus in His later letter indicates that Timothy did indeed save the body of the church by cutting out this gangrene. But we note that what is being taught here is not guilt by association, nor a call to excommunicate individuals who believe the wrong things. The context is instruction to Timothy regarding who he allowed onto the platform to teach.

Hymenaeus had destroyed his own faith, and as such often do, wanted to destroy that of others (see on 1 Tim. 1:20). Despite having been "delivered unto satan" he was now back in the teaching ministry. Perhaps Timothy had not fully supported Paul's discipline of Hymenaeus, and this was the fruit of that.

2:18 *Men who concerning the truth have erred, in saying that the resurrection is past already; and they ruin the faith of some*- "The truth" may refer specifically to the Lord Jesus. These men may have been influenced by the kind of incipient Gnosticism which was pushed by the Judaizers, coming to term in the teachings of the kabbala which deny the significance of the body and of bodily resurrection. The denial of bodily resurrection was associated with "unGodliness" in practice (:16). If we are living only for today, and bodily resurrection [both of the Lord and ourselves] is

minimalized to the point of denial, then there will be "ungodliness" in practice. And this is the danger of preterism. Faith is 'ruined' if the bodily aspect of resurrection is minimized or removed. "Ruin the faith" is a Greek word only elsewhere used in Tit. 1:11, where the motive for such false teaching was money. If we do not need to face a future judgment for the things "done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10), then the flesh can be pleased just as we wish. And this was so attractive that some were even prepared to pay money for that to be true. We see here how the root of much doctrinal, theological heresy is psychologically based; a desire to justify the flesh.

2:19- see on Mt. 7:23.

However the firm foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those that are his. And: Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness- The implication is that despite false teachers, those known by the Lord [Jesus?] are on God's firm foundation and will not be shifted from it. But that firm foundation, as Paul uses the metaphor in Corinthians, is a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. Those who know Him, and are known by Him, are thereby in relationship with Him. And having named His Name, calling it upon themselves in baptism, they will "depart from unrighteousness". Any teaching which leads them to unrighteous behaviour will be intuitively rejected by them. In expounding 1 Timothy 2, I noted there were many allusions there to the idol temples of Ephesus, especially the temple of Artemis. The reference to firm foundations likewise refers to that same temple. The two "seals" quoted are likely "faithful sayings" popular amongst the illiterate of the first century Christian community. The seal of God is in the mind, "in the forehead" (Rev. 9:4), likely a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit in the heart / mind of every believer. This is what knowing the Lord and being known by Him is all about- living relationship with the Lord Jesus through the gift of His Spirit. And the function of that Spirit in practice will be a departure from unrighteousness. The term "depart from" usually refers to departing from persons; and this is the context of this verse- an appeal to depart from false teachers and their teachings. The same word has been used in 1 Tim. 6:5 about withdrawing from those who taught like this.

2:20 *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour*- As noted on :19 and earlier, the context here is of separation from false teachers and their teachings; not allowing them to teach, and not giving heed to their teachings. Those who teach rightly from God's word will not be ashamed (:15); whereas those who do not shall be ashamed. The honourable vessels here refer to the true teachers, and the dishonourable vessels to the false teachers. This is why :21 will go on to speak of separation from the dishonourable. Gold, silver and wood are listed in 1 Cor. 3:12 as the kinds of building which a teacher makes in his or her pastoral work. We note that the existence of dishonourable vessels within the "great house" of the church is taken as something inevitable; there is significantly no call for them to be excommunicated, but rather they should not be given a platform nor their ideas given credence.

2:21 *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, fulfilling the use intended by the master, prepared to do every good work*- As noted on :20, the context is about separation from false teaching and not allowing false teachers the platform. The purging from the dishonourable vessels [= false teachers, see on :20] therefore doesn't speak of excommunication but of not allowing God's house to have such people teaching within it. The Master of the great house (:20) is surely the Lord Jesus; and He has a use intended for all the apparatus

["vessels"] within the large household. There were good works intended for us from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10). We need to pray to God to reveal to us what those works are, and which uses He has in mind for us. The language in :20 and :21 is alluding to Is. 22:20-24 about the temple. "Prepared to do every good work" must link with 2 Tim. 3:16,17, which says that the word of God enables the man of God to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Thus the sanctifying and purging power is the word (as Jn. 17:17; Eph. 5:26).

2:22 *Enthuse about righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*- Some manuscripts, followed by the AV, add: "Flee youthful lusts". It is possible that Timothy went through a mid-life crisis, as Hezekiah did. Paul's warning to middle aged Timothy to "flee youthful lusts" was a sure reference back to Joseph fleeing from the advances of Potiphar's wife. If indeed Timothy was now middle aged, Paul would be reasoning that his sexual crushes were the immaturity of youth which by this stage he ought to have left behind. I noted on 1 Tim. 3 that Timothy was the bishop at Ephesus, and the commands concerning bishops and their relationships with their wives were therefore being spoken directly to Timothy. We can assume he was therefore married. And yet Paul sensed Timothy needed exhortation about "youthful lusts". The antidote to these lusts was positive- the energy should instead go into enthusing about spiritual things, not consorting with women in questionable relationships, but taking strength instead from others who "call on the Lord out of a pure [sexually pure?] heart". This rechannelling of energy from sin to righteousness is a common Biblical theme (e.g. "Not coarse joking but rather giving of thanks", Eph. 5:4); and Paul's redirection from persecutor of Christ to ambassador for Him would be the parade example. And so here, *pheugo* ["flee"] lusts, and instead *dioko* ["enthuse about"] righteousness. *Dioko* is the standard term for persecution, used about Paul's persecution of the Christians. His energy for persecution was redirected into a chasing after of righteousness.

Those with a pure or purified heart / mind are those who have allowed the sanctifying / purifying of the Spirit to cleanse their minds, conscience and thinking (1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 10:22). We must be *made* clean by the Lord Jesus, it is not of ourselves (Jn. 15:3; 13:10,11). Paul recognizes that not all in the church will have allowed this purifying work of the Spirit, even though all believers have potentially been given the Spirit gift at baptism. But he urges Timothy to associate with those who have.

2:23 *But foolish and ignorant questions refuse, knowing that they only cause strife*- The command to Timothy to "refuse" surely means in line with :14 and :16 not allowing the platform to teachers who "babble" with issues of semantics, words and meanings. These issues cause strife- the same word used in Tit. 3:9 of how the Judaist false teachers caused "strivings about the law". Teaching with a view to helping others towards spiritual fruitfulness does not leave the hearers with a mass of questions with no answers. This is destabilizing, and such teachers aren't aiming to help anyone towards God's Kingdom; all they will do is cause tension between persons, because different answers will be presented to the questions raised. The style of teaching which throws out a mass of questions was clearly the style of the Judaizers, in their program of destabilizing the Pauline churches. This is not an appeal for simplistic attitudes; rather for direct guidance of the flock, especially the illiterate, towards true spirituality. And this may involve ignoring certain questions, just as the Lord often avoided giving direct answers to leading questions and replied in terms of mega principles.

2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be gentle towards all, eager to teach, patient of ills and wrongs*- As noted on :23, a minister / teacher will be eager to teach, and not simply present a mass of questions to an illiterate, newly baptized audience which will only destabilize. This was the style of the Judaizers. Such presentation of questions was not teaching, being didactic, as the term means. The new converts needed a didactic approach, instructing them, rather than destabilizing them with endless questions and provoking quarrels. The Judaist false teachers were apparently not gentle, nor patient with disagreement. This dogmatism is somehow attractive to some audiences; Catholic and Orthodox priests were [at least in the past] renowned for their aggressive attitude to their flock. And many like it that way- to be made to feel unworthy and weak, because that is how they feel themselves, and to trust that a firm leadership might somehow lead them to salvation at the end of the day; although they have no firm hope in salvation for that would demand too much of them in mental and secular life. This attitude was prevalent in Judaism and amongst the false teachers. 2 Cor. 11:20 suggests the false teachers beloved of the Corinthians demanded money from them and even hit them on the face.

All teaching must be after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who taught "as His manner was", i.e. He was "eager to teach". When Paul wrote that “the servant of the Lord must not strive” in his preaching ministry (2 Tim. 2:24 AV), he was alluding back to how the servant song described the Lord Jesus in His preaching as not striving or lifting up His voice in proud argument (Is. 42:2 cp. Mt. 12:19). And Paul goes on: “...but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing...”. This is all a pen picture of the Lord’s witness to men in Galilee. And yet it is applied to *us*. “Apt to teach” is surely an allusion to the way in which the Lord taught the people “as he was wont” (Mk. 10:1). So it’s not just that we should witness because the Lord, in whom we are, was the “faithful and true witness” (Rev. 1:5; 3:14); because we are in Him, we must witness *as He did*, with something of that same ineffable mixture of candour, meekness and Divine earnestness for man’s salvation

Paul in 2 Tim. 2:24,25 makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:
“The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam’s self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] [“Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin” (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses’ devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn’t just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to ‘be with’ brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

2:25- see on Acts 18:6; 2 Tim. 3:7; Tit. 1:1.

In meekness correcting those that contradict themselves, so that God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth- Arrogance is so easily companion of holding a superior understanding about something. To realize we have the correct position and to correct with humility- is really the supreme qualification of a teacher. And the context here is about teachers. If the contradictions can be corrected in humility, *then* God may give them repentance. He is prepared to confirm the efforts of a sincere teacher, by acting on the mind of the person being corrected. Repentance is a gift, as stated clearly in Acts 5:31. This is more than forgiveness. Repentance itself is a psychological gift, a direct operation upon the human heart. And the text here says that God will grant this when a teacher has humbly corrected a person; so He works with our teaching of others. Repentance is an outcome of having corrected someone who is contradicting themselves; the contradiction is therefore a moral issue, a way of life being lived in contradiction to principles espoused. There is no reference here to simply correcting someone whose theology or intellectual process is self contradictory or logically twisted. That has for too long passed as 'evangelism' or 'preaching'. The issue here is essentially *moral*, because the resolved contradictions are confirmed by the Lord granting repentance. And a fair case can be made for "contradict themselves" really meaning 'contradict' in the sense of those who contradict the teachers; the same group are mentioned with a similar word in 1 Tim. 6:20 and Tit. 1:9. "Correcting" is a word used about training of children; it is to the spiritual elders / fathers / teachers that these words are addressed.

"The acknowledging of the truth" doesn't mean 'I accept you are right and I am wrong'. This is the stuff of Socratean debate which has been so attractive to conservative Protestants, whereby "Bible truth" becomes a battleground upon which one side strives to win the victory of 'truth' in intellectual, expositional terms; as if Bible study is a concourse with only one glorious winner and many eternal losers. I have demonstrated above that "repentance" means that moral issues are in view. The repentance granted by the Lord leads to "the knowledge of the truth"; "acknowledging" is an unfortunate translation, because it suggests that the contradicting side acknowledges logical defeat. But it is the same word used as in Eph. 1:17 and 4:13, speaking of the effect of having the gift of the Spirit, leading to "the knowledge of Him". Repentance leads to relationship, a knowledge of the Lord Jesus who is "the truth". The very phrase "the knowledge of the truth" is used in 1 Tim. 2:4 [see note there] as meaning 'being saved'. Repentance results finally in salvation, when we shall know the final truth- which is of God's grace in Christ for eternity. Indeed 2 Tim. 3:7 contrasts "ever learning" with "coming to the knowledge of the truth". It is all a moral dimension, rather than an intellectual one of learned intellectual knowledge.

2:26 *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will*- As noted throughout this chapter, the problem Timothy faced was from Judaizing false teachers, whom Paul was urging him to ban from the platform at Ephesus. Already the "Devil", the Jewish opposition to the Pauline Christian churches, had gained some converts and taken captive some of the converts. But good teaching, with the Lord's additional help, could lead to some of these lost ones being recovered. The parallel is with how the false teachers "overthrow the faith of some" (:18). "Overthrow" is the same word translated "subvert". Nearly every other time it occurs it is in the context of the Judaizers subverting the Christians - Titus 1:11; 3:9-11 (an equivalent word); Acts 15:24 (the Judaizers "subvert your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law").

The Jewish satan, the great adversary to true Christian mission in the first century, was seeking to make converts. The only other usage of the word for "taken captive" is in Lk. 5:10 about 'catching men' i.e. making converts.

For a critique of the standard view of the Devil in this verse, see http://www.realdevil.info/5-26.htm .

The RV reflects an alternative manuscript reading: "Having been taken captive by the Lord's servant unto the will of God". It seems to me that whilst on one hand preaching can be likened to a warfare, a tearing down of the bastion of unbelief, the Lord's servant taking people captive unto the will of God, this is only one facet of the picture. Taken too far, we can become motivated perhaps by a fear of failure, we try harder and only get into a verbal battle, a jousting match, or worse. We will often 'lose' these exchanges, because we were unable to convince our 'adversary'. Thus such exchanges become like a court battle of who's right and who's wrong, one-upmanship and point scoring. We will then end up feeling that the person has rejected the calling of the Father simply because my argument wasn't good enough. This need to win, this fear of failure, is the way of the world not the way of God, it is not "reasoning together". There is too much ego involved. Preaching, though it might seem otherwise at times, is not a competitive sport. If we failed it's not because we did not try hard enough, nor is it because we did not know enough, perhaps it's because we tried too hard driven by a fear of failure, or perhaps we have thought too highly of ourselves, thinking we speak for our God?

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

3:1 *But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come*- As noted on 1 Tim. 4:1, Timothy was called to stem what seemed an inevitable tide. Men were going to fall away from the faith, but his ministry was to stop this happening. And according to the Lord's view of the Ephesian church in Rev. 2, he succeeded against all odds, despite his own weaknesses. The Holy Spirit had said that grievous wolves would destroy the flock at Ephesus (Acts 20:30)- but just as God's word had stated that within 40 days, Nineveh would be destroyed. In the gap between God's statement and its fulfilment, there can be repentance and the human effort to change. And as Jeremiah makes clear, in this case, the predicted judgments will not happen.

3:2 *For men shall be lovers of self*- These "men" were within the church, for :5 speaks of them having the form of Godliness. The list of sins here recalls that in Rom. 1:29, which appears to be about the spirit of the unbelieving world. The point being that the spirit of the age shall affect the church. We note that these bad characteristics all arose from the false teachings which Timothy had been called upon to stamp out in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3,4). False teaching without doubt brings forth bad fruit, and thus a teacher or teaching is to be known by its fruit. Perhaps Paul is telling Timothy that such things will be found within the church because Timothy was somehow shocked and disappointed that they were present. We note that he was not called to isolate the guilty individuals and cast them out by some formal process of disfellowship; but rather to always seek to turn things around.

We note the words connected with "love"; lovers of money, lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure, not lovers of the good, not lovers of God. Clearly the idea is that humans are wired to "love" either self, or God. And conversion is all about the fundamental psychological restructuring of the mind, putting our "love" into God rather than ourselves.

Lovers of money, boastful, proud, argumentative, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy- "Argumentative" is really "blasphemers". Paul himself had been one of them (see on 1 Tim. 1:13) but had turned around; likewise the predictions here are not to be read as an inevitable tide. Timothy was called to fight against them; just as Nineveh was to be destroyed after 40 days, and yet that prophetic word was annulled by their repentance. The wonder of it all is that someone as weak as timid Timothy actually did turn it all around, at least doctrinally.

It's possible to understand 3:1-3 as specifically talking about our last days: "In the last days, fierce (Gk.) times shall come. For men (in an ecclesial context) shall be lovers of their own selves... proud... without natural affection... despisers of those that are good, traitors (cp. Mt. 24:10)... highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (implying they *do* love God); having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof". The spirit of fierce aggressiveness which is increasingly seen in the world will enter the ecclesias; brethren will become proud, argumentative, materialistic, despising the truly righteous, disregarding the needs of the household. And there are other NT passages which suggest that this was indeed the ecclesial situation in the prelude to AD70. The increasing bitterness and subdivision amongst us indicates this will all be seen in the latter day body. Ultimately, human relationships within the ecclesia will go crazy; brethren will hate and betray each other. There will be little real spiritual mindedness; the power of Godliness, the spirit / mind of Christ, will be denied, and only the outward form of Godliness remain (cp. Eph. 3:20; 6:10; Col. 1:11). The abounding wickedness of the world will so permeate the ecclesia that true agape-love will grow cold amongst us (Mt. 24:12). The antidote to this is offered in 2 Tim. 3:14 - 4:3: Love the word, hold on to the doctrine you were taught by faithful brethren, study the word, make it your life, challenge the apostate majority of the ecclesia with no fear of the result, preach to the world, look to the blessed day of Christ's coming.

The Old Testament as well as New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables. In 2 Tim. 3:2,3 nearly all words end in (*-oi*), the masculine plural case termination- when it would surely have been possible to construct the sentence in another way.

3:3 *Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers* - There were such within the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:11 s.w.)

Without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good- AV "despisers of those that are good". Timothy had been despised by some within the church (1 Tim. 4:12); these people were within the church (see on :2).

3:4 *Traitors, headstrong*- Both words used about Judas, a member of the ecclesia (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:18 "falling headlong"), who typified these Christians in the church at Ephesus.

Puffed up- The word is only elsewhere used in 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4 about the proud within the church at Ephesus.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- "Rather than" is better "more than" (AV). These people had a love of God, but their love of pleasure was greater. They were within the ecclesia, having the form of Godliness (:5).

3:5 *Holding a form of reverence towards God, but having denied the power of it*- Paul notes that the opposition to Timothy within the church had a "form of Godliness [possibly referring to their upholding some kind of statement of faith] but [were] denying the power [*dunamis*]" of that form of Godliness, i.e. the doctrines of the Gospel (2 Tim. 3:5). Paul has spoken of the "form of sound words" as referring to some kind of corpus of Gospel teaching in 2 Tim. 1:13. This has unpleasant similarities with those of our day who loudly profess their Biblicism, their holding of some "form of Godliness" in the Gospel; but who deny the operation of the power / *dunamis* which is associated with it, in that those who accept the Gospel shall be given the Spirit. They were likely associated with Jewish thinking or mentality- "having the form [s.w.] of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (Rom. 2:20). "Form" in Greek refers to the formation of an image; Paul writes of Christ being formed within the Galatians. But the association is also with the carving and forming of idols. Biblicism without the Spirit, the "power thereof", is of itself mere idolatry. The outward form of religion becomes an idol, to be worshipped for its own sake. But it is without spirit. And this element within the church of today deny this, insisting that the Spirit is not given in response to belief of the Gospel, and that the days of Spirit operation ceased in the first century. It is this *dunamis*, this power from the Lord, which provides us with all things required for spiritual life and Godliness, and keeps us unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3). See on 1 Tim. 1:14 *And the grace...* Paul has spoken much to Timothy about the "power" / *dunamis* which can strengthen him as it did Paul. He wishes Timothy to make use of the same strengthening: "Be strong in the grace [Gk. 'the gift'] that is in [that comes from being in] Christ" (2 Tim. 2:1). And at the end of his days, Paul could reflect that the Lord Jesus stood with him at his final trial and strengthened him (2 Tim. 4:17). The same word is used of how weak believers like us were strengthened out of their weakness to be strong in faith- again a reference to psychological strengthening (Heb. 11:34), just as Abraham's weak faith was strengthened (Rom. 4:20 s.w.). The same power strengthens believers [s.w.] unto internal characteristics such as endurance, patience and joy (Col. 1:11), the "power" in view being the spirit of Christ. This same power / *dunamis* is referred to in Rom. 15:13 as the source of these same internal, mental attributes: God fills us with "all joy and peace... that you may abound in hope, through the power / *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit". To deny the operation of power is not simply a matter of missing out on so much; it is a denial of the essence of the transforming Gospel. A related word is found in Eph. 3:16- we are "strengthened with might [*dunamis*] by His spirit in the inner man". This is where the gift of the Spirit operates; the reference is to "the inner man" and not the public display of the Spirit in special miracles etc. Paul's whole ministry, like ours, is a result of "the operation of His power / *dunamis*" (Eph. 1:19,21; 3:7). On this basis, Paul urges timid Timothy to allow the spirit / *dunamis* of love and a sound mind to work in him [again, internal attributes, not referring to any ability to perform miracles]; and this would drive out his "spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). It was this *dunamis* which would enable Timothy to endure "the afflictions of the Gospel" which were clearly making Timothy balk (2 Tim. 1:8).

It may be that those who have "a [the] form of Godliness" but deny its power are those who merely accept the propositions as outlined, e.g., in a statement of faith, but deny their living power in practice. And let us note that Paul lists this as an especial temptation of the last days. 2 Tim. 3:5-8 has some telling parallels:

	denying [Gk.
Having a form of Godliness	‘contradicting’, ‘going against’, the power thereof
Ever learning [Gk. Studying]	but never acknowledging the truth [the ‘form of Godliness’]
Resisting the truth	

All this implies that there is a power in the “form of Godliness”, perhaps the basic “form” of doctrinal teaching delivered to baptism candidates. This power can be resisted in that lives remain unchanged; yet acknowledging the true implications of the Gospel will radically transform life. One can ‘hold the truth’ and study it academically, yet not acknowledge its power. Thus one can hold to a statement of faith and regularly study Scripture, and yet live the life outlined in 2 Tim. 3:1-3, of lying, deceit, boasting, dividing etc.- all because we do not acknowledge the power of the demands of the doctrines which we study. Hence, there is an urgent need to discern and accept the practical, lifestyle demands of each of the doctrines which are fundamental to the Gospel. If we do not see the connection between doctrine and practice, if we don't perceive how doctrine and practice are linked, then the life of thought without action reduces our faith to mere intellectualism and endless theological debate, with all the resultant division this creates.

In 1 Tim. 4:1, Paul warns of a coming apostasy in the last days. 2 Tim. 3 repeats this theme by saying that in the last days, men will be “lovers of their own selves, covetous" etc.; these men / brethren will be "holding a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (3:5 RV). Their keeping the faith was meaningless. This "form" of teaching which they held is that of Rom. 6:17- the form of doctrine which they accepted at baptism. They will 'hold the truth' but deny its real power. "From such turn away" (3:5) is the equivalent of the command in 2:21 to separate from those vessels unto dishonour which exist in the house of God, the ecclesia. So the problem of 'holding the faith' but denying its practical meaning is going to be *the* major apostasy of the last days, Paul reasons. Continuing in and keeping the Faith is parallel with running the gruelling marathon of struggle against ourselves, wrestling not with flesh and blood in the fight for real spirituality (2 Tim. 4:7). There have been theologians at times who have argued that 'God did not command certain things because they are right, but certain things are right because God commanded them'. I sense this attitude at times amongst us too. But the Father doesn't seek obedience just for the sake of it. There is reason and purpose to His commands- hence David so praises them for this in Ps. 119. And so it is with all 'doctrine'.

The parallel in Tit. 1:16 uses the same Greek word for "deny": "They profess [Gk. to publically praise] that they know God, but in works they deny Him". The denial of the power of 'knowing God' was therefore shown in their works. Works, life lived, is to be lived "in the power thereof". Otherwise, our Godliness is mere religion, a form of Godliness which we craft into a mere idol. So much in the Christian experience must be analyzed as to whether it is religion, the outward form- or works done and lived in the power / *dunamis* of the Gospel. Attending meetings, going home feeling "It was good for us to have been here", performing rituals, mixing with the same group in church life... this is all the stuff of mere religion, and so easily it can

give a false impression of spirituality. It may 'feel right', but life in the *dunamis* of knowing God is unmistakeable and is no mere religious feeling.

From such people- turn away- Timothy as the bishop of the church could not just personally ignore some church members. His commission at Ephesus had been to stamp out false teaching and inculcate a culture of good works (1 Tim. 1:3,4). So I would read this as meaning that he was to turn away such people- from the platform. The next verse goes on to speak about the same group of [largely female] false teachers in the church who were the burden of 1 Timothy.

3:6 *For of these are they that creep into houses and take captive weak minded women laden with sins*- This entering the house churches which comprised the larger Ephesian church and creating havoc is exactly the scene we found in 1 Tim. 5:13. There, according to the reconstruction offered in our notes there, we encountered a group of young widows, the same group of gaudily dressed prostitutes within the church who were slammed in 1 Tim. 2, "going about from house to house". These women were getting more adherents in the house groups which comprised the church at Ephesus. Note how Tit. 1:13 speaks of a similar scenario, whereby the church at Crete suffered whole 'houses' being subverted; i.e. house groups were taken over by the false teachers. The G.N.B. does well in translating "weak women who are burdened by the guilt of their sins". Most of the Gentile converts had come from the Diana cult, and perhaps these women had been part of the thousands of Ephesian women involved in the cult prostitution of the Diana cult. The false teaching women kidded these other women that actually they need not feel bad about it, and could join them in essentially the same behaviour under a Christian guise. The 'creeping in' to the house churches is very much the language of Jewish false teachers in Gal. 2:4; Jude 4 and 2 Pet. 2:1. Yet in our reconstruction, these female false teachers were Gentiles who had once been involved in the Diana cult. But we have noted repeatedly that there was a heady mix of Jewish myth and Gentile paganism at Ephesus. The constant fear that 'Satan', the adversary, would use the situation refers to the organized Jewish campaign to undermine Christianity. And they would be eager to use the women who were involved in this false teaching.

Led away by various lusts- This along with the "sins" earlier in the verse are fairly obviously sexual in character. The false teaching sisters of 1 Tim. 5, who feature here too, were therefore offering some kind of justification for sexual misbehaviour. We note that by the time the Lord wrote His letter to Ephesus in Rev. 2, the problem had been resolved. But it was not resolved immediately, for between the first and second letters to Timothy, the problem was still present. Timothy himself needed warning to 'flee sexual lusts' and commandment to deal with the younger women in the church "with all purity". He seems, at first blush, exactly the wrong person to have to deal with these kinds of women within the church. But he was willing to be used, and he was used. He succeeded, in the way the unqualified succeed at doing a job requiring high qualification- by the power of the Spirit. And we too can achieve, in God's strength, that which is far beyond our natural personality.

3:7 *Ever learning*- I have shown in commentary so far in this chapter that the persons referred to were within the church. They continued learning, attending teaching sessions; but could never acknowledge "the truth". The reference is not to people who hear the Gospel but fail to come to "the truth" by some intellectual refusal to accept it. Rather the "learning" must refer to Timothy's teaching of the church, and the fact that some 'learned' but never came to the repentance which is signified by "the knowledge of the truth". This would have been comfort to Timothy lest he get discouraged by the

apparent failure of his teaching ministry with these individuals. Here we clearly see the difference between 'learning' and 'knowing truth'. They are not the same. The Hebraic idea of knowing in the sense of relationship is clearly in view. This is a point that we "come" to. Perhaps this is in fact part of every man's path- to come from learning to knowing. But those in Ephesus appeared not to have got there.

And never able to come to the knowledge of the truth- Jer. 5:1 says that "if ye can find a man… that seeketh the truth… I will pardon it". To seek truth is therefore to repent. Those moments of realization of our sinfulness, of accurately perceiving the gap between the personas we act out and the real, Christ-self within us- in those moments, we have come to truth. And this is the repentance that leads to true, authentic pardon. There is a moral link between any falsehood and an unspiritual life. And so repentance is an acknowledgment of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). A person can learn the theory of God's truth but never come to acknowledge it- i.e. to repent and life the life of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), never being transparent before God and brutally honest with oneself. However, as noted on 1 Tim. 2:4, "the knowledge of the truth" is a phrase also used there, but referring to final salvation. God wills "all men" to come to this "knowledge of the truth". Their inability to "learn" is therefore a wilful rejection of God's attempts to bring them to His great salvation. Their inability to convert 'learning' to "the knowledge of the truth" is therefore due to their own moral failure, and not simply some intellectual barrier, an honest failure to connect ideas together as they should be.

The parallel is with those having the form of Godliness [cp. "ever learning"] but denying the power thereof [cp. "never able to came to the knowledge of the truth"] (3:5). I explained that "the power thereof" referred to internal strengthening by the Holy Spirit. It could be argued that the 'true knowledge' here also refers to the knowing of God, in terms of relationship, which is made possible by correct response to the gift of the Spirit in human hearts. For this is how "knowledge" is used in Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9,10; 2:2; 3:10).

3:8 *Just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses*- Some Jewish fables claimed that these two magicians of Pharaoh were converted to support Moses. But Paul makes it clear that they "*withstood* Moses". Jewish fables were a major problem at Ephesus, according to several passages in 1 Timothy. Paul is often weaving into his argument inspired corrections of the Jewish myths.

So do these also withstand the truth- The same word is used in 4:15 about the false teacher who "withstood our words". Resisting Moses, "the truth" and "our words" are thus all paralleled. It was an incredible calling for weak minded, self doubting, half Jewish Timothy to realize that he was being put on the level of the revered Moses. But speaking forth God's word does that.

Men corrupted in mind- Used in 1 Tim. 6:5 about believers in the Ephesus church.

Reprobate concerning the faith- GNB "failures in the faith". The idea is that these are not random people from the world but those who had been "in the faith".

3:9- see on Rev. 16:15.

But they shall proceed no further- Does Paul refer to his certainty that the Lord's coming will be experienced by that generation, and declare their folly at the day of judgment? Or is he certain in faith that the Lord through Timothy is going to turn around the Ephesian church and expose these people? Or is he hopeful that they will in fact repent, realizing their folly and confessing it to others? He may have in view the idea that the false teaching is not going to proceed- Timothy is going to put it

down, which according to Rev. 2 he succeeded in doing. Paul notes that evil men in the world will proceed in their evil- for :13 uses the same word: "[they] shall grow worse and worse [s.w. "proceed"]".

For their folly shall be made evident to all men, as theirs also came to be- Not least, their folly will be made evident to themselves at the very end. Parables like that of the rich *fool*, the *foolish* virgins... they will all be crystal clear to them. *Then* the Kingdom of Heaven will be likened to wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1), after the judgment experience. The materialist "at his end [rejection at the judgment] shall be a fool" (Jer. 17:11). The utter *folly* of the rejected is a major theme (Prov. 14:8,18; Ps. 5:5; 49:13; Mt. 7:26; 25:8). Rejected Israel were made to drink the wine of astonishment (Ps. 60:3), and the rejected in like manner will gape: "When saw we thee...?". They will be turned back from the Kingdom "in dismay... clothed with shame and confusion" (Ps. 35:5,26). Confusion will then give way to panic and then to a level of agitated dementia well beyond the paradigms of present psychiatry. Often the Spirit points out that the sinner is only harming himself by his actions- and yet he earnestly pursues his course, in the name of self-interest and self-benefit (Num. 16:38; Prov. 19:8; 20:2; Hab. 2:20; Lk. 7:30). Sin is therefore associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. "This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah (pause to meditate)" (Ps. 49:13). The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God.

3:10 *But you, follow my teaching*- Paul could only write such things without pride because of his deep sense of what he wrote at the beginning of 1 Timothy; because of his serious sins and the depth of grace shown to him, he had been set up as a parade example to other Christians. The idea could equally be [as in AV] that Timothy had "fully known" Paul's teaching etc.- by reason of having travelled so much with him.

Conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience- Paul could say that Timothy had fully known his “purpose” (2 Tim. 3:10). The Greek *prothesis* is the same used in the New Testament about the shewbread- the bread openly on display before God. Paul is saying that his essential and real self was transparent, openly shown to both God and man. To say ‘You’ve fully known how open and transparent I am’ is really quite something. Who Paul showed himself to be was who he really was.

As he prepared to die for his Lord, Paul's openness increased yet more. He tried to motivate Timothy to resist apostasy in the ecclesia by reminding Timothy of how well he knew Paul's example: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). The sense of *purpose* and *determination* in Paul comes over so often (e.g. Acts 19:21). The constant energy of his mind comes over in the record (e.g. Acts 28:23), and also in his letters (note the urgency of " today" in Heb. 3:7,13,15; 4:7; 2 Cor. 6:2). It makes a good exercise to read through the record of Paul in Acts and highlight words like "reasoned", "persuaded", “convinced", "purposed", "disputing" (e.g. 18:4,5,11,19; 19:8,9,21). And he really is our example, not just a historical figure to be admired.

3:11 *Persecutions, sufferings*- I suggest the "sufferings" refer to the mental and spiritual temptations which arise from the literal, physical persecutions. The same word is translated "sinful passions" (Rom. 7:5; Gal. 5:24). The rest of the verse goes on to talk about the Lord's spiritual deliverance of Paul from these spiritual temptations (see commentary).

Think of what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra- Timothy had been with Paul and was being asked to model himself on Paul. Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1,2) and would have well known Paul's sufferings in the area.

What persecutions I endured- Paul uses the same word for "endured" in explaining that we can only bear or endure our trials because a way of escape is made for us out of them (1 Cor. 10:13). And so the Lord's deliverance of Paul was through making ways of escape every time. The comment that the Lord had 'delivered' Paul from those persecutions therefore refers to not suffering him to spiritually collapse as a result of them. Paul seems to constantly feel that Timothy is on the verge of spiritual collapse; the fact he fulfilled his ministry at Ephesus, according to the Lord's judgment of the church in Rev. 2, shows that despite so much teetering on the edge, the Spirit finally made Timothy strong out of weakness. Timothy was being encouraged that despite all the trauma that Paul had endured, the Lord had delivered him from spiritually stumbling as a result of them; and Paul is consciously setting himself as Timothy's example.

And out of them all, the Lord delivered me- I noted above that this deliverance was more in spiritual terms than deliverance from literal hardship. The bad experiences were not allowed to make Paul stumble. We find the same word in the Lord's prayer, regarding deliverance from temptation (Mt. 6:13); and of our deliverance from spiritual temptation (2 Pet. 2:9). Paul's confidence that he would always be "delivered" (4:18) surely refers to his confidence that he would be delivered from spiritually falling; for in the same breath he recognizes that the time of his death is near, and he did not expect any last minute reprieve from it. This is huge encouragement for us all; we shall be delivered from spiritual temptation if this is our true desire. Truly "The sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil" (Ps. 125:3).

3:12 *Yes, and all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*- Paul sees himself as being set up as a model for all believers, not just for Timothy (1 Tim. 1:13). And we will likewise be delivered from the spiritual temptations which go along with those persecutions- if that is our dominant desire.

3:13 *But evil men and impostors shall grow worse and worse*- As noted on 1 Tim. 4:1, Timothy was called to fight what seemed an inevitable tide of declension from the faith. As were the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20. And just as Moses succeeded in changing Israel's destiny, it seems they succeeded. For the Lord's letter to Ephesus commends the church for keeping out false teaching and excelling in good works. The problem was that they lacked *agape* love.

Deceiving and being deceived- This is surely a pointer to Jacob. Allusions to Jacob in later Scripture often comment on his negative side.

3:14 *But you, grow in the things which you have learned*- The downward spiral of :13 is matched by this upward spiral language. We can never stand still in spiritual life; there are forces propelling us either downwards or upwards. The command is not simply to retain what we learned before baptism; but to grow in those things, ever seeing new and wondrous implications in those basic truths.

Knowing from whom you have learned them- The integrity and manner of life of those who converted us is what inspires us to carry on. Thus Paul urges Timothy to "continue" because he knew "of what persons" he had been taught them (2 Tim. 3:14 RVmg.). The reference would be not only to Paul, but to his mother and grandmother who first taught him the Gospel. Paul is writing from the psychological viewpoint of Timothy; the integrity of the teacher was and is associated with the truth of the

message taught. This is basic human psychology. And it explains why there is so much emphasis in Timothy's ministry upon not allowing immoral people to teach. Because especially with illiterate audiences, the power of the message will be compromised by the integrity of the messenger. It is too easy to take the high ground that people should believe the message despite the messenger, because it is ultimately from God. That may be true on a theoretical level, but reality is that people do associate the message with the messenger. Hence Paul's request that Timothy reflect on the integrity of those who brought him the message, so that he might continue believing the message.

3:15 *And that from a child*- This continues the argument of the preceding phrase in :14; because Timothy had been taught the scriptures from childhood by his mother and grandmother who were of integrity (2 Tim. 1:5)- therefore he should continue to reverence the scriptures. See on :14 *Knowing from whom*.

You have known the sacred writings- Literally, 'the holy letters' (s.w. 2 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 6:11), as if referring to how his mother and grandmother taught him to read letter by letter from the Scriptures. Considering the low literacy rate in the Roman empire of the first century, we can assume that Timothy's background was of reasonable wealth. This would explain much of his weakness of character and personality which we have noted elsewhere; the weaknesses are typical of a 'rich kid'.

Which are able to make you wise to salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus- Paul is not saying that Bible reading will save us. It is faith in Christ which saves us, and we are made wise to that fact by the content of the entire Scriptures. The Old Testament scriptures were opened up by faith in Christ; that is what provided the key to interpretation which made them useful.

3:16- see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness- The Hebrew Bible was split up into small sections, such as "The Bush", referring to Moses and the burning bush. Each section was Divinely inspired, and this is probably the reference of "Every scripture".

A comparison of 2 Tim. 3:16 with 4:2,3 makes it clear that because the inspired word is profitable:
for doctrine *therefore*
preach the word; be instant in season, out of season (i.e. whether
you naturally feel in the preaching mood or not)
for reproof *therefore*
reprove
for correction *therefore*
rebuke
for instruction in righteousness *therefore*
exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

3:17 *So that the man of God may be complete*- Note how Peter says that the prophet was a ‘man of God’ who was moved by God’s Spirit to write Scripture; whereas Paul says that the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are what makes a ‘man of God’- us- who he is (2 Tim. 3:17 cp. 2 Pet. 1:21). There is a mutuality here, in which even we in this age can have a part.

Completely empowered to every good work- Yet we so often blame our lack of good works on a lack of resources or abilities. But the Scriptures speak to us, if we let them and read them in faith, and thus inspire us to good works. The Lord later commended the Ephesus ecclesia on their "good works", so it would seem that

Timothy really obeyed the spirit of all this. He pursued the teaching ministry he had been given, even if it was initially against the grain of his character. And it did indeed empower others to good works. Sadly, this was all done without *agape*, and this was the Lord's serious criticism of the later Ephesian church.

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

4:1 *I charge you in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus*- Paul several times writes this to Timothy. Paul always seemed so worried as to whether Timothy was going to hold on, and we could dynamically translate him as meaning 'Get a grip!'. But it may be that Paul had been given charges by the Lord which he was duty bound to soberly pass on to Timothy- hence the reference here to the charge being given in the presence of the Father and Son.

Who shall judge the living and the dead- The charge to preach to others is made in the light of judgment to come. We shall be judged according to whether we have shared the light with others or not. This is not to say that our acceptance is determined by our works; but the final judgment shall in some form take into account the life we lived now.

And by his appearing and his kingdom- Because there really will be a Kingdom of God on earth and people really can eternally live there because of their response to the Gospel- therefore we should preach.

4:2 *To preach the word. Preach it urgently, whether the occasion seems appropriate or not*- Our task of witness may seem hopeless. But we are to be prepared to preach "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2 AV). Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, and his language in 2 Timothy has many allusions to his own behaviour whilst at Ephesus. He spoke at Ephesus of how he had preached the word "at all seasons" (Acts 20:18)- and he tells Timothy to do likewise (2 Tim. 4:2 AV); Paul had taught what was profitable to others (Acts 20:20); and this was to be Timothy's pattern (2 Tim. 3:16 RV). "Out of season" translates a Greek word only elsewhere rendered 'lacking opportunity' (Phil. 4:10). Whether there is apparent opportunity or not, we must still witness- not just wait until someone asks us if we are religious. This is a common fallacy we all fall into at times. By contrast, there is to be a sense of urgency to our witness. Several times the Lord invites us to "go" and preach- we are all to feel a spirit of outgoing witness, rather than the defensive, tell-them-if-they-ask attitude which has dominated so many of us for so long. We need the same spirit of heroism in our witness which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had, as they reflected the indomitable Spirit of God in this matter of human salvation. Our unbelieving families, our workmates, our neighbours, seem to be stony ground to the point that it just isn't worth bothering. But we need a positive spirit.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort, as you patiently teach- The patience or *makrothumia* which God has is intended to be had by us too (2 Pet. 3:9,15; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 4:2). And especially is the preacher encouraged to have this *makrothumia* (2 Tim. 4:2; 3:10). God waits / is patient for repentance, amazingly so (we recall His waiting 120 years before the flood came)… and we are to have it in this same way too.

4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching*- See on :4 *Will turn away*.

But having itching ears, will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own lusts- "Lusts" in Timothy refer to lusts for illicit wealth and sex (1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Tim.

2:22; 3:6), of the type justified and indulged in by the group of female false teachers whom Timothy had struggled with in Ephesus. We have noted that there were sinful Christian women of 3:6 who were led astray by female false teachers seeking to justify their lusts. But those women were led astray because they subconsciously wanted to have such teaching. The whole theme of the Timothy letters is that Timothy has been given a charge to teach true doctrine and stop false teaching in Ephesus. Paul is warning him about these particular false teachers, and helping Timothy understand that false teaching is actually a psychological function of the desires of the audience, ever seeking self-justification. Paul may be saying that even although Timothy has sorted out the immediate problem in Ephesus, it will recur- because that is the way of human nature.

4:4 *And will turn away their ears from the truth*- Paul had told the Ephesian elders the same (Acts 20:29,32). It is the more impressive, therefore, to read the Lord's judgment that the church at Ephesus had maintained the faith and driven out false teaching. Timothy had fulfilled his ministry against incredible odds, and had changed, at least for a generation, the direction which the Spirit had foretold.

The phrase “the truth” is used in Scripture as a summary of the Godly life, rather than a set of particular theologies; for truth telling, and being truthful with oneself and God, is the epitome of the life which God intends. All too often it has been assumed that because we know and believe true propositions about the Gospel, therefore we are somehow automatically ‘of the truth’. The following passages make clear enough that “the truth” refers not so much to intellectual purity of understanding as to a righteous way of life. If someone understands a matter of Biblical interpretation differently to how we do, e.g. over matters of prophecy, this doesn’t mean they have ‘left the truth’. Yet if we [e.g.] lie, then we have ‘left the truth’ despite holding a correct understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. Sinners turn away from truth (2 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14). They are bereft of the truth (1 Tim. 6:5). God has revealed the truth, indeed has sent his Son to live it and to proclaim it, but sinful people have refused to listen.

And turn aside to fables- Gk. 'be turned aside'. As men turn away their ears (of their own volition) from the truth, so God will turn their ears to fables. If you turn away your ears from truth, Paul says that you are turned unto what is untrue. He doesn’t say that a person turns their ears away from truth and then turns their ears to untruth. By turning away from truth, God confirms the person in that- and He turns them towards untruth. He sends strong delusion upon those who love and want to believe in lies (2 Thess. 2:11). The fables in view are those which Timothy had been asked to stamp out in 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7. According to the Lord's estimation in Rev. 2, he succeeded in stamping them out. But Paul is saying that there will always be a desire for people to believe in them, and God will even turn people towards them if they do not want to hear truth.

4:5- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

But you, be sober in all things- The word means literally to be sober as in not being drunk. Every time it is used, it is in the context of being prepared for the Lord's second coming and not being caught off guard (1 Thess. 5:6,8; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). The reference is surely to the Lord's parable about the household servants who are to remain sober and care for the others in the household (Mt. 24:45-50). Timothy had been set over the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and thus that parable spoke to him

directly as one "whom his lord has set over his household". The soberness or awareness was therefore in relation to looking out for the needs of the household.

Suffer hardship- The same words used about Paul himself, and his earlier encouragement to Timothy to endure hardship (2:3,9). Paul so consciously sets himself up as Timothy's pattern (1 Tim. 1:13-16).

Do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry- Paul encouraged Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" *despite* all the doctrinal and pastoral problems and needs at Ephesus. These are never to be an excuse for not evangelizing. This was in addition to "fulfil your ministry"- which according to 1 Tim. 1:3,4 was to stamp out false teaching and encourage good works. In other words, his pastoral calling should not mean that he overlooked evangelizing fresh blood for the church. So often evangelism has been overlooked because of pastoral concerns, and yet it is fresh blood which is so helpful in moving beyond the pastoral problems.

4:6 *For I am already being offered*- Paul has in view his imminent death, but he sees it as on ongoing death. Alternatively we can read this as GNB "the hour has come for me to be sacrificed". But there is the idea as reflected in the AV that "I am now *ready* to be offered". It seems that Paul wrote 2 Tim. 4 when news of his imminent death had just been broken to him. As Paul faced his death, there was a deep self-knowledge within him that he was ready, that he was "there". As we face the imminent return of the Lord, it should be possible for us to have a similar sense: "I am now ready...". If we don't know that we are "in the faith" and that "Christ is in you", then we are "reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:5). All those who will be accepted *must*, therefore, *will*, therefore, have a measure of self-knowledge and appreciation of how far they've grown in Christ. Growth is a natural process, it's impossible to feel it happening. But by looking back on our lives and attitudes and comparing them with the experience of successful believers, it *is* possible to get some idea of our readiness for the judgment.

And the time of my departure comes- Paul had earlier spoken of his "departure" (Phil. 1:23), he had told Timothy and the Ephesian elders that he must finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24); and he knew his time had come; he could speak of having reached "the time of my *departure*" (2 Tim. 4:6). The level of self-knowledge he had as he faced the end is remarkable. Yet it really is possible for each of us; for his glorious race to the finish is our pattern. Despite his surface sadness and depression, Paul was finishing his course *with joy*.

As Paul's sense of his own sinfulness grew, so did his confidence of salvation. These two elements, meshed together within the very texture of human personality, are what surely give credibility and power to our witness to others. On one hand, a genuine humility, that we are sinners, that we are the last people who should be saved; and yet on the other, a definite confidence in God's saving grace and the achievement of Jesus to save sinners. Paul at the very end had a wonderful confidence in the outcome of the day of judgment. He had spoken earlier of running the race (1 Cor. 9:24-26; 1 Tim. 6:12). Now he says that he has finished it, in victory. His final words consciously allude back to what he wrote to the Philippians a few years earlier:

Philippians	2 Timothy 4
What I should like is to depart (1:23)	The hour for my departure [s.w.] is come (4:6)
If my life-blood is to crown the sacrifice (2:17)	Already my life blood is being poured out on the altar of sacrifice [s.w.] (4:6)

I have not yet reached perfection [finishing] but I press on (3:12)	I have run the great race, I have finished [s.w. perfected] the course (4:7)
I press toward the goal to win the prize (3:14)	Now the prize awaits me (4:8)

Paul felt that he had attained the maturity which he had earlier aimed for. To have the self-knowledge to say that is of itself quite something. May it be our ultimate end too. These parallels and Paul's commentary becomes all the more poignant if we accept the view that actually, Paul did not die soon after 2 Tim. 4 was written- rather was he released, did much work for the Lord, and died under Nero at a later date. In this case his commentary in 2 Tim. 4 is a reflection not so much of a dying man's last words and hopes, but of a mature, reasoned conviction that in fact he had arrived at a point of believing in salvation.

4:7- see on Lk. 13:24.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course- Paul has used the metaphors of a soldier and athlete in challenging Timothy to a disciplined life. And now he says that he has himself fulfilled those images, yet again setting himself up as Timothy's pattern. In nearly all his letters, Paul asks his readers to pray for him. But not in these final letters to Timothy. "I am now ready to be offered". He knew he had finished the fight (2 Tim. 4:7). The Greek for "fight" occurs in Phil. 1:29,30 concerning the struggle we have to truly take up the cross of Christ, and also in 1 Cor. 9:25 regarding the battle we have for total self-control. Paul knew these were the aims his Lord had hoped to achieve in him. And Paul knew that he was through, he'd finished and achieved them. He had achieved self-control. He knew his Lord, he had been made conformable to the dying Lord Jesus on the cross, he *knew* the fellowship of his sufferings. He had filled up the whole measure of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

Paul felt very clearly his sense of mission. He speaks in Troas of how “none of these things move [deflect] me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy” (Acts 20:24). Some years later at the end of his life he could write that “I have finished my course” (2 Tim. 4:7). He didn’t let anything distract him- and our age perhaps more than any other is so full of distractions. In his time of dying (at which he wrote 2 Tim.), John his hero was still in Paul's mind. Paul speaks of finishing his course (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7), using a word only used elsewhere concerning John finishing *his* course (Acts 13:25).

On a series of long Russian train journeys, I read through the Gospels and epistles, noting down all the times Paul makes a direct or indirect allusion to the Gospels. I then worked out how many times in each epistle he alludes, on average, to the Gospels. I found that on average, he did it once every six verses. But when you list his epistles chronologically, the general trend suggests that in his writing, Paul *increasingly* alluded to the Gospels. And in his time of dying (in which he wrote 2 Timothy), the intensity of his allusions to the Gospels reaches an all time high. In 2 Timothy he is referring to the Gospels at least once every 3.9 verses- and almost certainly more than that, seeing that my analysis is incomplete. As he faced death in 2 Tim. 4, he more intensely modelled his words (probably unconsciously) upon those of Christ. Thus when he speaks of how he is about to *finish* his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he is combining allusions to Mt. 26:58; Lk. 12:50; 18:31; 22:37 and Jn. 13:1. He speaks of how he wished that “all the gentiles might hear” (2 Tim. 4:17) in the language of his

Lord, also facing death, in Jn. 17- where He spoke of His desire that all “the world might know”.

I have kept the faith- Paul breathes a sigh of relief at the end of his life when he says that he has “fought a good fight... finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). To keep believing true doctrine (“the faith”) is likened to a lifelong struggle, a grueling race. It hardly appears like this when we first learn the basic doctrines and are baptized. That it will be a struggle to continue believing them properly hardly seems possible in those innocent days. But living out true doctrine is a pre-requisite for acceptance into the Kingdom: “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truths (AV mg.) may enter in” (Is. 26:2).

Paul at his bitter end could say that he had kept the Faith; but he brackets this together with finishing the race and fighting a good fight (2 Tim. 4:7; Eph. 6:12). These ideas of running the marathon and wrestling through the fight he uses elsewhere; but in the sense of striving for spiritual mastery over ourselves. It is *this* which is keeping the Faith. The need to remain in the Faith, to hold onto it, is one of the classic themes of the NT (Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 4:7). Jude begins by appealing for his readers to be keeping the faith, to contend for the faith; and concludes by asking them to build up each other in that faith. To preserve it is in order to build up; for our growth is on the basis of the pure Gospel which we believe. It is this which leads us on "from faith to faith" in an upward spiral of growth (Rom. 1:17). These passages do not mean that we must religiously hold on to our understanding of the doctrines of a 'Statement of Faith', *and nothing more*. It is true that the need to maintain doctrinal purity *is* taught in these passages; but those doctrines are not just things which have been delivered to us to 'keep' in the sense of maintaining a correct understanding of them. If this were the case, God would be rather like the Roman slave owner who endlessly dropped a spoon and asked his slave to pick it up, then he dropped it again, asked him to pick it up... There was no *purpose* in the exercise itself, it was simply a test of the slave's obedience. But God is not like this. He has commanded us to keep the faith, to preserve the doctrines of the Faith, but there is a reason for this. Those doctrines are not just arbitrary statements which God invented as part of the boundless theological fantasy of an omnipotent being. They are intended to produce *behaviour*, and *this* is why they must be defended; because without the understanding of true doctrine, true spiritual behaviour is impossible. To simply hold on to the same doctrines we learnt before baptism, e.g. that God is one not three, is not holding the Faith in the sense the NT requires. This is simply clinging on to what we have always believed, just as most human beings cling on to their belief systems, especially as they grow older.

4:8 *From this time forward*- This references "that day" later in the verse when Paul would be immortalized at the day of judgment. But he sees it was "this time forward", another example of how he understood his death as effectively being the Lord's coming for him. Hence his desire to depart and "be with Christ" expressed to the Philippians. Was Paul given some special assurance that he would be saved at the last day? Otherwise it is hard to understand the force of him saying that he is sure of his salvation "from this time forward".

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness- It could be that the reward is to be made righteous. Or that the reward / crown is the reward for righteousness. Yet Paul elsewhere is very aware of "our unrighteousness" (Rom. 3:5), and how righteousness is imputed to us, final salvation not being any function of "works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit. 3:5). Perhaps he means that he now finally

believed in practice what he had so eloquently explained to the Romans in theory- that he was righteous by faith. And he saw that there was indeed a crown for that faith.

Which the Lord, the righteous judge- This title is to be connected with the way that He will give us "the crown of righteousness". The 'justness' or 'rightness' of His judgment is not to be measured in human terms; for it shall involve counting us righteous who are not- if we have believed it. But this is *His* rightness / justice.

Shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing- The Lord said that all those whom he finds *watching* will be welcomed into the marriage feast (Lk. 12:37). And 2 Tim. 4:8 is plain enough: "All them also that love his appearing" will be rewarded along with Paul. Paul's own confidence in salvation was because he knew the earnestness of his desire to be "present with the Lord" Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8), such was the closeness of his relationship with him. Is this really our attitude too? Can we feel like Simeon, that we are quite happy to die after we have just seen our Lord with our own eyes (Lk. 2:29)? Is there really much *love* between us and our Lord? The faithful are described as "those that *seek* (God)... such as *love* thy salvation" (Ps. 40:16). None truly seek God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: "Unto them that look for (Christ) shall he appear the second time... unto salvation". Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Their response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in that moment effectively be their judgment. See on Lk. 12:37. The idea that whoever truly loves the Lord's coming will therefore be accepted by Him can easily be abused by those who reason that anyone who has the emotion of love towards Christ will be rewarded by him. We know that true love involves both having and keeping his commands. But for those of us in Christ, these verses are still a major challenge. If we truly "look for" Christ's second coming, if we "love his appearing", this will lead us to acceptance with him. So the point is surely clinched: our attitude towards the second coming is an indicator of whether we will be saved. Time and again in the Psalms, David expresses his good conscience in terms of asking God to come and judge him (e.g. Ps. 35:24). Was this not some reference to the future theophany which David knew some day would come?

As Job's emphasis on the coming of Christ and judgment increased, so his concentration on his present sufferings decreased. His heart was consumed within him with desire for that day (Job 19:27 AVmg.). 2 Tim. 4 can be regarded as Paul's most mature spiritual statement, written as it was just prior to his death. In 2 Tim. 4:1,8, Paul's mind was clearly on the second coming and the certainty of judgment. He realized, in that time of undoubted maturity, that the common characteristic of all the faithful would be that they all *loved* the appearing of Christ. This isn't, of course, to say that anyone who loves the idea of Christ's coming will thereby be saved. A true love of His appearing is only possible with a correct doctrinal understanding, and also a certain level of moral readiness for His appearing. But do we *love* the appearing of Christ as Job did? Is it *really* all we have in life? Is our conscience, our faith in the grace of God, our real belief in the blood of the cross, so deep that we *love* the idea of the coming of judgment, that we would fain *hasten* the day of His coming? The graph

constructed above shows how Job's *love* of the Lord's coming grew very rapidly. Before, he was too caught up with bitterness about his unspiritual fellow 'believers', effectively justifying himself in the eyes of his ecclesia and his world, full of passive complaints about his own sufferings... and so he didn't *love* that day as he later came to.

4:9 *Make an effort to come to me soon*- "Make an effort" again seems to reflect Paul's knowledge of Timothy's tendency to inaction and laziness, and the need to 'stir himself up'. By inviting him to Rome, Paul clearly believed that Timothy did not have to be permanently in Ephesus, but must have been confident that Timothy could pass over his duties to faithful brethren there for a time.

4:10- see on Mt. 13:22; Lk. 13:27.

For Demas- In Col. 4:14, Demas is a fellow prisoner with Paul, or at least with Paul in Rome. Either he fell away, or the difference is evidence of a second imprisonment. Demas was certainly within Paul's inner circle to have been with him in Rome, and a great loss.

Forsook me- Paul does take things rather personally, although that is just a function of being human. We would rather expect him to speak of forsaking the Lord. There are so many references to "I" and "me" in these final words that we can assume that Paul was in deep depression as he faced death alone and deserted. "Only Luke is *with me*... profitable *unto me* (:11)... did *me* much evil (:14)... no man stood with me, but all forsook me (:16)... that *through me* the message might be fully proclaimed" (:17).

Having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia- Translated to Hebrew, the *olahm hazzeh* ["present world"] is the term used by Judaism for the Jewish system. So it seems that Demas went off to Judaism, another casualty of the Jewish plot and machinations against Paul and his work.

4:11 *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you*- As Paul in his time of dying remembered his fallout with Mark, so awareness of sinfulness is a sign of spiritual maturity in us all. Paul must surely have had twinges of guilt over his behaviour at times (not least over the bust up with Barnabas and Mark, Acts 15:39); and yet he insists that he always had a good conscience; so convinced was he of forgiveness. It seems Paul was aware of his error of years before in pushing Mark away. We have seen that he alluded to it in his letters. And now, right at the very end, the memory of his earlier pride and brashness to his brethren stayed with him. Every, every one of us has done the same thing to our brethren, countless times. Will we remember them on our deathbeds? Will our sensitivity to sin be that great? Paul in his time of dying was a man who had reached a spiritual peak, the love which was the bond of spiritual completion and maturity. Yet this didn't stop him being depressed, or from so desperately wanting his brethren, or from meditating upon past mistakes.

For his service is profitable to me- AV "Profitable to me for the ministry". Paul at his last gasp was still thinking about fulfilling his ministry / service of the Lord. And he saw that the fulfilment of his ministry required others, including those whom previously he had considered unhelpful. We all go through this path, coming to realize that we ourselves desperately need our weak brethren, that no man is an island, not even me. The term has just been used by Paul in saying that if a man separate himself from the vessels which are to dishonour, then he can be "profitable" in ministry (2 Tim. 2:21). It could be that Paul considered the vessels unto dishonour to be the Judaists, for he uses similar language about those under the Mosaic law in

Romans. Perhaps he was satisfied that Mark had now separated himself from those Judaistic influences which had limited his service previously. Or perhaps Paul in his desperation to fulfil his ministry, simply lowered the bar and accepted the likes of Mark, even though he disagreed with those with whom Mark fellowshipped. Again, this path has been trodden by so many of the Lord's servants as they come towards the end of their service.

4:12 *But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus*- Timothy was the bishop at Ephesus, and Paul has charged him about how to lead the church there. But really wanting Timothy to personally come to him, he had arranged for Tychicus to go to Ephesus to temporarily relieve Timothy. We see here how intensely valuable and encouraging Paul found Timothy's presence. And yet there is probably no other single individual over whom Paul worried so much, and feared his weakness and possible spiritual collapse. Such fears are evident throughout the letters to Timothy. But it is a mark of Paul's final maturity that he took such encouragement from a brother whose weaknesses he so clearly perceived.

4:13 *When you come, bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus*- Paul's situation is very different from that presented at the end of Acts, where he lives in a large rented home capable of accommodating many visitors. He is presumably cold and needed the cloak. There are many links between Paul's time of dying (as recorded in 2 Tim. 4) and the death of the Lord Jesus. Paul felt that he had at last approximated to the fellowship of his Lord's sufferings, and therefore he looked ahead with confidence to the day of resurrection. His awareness of his cloak, as his one treasured worldly possession, was maybe fuelled by a realization that this too was the only significant worldly possession of his Lord, at the end (2 Tim. 4:13).

And the books, especially the parchments- He wanted to have his own copies of the Scriptures, which implies his relationship with the Jews in Rome had soured to the point where nobody would provide copies of the Scriptures to him. His desire for parchment reflects how he had no local source of them, even though Luke was with him, they perhaps had no money to buy parchment. Whereas previously Paul had the funds to rent his own accommodation in the prison. His desire for parchment suggests he wanted to write more letters; and yet 2 Timothy appear to be his final letter preserved. Perhaps his intention never came to anything; but he surely desired to serve his Lord until his last breath, and he realized that letter writing was a significant ministry.

4:14 *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; may the Lord render to him according to his works*- The individual was clearly known to both Paul and Timothy, and it seems he was present with Timothy in Ephesus. He is the Alexander who had left the faith in 1 Tim. 1:20. It cannot surely be coincidence that Acts 19:33 records that there was a friend of Paul's called Alexander in Ephesus who attempted to defend him when the crowd of silversmiths called for Paul's destruction, angry that the collapse of the Diana cult had put them out of business. We can reconstruct that Alexander as a metalworker likewise depended upon the Diana cult for his livelihood. He initially converted and stood with Paul- but the pull of the Diana cult and the love of wealth and his former status had meant that he had turned against Paul. To regain his credibility in Ephesus, he had started a campaign against the Christians in Ephesus which affected Timothy and also led to Paul's suffering from him even in prison in Rome. This is fairly commonly seen amongst once zealous converts who fall away,

and contributes towards the picture of Paul feeling so forsaken at the end.

4:15 *You also need to be on guard about him, for he greatly withstood our words*- The same word in 3:8 about the men of corrupt minds within the Ephesian church who resisted the Truth. There the parallel is drawn between them and Jannes and Jambres, the magicians who did false miracles to withstand the teaching of Moses. Perhaps Alexander repeated the false miracles claimed by the Diana cult; and the parallel would put Paul and timid Timothy in the place of Moses, who was seen as someone way above all other human spiritual endeavour. Paul often alludes to Moses as an example who is to be realistically followed, rather than admired as an icon from a distance.

4:16 *At my first defence no man stood with me, but all forsook me*- Paul was obviously deeply hurt by this. His call for Timothy to join him in Rome was therefore an invitation to persecution; for people didn't stand with Paul for fear of guilt by association and persecution. "All forsook me" obviously recalls the Lord in Gethsemane and Paul continues this allusion further. This is how 'Jesus is with us', in that life situations are clearly designed to be repetitions of what He experienced.

May it not be held against them- Paul saw that his own tribunal appearance was nothing compared to the appearance we shall all make before the judgment seat of Christ. Things like not standing up for a brother in court will perhaps be raised. But Paul understood that his forgiveness and prayer in this life, regardless of their repentance, could influence the nature of their judgment experience. His forgiveness of them could mean that the issue would not be raised with them then (AV "laid to their charge"). Whilst Paul doesn't speak with absolute certainty ["May it not..."], this possibility opens up huge issues for us. It gives eternal weight to our decisions regarding forgiveness, and our need to implore others to forgive us when we have sinned against them.

4:17- see on 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:7; 4:13.

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me- There in the empty witness box, Paul sensed the Lord Jesus standing. The 'strengthening' is that spoken of in the notes on 3:5. It was psychological strengthening, against the pain of being left alone there, against bitterness, against unforgiveness. The Lord had such a wide experience of human life and suffering so that not one of us could ever complain that He does not know in essence what we are going through. This is my simple answer to the question of why, exactly why, did Jesus have to suffer so much and in the ways that He did. Take one example of how His earthly experiences were the basis of how He later administered “grace to help in time of need” for a believer. The Lord’s one time close friend Judas is described as "standing with" those who ultimately crucified Jesus in Jn. 18:5. Paul says that none of the brethren 'stood with' him when he was on trial, but "the Lord [Jesus] stood with me". It seems to me that the Lord knew exactly what it felt like to be left alone by your brethren, as happened to Him in Gethsemane and at His trials; and so at Paul's trial He could 'stand with' him, based on His earthly experience of being left to stand alone. In our lives likewise, the Lord acts to help us based on His earthly experiences; He knows how we feel, because He in essence went through it all. John maybe has the image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1), facing the hostile world.

That through me the message might be fully proclaimed- Paul's intention of going to Rome in order to make a public witness for the Gospel was therefore fulfilled. His trial was presumably high profile, so that many Gentiles heard the Gospel.

And so all the Gentiles might hear- As he faced death, Paul more intensely modelled his words upon those of Christ (see on :7). And yet despite this, perhaps because of his increasing identification with Christ and sense of Christ's supremacy, Paul's concern was constantly for doctrine; he pounded away, time and again, at the danger of apostasy. As he got older, this was a bigger and bigger theme with him. His last words just before his death are full of this theme, more than any other of his writings. And yet that same letter has more reference (relatively) to the Gospels and to the Lordship of Christ than anything else he wrote. On average, Paul refers to Christ as "the Lord" once every 26 verses in his letters. But in 2 Timothy, he calls Christ "Lord" once every six verses; and in his very last words in 2 Tim. 4, once every 3 verses, nine times more than average! His appreciation of the *excellency* and the supremacy of Christ, of the height of His Lordship, grew and grew. Paul seems to have seen in Christ's prophecy that the Gospel would be fully known world-wide in the last days as being a specific, personal command to him (Mt. 24:14 = 2 Tim. 4:17). The Gospel is to be preached; Paul realized this in these his very last words, as even then, he makes one of his last plays on words: "… that through me the proclamation might be fully proclaimed" (2 Tim. 4:17 RVmg.). The Gospel, the proclamation of the Kingdom, is to be proclaimed. We cannot possess a proclamation, designed to be proclaimed, without proclaiming it.

And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion- As a Roman citizen, Paul's death would have been by execution. So he may be expressing gratitude that the form of his death was not going to be so awful as death in the arena. But he may also mean that he was spared the death penalty. But in this case, why does he write with urgency to Timothy as if he is about to die shortly? Perhaps he realized he had a terminal illness? Surely such language would be inappropriate if he had just been acquitted from a death penalty. This is why I take him here to be simply grateful for the form of death which had been decreed for him. We must also factor in the historical records of Paul's execution at the time of Nero's persecution. The reference to salvation from the lion was alluding to the Lord's experience on the cross, as described in Ps. 22:13,21. He felt forsaken by his disciples, just as Christ had been at His arrest and judgment (2 Tim. 4:16). The Lord's deliverance from the lion was through resurrection- and not through temporary release from its power. And it seems Paul understood that. But maybe he was also alluding to Daniel, who was literally saved from the mouth of the lion.

Whatever, Paul's mind was full of allusions to John the Baptist, Daniel, Moses and above all his Lord. All his years, his hours and minutes, of sustained meditation, of bringing the mind back from its natural wandering, were now paying their glorious reward. The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (Phil. 1:21). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be. Nero is reported as having said that the time would come, when men would call their sons Nero and their dogs Paul, as veiled with all the pomp and the power and the pride of this life, he watched Paul led out to his death. And yet that Paul is the man we fain must be; and doubtless he had in his mind words he had penned years before: "... those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things...

and be found in him... being made conformable unto *his* death; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead... forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth... I press toward the mark for the prize" (Phil. 3). This is a far cry from the Paul who just a few years earlier had 'refused to die', who wanted to fight for his life (Acts 25:11). Now he felt ready to be offered, to be poured out as a drink offering upon the lives of his brethren (Phil. 2:17 Gk.); he held nothing back, but *gave* his life rather than have it forced from him by the inevitable death that must come to all men. What he had once counted gain- and the Greek suggests material, financial gain- he now counted loss. He came to despise the materialism of the world, as did Jacob in his maturity. The power of all this is not just in its relevance to the elderly or terminally ill. We are all old men now, we are all on borrowed time. We believe the Lord's return, the end, *the ultimate end,* is imminent. If we are living expecting the imminent second coming; *are we* ready? Have we reached the completeness?

4:18 *The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me to his heavenly kingdom; to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen*- Paul writes to Timothy as if he is shortly to die. So I don't take this as meaning that he was confident of deliverance from death at the hands of the Romans. Rather is this confidence that despite the "evil work" of his execution, he would be delivered from that through resurrection of the body at the Lord's return. He was using the very words of the Lord's payer, "Deliver us from evil, for Yours is the Kingdom..." (Mt. 6:13). He understood this as ultimately a prayer for deliverance from death into the Kingdom of God on earth at the Lord's return. Admittedly he has spoken of past deliverance from his persecutions (3:11), but here he speaks of deliverance as a 'saving me to His heavenly Kingdom', the Kingdom of Heaven to come on earth at the Lord's return. The Greek term for "evil work" however may well not refer to the 'evil work' of his execution. The plural "every evil work" suggests many evil works. And the phrase is consistently used in the NT of sins (Col. 1:21; 1 Jn. 3:12; 2 Jn. 11; 3 Jn. 10), specifically those committed by Judaism against Jesus (Jn. 3:19; 7:7). At the end of his life, faced with death, Paul's mind was inevitably on the serious sins he had committed against Jesus under the influence of Judaism. And as he surveys his future, he is confident that he will be delivered from them, and accepted into God's Kingdom. And that is enough for him to face death calmly. And it is with this issue of forgiveness and subsequent salvation in view that he can comment: "to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen". This language is more appropriate to the triumph of Divine forgiveness and salvation than it is to Paul's being delivered from Roman punishment and released from prison.

4:19 *Greet Prisca and Aquila and the house of Onesiphorus*- His old friends Priscilla and Aquila were now at Ephesus.

4:20- see on Acts 20:25 *I know*.

Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick- Perhaps this is a lament of loneliness. Instead of coming to Paul, Erastus had remained at Corinth. Hence Paul's urging of *Timothy* to not be like the rest and find excuses not to come to him.

4:21 *Try by all means*- At the bitter end, the way Paul begs nervous, spiritually and physically weak Timothy to try to get to him before he dies has something pathetic about it: "Do thy diligence to come... do thy diligence to come", he repeats twice over (2 Tim. 4:9,21 AV). The spiritual weakness of Timothy and his need for Paul's encouragement is quite a theme (1 Cor. 16:10; 1 Tim. 4:12,14; 2 Tim. 1:6-8; 4:2).

To come before winter- The urgency may be because without the cloak he would have frozen in his cell (:13). But he knows that the time of his departure is near. He knows that travelling to Rome by sea in Winter is dangerous- as he had experienced. So he wished Timothy to come immediately and not miss the shipping season.

Eubulus greets you, and Pudens and Linus and Claudia, and all the brothers- We note his grace in passing on these greetings; because these would have been amongst those who sadly did not stand with Paul in support at his trial (:16).

4:22 *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you*- As noted on 1:14 and elsewhere, Paul was very conscious of the work of the Spirit as an internal strengthening within Timothy's spirit. "Grace" or 'gift', *charis*, refers to the gift of the Spirit; so we see here the way Lord's Spirit intertwines with the human spirit. This is Paul's closing wish to Timothy, because he realized the supreme importance of having the mind or spirit of Christ. We should give it a like importance.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: TITUS

TITUS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending

forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

TITUS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*- Paul several times calls himself "a servant of God". In the light of all his other allusions to Moses, Paul is surely alluding to the frequent descriptions of Moses as God's servant.

For the sake of the faith of God's elect- Paul in Romans understands election as evidence of grace; some are called to 'know the truth', to have faith, and others are not. This immediately removes any pride from any spiritual achievement, be it of faith or understanding.

And their knowledge of the truth- Or 'acknowledging'. There is a tremendous power in the basic doctrines of the One Faith. We come, over time in our spiritual growth, to acknowledge "the Truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to be led to a Godly way of life by not only *knowing* the Truth but *acknowledging* its power (Tit. 1:1).

The truth which is ultimately all about reverence towards God- The NIV in Tit. 1:1 speaks of "the truth which leads to Godliness". Truth doesn't save of itself. Thus true understanding *is* related to true Godly living- *if* we translate the doctrines into practice. The Passover would only be properly kept, Moses explained, if the meaning of it was understood (Dt. 6:20-25). Again we note that 'the truth' is not a phrase which refers to set of theologies correctly understood. Perhaps this was a misconception even in those days which Paul is correcting, by saying that this phrase is instead ultimately practical and not theoretical.

1:2 *In hope of eternal life*- This is to be connected with the fact that God promised this "*before* times eternal". The mind boggles at the huge significance which our eternity has to God. He had the idea of it before eternity and He intends to give us eternity.

Which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal- This is an intentional tautology. There can be no point before infinity. But the contradiction achieves its end- we are blown away by the thought that somehow, in a beginning before eternity, the most precious thing in our hearts was promised. And that is, our eternity, our deepest and most passionate hope, that which we fear losing above everything else... was in fact secured and promised. How was it promised at that 'point'? The Greek can mean 'to

assert to oneself', and this is I think the idea. God asserted within Himself that we would come to eternity. And God cannot lie, not to us nor to Himself. And He has spent infinity preparing this for us, through developing this earth with its unique possibilities for our existence, our personal gene pool, our calling etc. What a wonderful day it will be when finally all this work of infinity comes to term in our immortalization at the Lord's return to earth! This is all a rather deep and intellectual way of saying that God passionately wishes to give us that which is our master passion too- acceptance in His Kingdom. Another take on this phrase would be to go with the AV "Before the world began" and to understand the promise of eternal life made in the promises to Abraham as being before the Jewish world began at the Sinai covenant.

1:3 *But in his own time manifested His word in the message*- The message / word is simply that God wishes to give us eternal life. We are playing a part in God's eternal purpose; the idea of giving us eternal life began 'before infinity', God asserted this plan within Himself; and He waited all this time to use us to go take that message to people who could accept it and thus come to eternity. This is why any genuine attempt to spread that message has His eternal power and strengthening and enablement behind it. It could also be said that the manifestation of that word of eternal life / salvation was in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The message with which I was entrusted- In a sense God requires not help from man; and yet in another sense He has delegated His work to us, and limits His achievements according to what we are willing to do. C.S. Lewis in *The World's Last Night* observes: "He seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye. Creation seems to be delegation through and through. I suppose this is because He is a giver". As any employer soon learns, delegation is a risk. We have been "entrusted with the Gospel" (Tit. 1:3 RV); and therefore the world God so wants to love, the world God is appealing to, may never see Him; for He makes His appeal through us, as Paul told the Corinthians. The same word is found in 1 Tim. 1:11 (see notes there). The Gospel has been entrusted to us; in a sense, the progress of God's work depends upon us. He could save who He wishes as He wishes, but it seems He prefers to work through the mechanism of preachers sharing His word with others. See on 2:11.

According to the commandment of God our Saviour- A reference to the great commission? Or to the specific calling given to Paul at this conversion? Recall how Paul does at times begin his letters with an appeal to the fact he has been specifically commissioned as a preacher (Gal. 1:1-12; 1 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1-4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:11). He has just written that the message was entrusted to him personally. But this is not to say that we have not also been commissioned to share the same message.

1:4 *To Titus, my true child-* There is no evidence that Paul had converted or baptized Titus. But clearly Paul had much influence in his life. Timothy was likewise Paul's son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2) although it was due to Eunice and Lois that Timothy had come to faith. This shows that our pastoral efforts for others can make them just as much our children in the faith; and these are the family ties which shall last eternally. "My *own* child" (AV) would suggest that there was some unique influence of Paul upon Titus, just as in natural families.

After a common faith- Whoever is baptized after believing the doctrines of the true Gospel is our brother or sister- regardless of who baptized them, or what name they go under. Titus was Paul's son "after the common (Gk. *koinos*) faith" (Tit. 1:4 AV). The faith, the doctrines which he had been taught by Paul and been baptized upon believing, were what had made him Paul's son; and therefore that faith was what bound them together in fellowship. The Faith in Jesus, as in the basic doctrines which make baptism valid, are the basis of our commonality, our fellowship, with each other. Perhaps Paul is saying that Titus had become his son due to the Gospel, i.e. he had converted him. But see above.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour- AV "Grace, mercy and peace". Peace with God comes from knowing His mercy in forgiving us, and that is because of His grace. Paul wished that Titus would feel this; there was real meaning in this otherwise standard greeting.

1:5 *The reason I left you in Crete was so you would-* The letters to Timothy begin with Paul saying he has left Timothy in Ephesus for the same reasons. The letter to Titus can be seen as a kind of template upon which those to Timothy are written; for there are many similarities of wording. The fact Paul speaks with such authority regarding matters in Crete suggests he had been instrumental in starting the work there. For he is careful not to get involved in any pastoral work which was the responsibility of others, and he did not build upon others' foundations (2 Cor. 10:16; Rom. 15:20). His mission and vision was to begin the Lord's work afresh in each place- no bad policy for any true missionary. But when was Paul in Crete? The only time mentioned is during his journey to Rome, when they stayed for a short time near Lasea (Acts 27:7-9), but because it was such a small place and not much fun to spend the Winter in, the sailors wished to sail further along Crete towards the larger port of Phenice (Acts 27:12). It was whilst trying to sail there that they got blown right off course and ended up on Malta. It would seem that during the stay near Lasea at the inlet known as Fair Havens, Paul preached in Crete. It would have been no more than a village. And from that work there arose churches throughout Crete, for Titus was to "appoint elders in every city". They were pushing towards Rome, and so they surely would not have spent long at Fair Havens. And yet there is a strange turn of phrase about their stay there in Acts 27:9: "Now when much time was spent...". The modern versions seek to avoid the difficulty by suggesting that

much time had been spent on the journey overall; but the Greek really suggests that they had spent "much time" at Fair Havens. They hadn't, really. But it was a significant amount of time from God's viewpoint, because as a result of this witness, several churches developed. And the witness began in a remote village, a mere anchorage rather than a harbour, near Cape Leonda, from where they had to walk five miles to the nearest shops in Lasea, itself little more than a village by modern standards. And from that remote spot the Gospel spread throughout the island. This to me has the hallmark of the divine.

Set in order- Used by medical writers of setting broken limbs or straightening crooked ones. The reference is to the body of Christ.

The things that were lacking- Literally, the things lacking in time to fix up. This was just the right word to use considering how brief was Paul's time in Crete. No wonder he wanted Titus to remain there and establish the new churches. Although we note that Paul wrote the letter from Macedonia, according to the endnote attached to the letter. This would be reason to think that Paul was released from the house confinement with which the Acts record ends, and from Rome went to Macedonia; and then returned to prison in Rome by the time of 2 Tim. 4, when he is clearly awaiting his death in Rome.

And appoint elders in every city- "Every city" suggests the Gospel had spread throughout the island; although the 'cities' were no more than villages or towns by modern European standards. Paul's approach to pastoral work was that it needed elders; the congregations were not left to just take it in turns to teach and run their meetings. This was not because they had the miraculous gifts of the Spirit and we in this age do not. It was simply that a system of eldership has always been God's way of structuring the life of His people, and there is no reason to think it is not to this day.

As I instructed you- The implication could be, as with Timothy in Ephesus, that Titus had not initially done what Paul had asked him.

1:6- see on Gal. 6:4.

If anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife- This could mean 'not polygamous', or could refer to not being a womanizer. He was to be a man of one woman.

Having children that believe- The converts on Crete had not long been baptized. The idea may be that it was quite acceptable for "children" to also convert; the elders should be heads of households who had accepted the faith. This was the more necessary because there is no archaeological evidence for dedicated Christian meeting places in the first century; the churches met in homes. The reference to "whole houses" (:11) would be to house churches.

Who are not accused of riot or unruly- But a related word is used about the behaviour of God's son, the prodigal (Lk. 15:13). The implication would therefore be that these brethren had done all they reasonably could so that the child wouldn't turn out like this.

1:7 *For the bishop, as God's steward*- Literally, a household manager. This is saying that the elder must have demonstrated ability to manage his own family well; family life is the training ground for work in God's family. The same is true today; an elder cannot really be a person who has clearly failed in family life because of their own faults.

Must be blameless- This is the language of priesthood. There are many allusions to the language of priesthood in the New Testament, both as major statements and also in passing, as here.

Not arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain- Clearly there were such people within the church membership, who formed the potential group from which Titus was to choose elders. He is told not to choose these types. We get the impression of a church completely open to all manner of sinners, including violent alcoholics; but the leadership was not open. A church open to sinners- all sinners- but led by Godly leadership is the ideal we should be working towards in our times. For we can hardly say that some sinners but not others are allowed.

1:8- see on Rom. 12:13.

But given to hospitality, a lover of good, self controlled, just, holy, disciplined- Literally, a lover of *xenos*, the very opposite to a xenophobe. This was a significant characteristic for a Christian to have, when most people were extremely insular and parochial, feeling negatively towards all from outside their immediate experience or geography. The same basic mentality is in us all, but in Christ we are not to be like that but the opposite, as recipients of the Lord's outgoing love toward us.

1:9 *Holding to the faithful word which is according to the doctrine*- "Holding" is elsewhere used about holding on to the Lord Jesus (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13), so the *logos* of faith could refer to the Lord Jesus, who is the substance of "the teaching / doctrine". The use of *didache* prompts the thought that there was perhaps a body of teaching which was used in missionary work, and the appointed elders would be teachers who were faithful to that. The early Christian document known as the *Didache* may possibly be in view, but probably the body of teaching has intentionally not been preserved for us.

Mt. 6:24 = Tit. 1:9. Holding to God as your master rather than mammon is achieved through holding on to His word. Paul spoke of *holding fast* the faithful word (Tit. 1:9) with

allusion to *holding to* our Master (Mt. 6:24). But- and this is an important caveat- don't deceive yourself that time spent in expounding Scripture is *necessarily* Bible study as *God* wants it- although it may make an impressive impact on a group of assembled Christians. True Bible study and understanding was what lead the Lord to the death of the cross. To *truly* love God with all our heart and understanding, not just for the intellectual fascination of it, is more than a burnt sacrifice.

That he may be able to minister comfort using the sound doctrine- Sound or faithful teaching is to be used as a "comfort" and not as an end in itself. The Bible is not a puzzle to be solved, with those who successfully make their way through some intellectual jungle of interpretation being rewarded at the end of it, for their mental tenacity and good fortune in meeting up with good teachers. God is not passive, He more actively seeks human salvation and the useful triumph of His Son's work in human lives.

And also refute those who oppose it- "Refute" means to convict, and the word is often used with the hope of eliciting repentance and reformation. We have the picture of the new churches under pressure from those teaching non-Christian ideas; but Paul doesn't say they should be driven out of the congregation. Rather his concern is with not allowing them to teach their ideas, and to convict them in the hope of their repentance. If individuals holding false ideas are to be excluded from the church, then we surely would expect to read about it here in the pastoral letters. But we never do. The concern always is with maintaining true teaching from the podium, as it were. Defenders of a closed table may respond that this is an argument from silence; but the silence is repeated, noticeable and deafening.

1:10 *For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers*- The idea is of men who were not subordinate to anything or anyone. Paul seeks to inculcate a structure in these new churches, of subordination to authorized elders, and to the *didache* or body of teaching which had been the foundation of the churches.

Especially they of the circumcision- Titus himself was a Gentile (Gal. 2:3) and the early converts in Crete were likely Gentiles. But there was a conscious campaign of destabilization of the early churches by the Jews. The same pattern is seen throughout Paul's arguments to Timothy about the situation in Ephesus. Gentile converts were being destabilized by Jewish teachers who were getting access to the platform; just as happened in the Galatian churches. The burden of the pastoral letters is to eliminate false teaching and replace it with sound teaching. Exclusion from the breaking of bread is never once mentioned as a tool to be used to this end.

1:11 *Whose mouths must be stopped*- They must be excluded from the teaching structure; there is no mention of driving them out of the church or limiting their access

to the Lord's table.

Men who overthrow whole houses- The churches of Crete as elsewhere in the first century were comprised of house groups, which were vulnerable to subversion by individual teachers.

Teaching things which they should not, all for money's sake- What exactly was the connection between their teaching and money? Were they demanding payment for their teaching services? That sounds unlikely to have been successful. Perhaps they were pedalling a version of the prosperity gospel. Or perhaps they were playing on the fact that Judaism was a registered religion within the Roman empire, and religious Jews were free from army service and paying some taxes. To affiliate with the synagogue was attractive; and we note that the false teachers were Jewish (:10,14). See on :15 *To the pure*.

The early corruption of Christianity was due to false teachers who like Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15); they taught false doctrine for the sake of money (Tit. 1:11). Time and again the NT warns against elders who would be motivated by the love of money rather than the Lord Jesus and His people (1 Tim. 3:3,8; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2). The Greek translated "filthy lucre" in the AV is hard to understand; it doesn't just mean 'money'. It suggests profit that is somehow filthy, morally disgusting. This is what money turns into, in God's eyes, when men so love it.

1:12- see on Jn. 1:46.

One of their prophets said- It is often claimed that what follows is a quotation from the Cretan teacher Epimenides. He is not called a false prophet, although he was. God is not so keen to as it were cover His own back, footnoting all the time to the effect that 'this is not true'. Hence the usage of the language of demons in the Gospels when such things do not exist. But Epimenides was born around BC 660- many centuries before. The "their" in view clearly connects with the preceding context, which is about *Jewish* false teachers, who may well have repeated what Epimenides was supposed to have said many centuries ago.

Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons- To lie like a Cretan was a well-known saying in the first century. The laid back island lifestyle would have made Crete an unlikely area for the Gospel. But as noted on :5, the Gospel spread there like wildfire. So we have a picture similar to what we find today- secular people were eager to respond to the Gospel, tired of the empty life of flesh pleasing, but on conversion still carried with them the baggage of that previous culture.

The Cretans were typical port dwellers, making a living from entertaining passing sailors

and their passengers, disposed to laziness from the good life, easy money and pleasant climate. Their idleness had led them to obsession with vanity in listening to vain arguments about words and turning to Judaism (:10). We see in parts of the church today an obsessive over-interpretation of Scripture, sectarianism, neo Judaism- and partly this is likewise a result of not harnessing the good life as it should be, to the Lord's service. See on 2 Thess. 3:11. It's noteworthy that division over 'doctrine' and demands to exclude others who fail to agree on some complex matter of theology nearly always come from the prosperous churches of the West, and not from the poor unto whom the Gospel is preached and willingly accepted.

1:13 *This testimony is true*- But not every Cretan was like that. Yet Paul doesn't worry to cover his back, he accepts that this is the general spirit on the island, and it had affected the believers- and they needed to be rebuked for it. We can deduce from this that many of the converts were local Cretan Gentiles. At first blush it may seem strange that such people, still very secular and worldly in their outlook, could be attracted to Judaism and Jewish fables (:14). But this is the huge attraction of legalism; it enables a fleshly mind and lifestyle to be respectably maintained under the guise of deep religiosity.

For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith- Soundness in the faith doesn't refer to purity of correct doctrinal understanding. Rather does it refer to the practical issues of not lying, not indulging the flesh in gluttony etc.

1:14 *Not giving heed to Jewish fables*- To the false doctrines of Judaism which were being pedalled *within the ecclesia*. Yet the spirit of our day generally is to be more and more tolerant of doctrinal deviants, rather than 'giving heed', 'watching' against them. There is a telling play on words here. The Greek for "giving heed" is normally used concerned taking heed, being ware, of false teachers (Mt. 7:15; 16:6; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 1:14). Paul's implication is: 'Instead of giving heed to the *danger* of these people within the ecclesia, you gave heed to them in the sense of listening to them'.

And the commandments of mere men who aim to turn away others from the truth- This is further evidence that there was a consciously organized Jewish plot to infiltrate the early ecclesias and break down the faith of the Gentile Christians. Despite this, never once does Paul advocate dealing with the problem by closing the doors of the church or fencing off the Lord's table. Instead his method is repeatedly to ensure that the teaching ministry is sound. If access to the Lord's table is indeed based on qualification, we would for sure have expected Paul to talk about this in these pastoral letters, and in addressing the problem of known infiltration of the church. Note that it was Jewish fables which were being used to turn believers away from the truth- which is in Jesus. Not everything Jewish must be automatically accepted and glorified by Christians- there

is a tendency that way in some quarters. It was Jewish fables and ideas which actually led to Gentile Christians in Crete losing their faith.

1:15- see on Lk. 11:41.

To the pure, all things are pure- The reference is surely to the Jewish food laws. The parallel in Timothy would be the comment that all food is to be accepted now (1 Tim. 4:4,5), which in turn alludes to the statement to Peter that all foods are to be seen as pure (Acts 10:15). All foods have been declared clean in Christ (Mk. 7:19). Indeed, food is not of itself morally pure or impure (Rom. 14:20). Paul's argument is that things are not of themselves impure- in contrast to the Judaizing arguments referenced in the preceding verse. What makes the usage of those things pure or impure is the attitude of heart which we bring to them. The legalists had tried to bring every issue of human life to the point of being pure or impure. It was a matter of atoning for one's endless impurities by ritual- rather than a heart matter. Seeing Crete was an island, this was only possible by paying for sacrifices to be made at the Jerusalem temple. This may explain the strong financial element to the false teaching noted on :11.

But to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; both their minds and their consciences are defiled- This element were within the church, but effectively unbelieving in Christ. Everything was potentially impure- because the Judaists thought that their laws covered every possibly part of human experience. It may seem strange, at first blush, that the easy going, morally lax islanders of Crete would be attracted by this kind of thinking. But actually, this kind of purchased legalism is very attractive to worldly Christians with a niggling conscience. They can buy in to the whole idea of a superior spirituality and understanding, and as it were purchase legal righteousness which makes no demand upon their heart or private behaviour. And the niggling conscience is apparently appeased, to the point that it is actually "defiled" and ceases therefore to function.

1:16 *They profess that they know God*- There are so many parallels with the letters to Timothy. The equivalent of this is the reference to those who have "a form of Godliness" but deny its power (see on 2 Tim. 3:5). The 'profession' of knowing God may refer to some confession of faith, perhaps of a standard "form of Godliness", made at baptism.

Tit. 1:16 AVmg. speaks of those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". The same word is used in Rom. 1:32 about those who know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are

sobering thoughts. There is a theoretical knowledge of God, and the knowing of God in ongoing fruitful relationship. Thus those who do not understand will ultimately be condemned by God (Rev. 1:16-18 cp. 14:10).

But by their works they deny him- The same word is used in 2 Tim. 3:5; some had "a form of Godliness" *denied* the power thereof. The power of that form of Godliness issued in good works. But the legalism of these Gentile law-keepers was such that they disallowed themselves from doing good works, and their legalistic obedience actually made them "*dis*obedient".

They are detestable, disobedient- See above. Paul the carefully obedient Pharisee, spotless as to legal righteousness, described himself at that time as being amongst the disobedient (3:3). The essential law is not about acts of commission; it is a heart issue, obedience to the spirit of Christ.

Unfit for any good work- Just as everything was impure to them (:15), so their mentality resulted in an inability to do anything good. Because the good works the Lord seeks are those which are done from a motive of gratitude for His total grace. "Unfit" translates a Greek word commonly used for 'rejection'. It's as if the Lord seeks people to do His good works in this world; but he rejects these types. Their apparent emphasis on works rather than faith left them unable to perform good works. For the heart motive is all important, and legalistic obedience stops this.

TITUS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *But you*- Despite the presence of other, false, teachers, Titus was to focus on teaching which promoted spiritual health or 'soundness'.

Must teach what accords with sound doctrine- His teaching was to accord with sound teaching; presumably referring to the basic teachings which comprised the Gospel message. The argument suggests that “sound doctrine” is a body of material against which subsequent teaching can be compared. Being unsound in the Faith is another way of saying that in works a man is denying Christ; to be "sound in the faith" is to tell the truth and not be lazy nor gluttonous (Tit. 1:13,16). Good behaviour "adorns the doctrine of God", i.e. the basic doctrines of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10); the practical commandments of Tit. 2:2-10 are "the things which befit the sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1 RV) which Titus was to teach. It's almost as if Paul is telling Titus to bring out the practical implications of the doctrines which he was teaching. “Doctrine" refers to a code of behaviour, not just a set of correct propositions concerning God and His plan with men. Thus we don't read about "*pure* doctrine" anywhere in the AV; but rather "*sound* doctrine": living, active doctrine. The things which become sound doctrine are soberness, etc. (Tit. 2:1-4).

2:2 *That older men*- This may refer to old in age, or to elders. The way the commands proceed to younger men (:6) may suggest it is older people who are in view.

Be sober-minded, dignified- This and other characteristics which Paul is appealing for were not inculcated by obedience to Jewish food laws and rituals which

form the context of these exhortations (1:15). A number of these characteristics are mentioned in :12 as being inculcated instead by living under grace. Realizing that we are saved in spite of ourselves actually provokes in us a desire to be spiritual in response to that grace. For we cannot be passive to knowing that by grace, I shall indeed live eternally.

Self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in patience- This appeal is made to old men [elders?], old women and young men (:5,6). It was obviously a very needed exhortation in the context. And yet the ecclesias in Crete were prone to be attracted by hard core Judaism, according to our notes on chapter 1. This is proof for all time that legalistic obedience and keeping Jewish food laws (see on 1:15) is not the same as self-control. Indeed it would seem that by attempting legalistic obedience, these Gentile converts were justifying a lack of self-control in their lives in other areas. Col. 2:23 makes precisely the same point- that obedience to Jewish rituals is of "no value" in the battle against self-gratification. By contrast, living under grace is what teaches us to overcome the flesh (:12).

2:3 *That older women likewise be reverent in demeanour*- Vincent: 'as those who are engaged in sacred service'- an allusion to priestly service. The idea is that the rank and file also live out the spirit of priesthood. The Greek means 'on sacred duties'. This could mean that these older women were elders in some kind of spiritual office in the church. But the allusion may be to priesthood, which was the domain of males under the old covenant. But now the entire church were to see themselves as a "holy priesthood", including older women, who were otherwise excluded from religious duties in most religions including Judaism. True Christianity opens up opportunities for service to those whom society would generally consider as unqualified to serve or be useful. Elderly women were particularly in that category in the first century, and there are many such groups within societies today. But the Lord has use for everyone because He has given each convert unique talents and callings to service- and not just to the visible leadership of a church.

Not slanderers- The same word usually translated "devil". This is proof enough that the word *diabolos* simply means a slanderer and does not necessarily refer to any cosmic being. But the 'devil' is often used as a personification for the Jewish opposition to the Christian movement in the first century. These women had perhaps been influenced by Jewish thinking, just as in 1 Tim. 4:7 we noted that the older sisters in Ephesus were teaching Jewish fables.

Nor enslaved to much wine- The incidence of alcoholism amongst elderly females is not something which receives much attention today, and we can be sure that this was a radical area to address in first century Crete. The older women were liable to just be overlooked in society and in any pastoral program. But Paul sets a great example in showing that each and every believer, in whatever situation they are in, must be valued and cared for. And he puts the finger on a weakness which many would've just shrugged off as irrelevant to the main thrust of church life and just a personal matter. But if they were teachers, it was not right that they were also alcoholics.

Teachers of that which is good- These women had a teaching ministry- something unheard of in most contemporary religions. This is one reason for thinking that the 'older women' and 'older men' here could refer to elders rather than necessarily those older in age. We see here the immense value of the human person. In an age when old

women were considered irrelevant to the functioning of any religious group, Christianity had a unique place for them. They are not criticized for teaching; as we saw in commenting upon 1 Timothy, the female teachers are rebuked for the content of their teaching rather than the fact they were teaching at all. The pastoral letters repeatedly focus upon the need for correct teaching, rather than suggesting that troublesome individuals be excluded from the church or the breaking of bread. The lack of such commands is significant. It is a silence that is deafening. These churches were threatened by serious false teaching and immorality; but Paul's inspired answer is to control the platform, the teaching ministry, rather than throwing people right out of the church or the symbols of the Lord's patient, saving love.

2:4 *So that they may train the young women*- This could suggest that there was a specific women's ministry intended, after the pattern of Miriam teaching the women of Israel.

To love their husbands, to love their children- In an age of arranged marriage rather than love marriage, this was a required exhortation. And it shows that 'love' as God intends is an act of the will. It is not something which comes and then can leave. It can be practiced in response to a command like this. The 'love' they were to show them was not, therefore, the natural love of a women towards her children; but the conscious act of Christian love. They were living in an age, as we are, where people were "without natural affection" (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). There was to be a resurrection of love, and a break with the spirit of the age in regard to feelings and family commitment. It could be that there was a specific reference here to not practicing abortion or infanticide, which were common.

2:5 *To be self-controlled, pure, working at home*- The Greek in all these verbs suggests a moral, sexual tendency towards immorality which was to be guarded against. Again we note that the attraction of legalistic Judaism had not influenced them for good. Rather were they perhaps feeling justified in immorality because of a few acts of legal obedience.

Kind and submissive to their own husbands- This is written in the context of church life where both husband and wife were believers. For wives in Eph. 5:22 and Col. 3:18 were to submit themselves to their own husbands as unto the Lord Jesus. The context of Titus is that there were many false teachers around, demanding submission to them. But the women were to not submit themselves to them, but to their husbands who were hopefully leading the family in sound teaching. Likewise believing slaves were to be submissive to their believing masters, who also were intended to be teaching them rightly (:9). The force of "their *own*" suggests to me that there were competing claims for submission; and the context is of false teachers seeking submission to themselves. This I suggest is the first context for the 'submission' which is in view here and in :9.

That the preaching of the word of God may not be mocked- The pastoral letters continually reflect a concern that there was a watching world outside the churches, eager to slander and mock the Christian movement. And no reason must be given for this to be legitimate. He assumes that all believing men and women would be preachers of the word, yet if the wives were disorderly in their behaviour they would bring mockery upon the message preached. See on 1 Tim. 6:1.

2:6 *The younger men likewise exhort to be self-controlled*- See on 2:2 *self-controlled*. But the Greek is literally 'sober minded', and the "likewise..." suggests this may be a continuation of the criticism of the older women for being alcoholics (:3). The soberness in any case is a required characteristic of all believers because of the immense gravity of the issues with which we constantly deal with- eternal life and eternal death, living in the shadow of the Lord's crucifixion death for us. These things can only issue in a sober, serious mindset.

2:7 *In all things show yourself as an example of good works*- This suggests a conscious self exhibition, of the kind Paul makes in 1 Tim. 1:13-15. This is not posing or posturing; it is a realistic acceptance of the fact that actions speak louder than words. In a largely illiterate congregation, the real teaching of the Christian life was by example, and not by appeal to words on scrolls or ancient manuscripts which were inaccessible to the majority.

In your teaching show integrity- Lack of integrity in teaching is found in telling people what we perceive they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear from God.

Dignity- The spirit of first century Crete was what we have today- a love of entertainment, light hearted joking and enjoyment. This is not to feature in teaching. We are dealing with ultimately serious issues, of eternity. And if we have grasped them, our teaching will likewise be with an appropriate dignity and soberness. The continual appeals for soberness [NEV "self-control"] were obviously needed in Crete and they are in our age no less.

2:8 *Sound speech that cannot be condemned; so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us*- Again we have the impression of the Christian churches being surrounded by critics, who had infiltrated them, and who were ever seeking to slander the Christian movement. The context requires that there were within the churches such 'opponents', eagerly grabbing hold of the words and behaviour of Christian leaders in order to speak evil of the Way of God in Christ. We recall how the Jewish opposition "spake evil of the Way" in Acts 19:9. The opposition were going to do this no matter how careful Titus was. Therefore the "put to shame" may refer to how they would ultimately be silenced at the day of judgment, where it will supremely be manifest that the true Christian "cannot be condemned". Speaking of the sudden destruction of the wicked at the future judgment, David reflected: "So they shall make their own tongues to fall upon themselves" (Ps. 64:8). Unsound speech will be condemned, or perhaps [will lead to our] condemnation.

2:9 *Encourage servants to be submissive to their masters*- See on :5 *submissive*. The implication would be that their masters were also believers; see on :9.

And to be pleasing to them in all things- The other 8 occurrences of the Greek word are all about being well pleasing to the Lord. This confirms my suggestion that the masters were believers "in Christ", and they were to view their masters as the Lord; all service done to them was done to Christ. This was an incredibly liberating concept for those locked into slavery, just as it is to those locked in to the slavery of working on minimum wage or other forms of modern slavery. One of the most obvious issues faced by Christian slaves was that they were often treated as the sexual property of their masters or mistresses. Should they resist or not? We could read Paul's inspired

position here as assuming that what is in view is "all things" which are not contrary to the Lord's way. And he is only addressing that. But that would be an assumption. So we must at least allow the possibility that he is here allowing believers in difficult circumstances to follow one principle [obedience to masters] whilst breaking another.

Not argumentative- The slave owned nothing, not even his or her own body. There was a chronic search for meaning and self value, a desire to preserve identity, define boundaries and keep self-respect, and secret ownership over at least some things, however small. These needs reflected themselves in arguing back with masters over requests made, and in petty theft of objects (:10). All these psychological needs were met in Christ, and according to contemporary references to Christianity, it was very popular amongst the slave population for precisely these reasons. The Lord likewise knows exactly our needs, emotionally and psychologically. And if we will accept it, there is the ultimate answer in Christ.

2:10 *Not petty thieves*- See on :9 *Not argumentative.* The believers who were in slavery were told no to 'purloin', not to steal little bits of property and money in the hope that one day they would save enough to buy their freedom. And yet we in our century with our mortgages and pension schemes are in just the same desperate, petty, small minded position! The ultimate freedom has already been paid for and given us. In Christ we have "all things" that really matter. The Greek word is only used elsewhere in describing how Ananias and Saphira "kept back" part of the price (Acts 5:2,3). This implies they were guilty of similar 'petty theft'. They only kept back a small part of the price, lest their story lack credibility. But for this they were condemned; just as false weights and measures were so condemned under the Law, when the falsity would have been very small in order to appear credible. God is in the small things and watches our attitude intently; small things and attitues to wealth in petty matters are clear indicators of our real spiritual level. The word is used in the LXX for how Achan stole quietly from the spoil of Jericho (Josh. 7:1). So small scale dishonesty is being connected with the behaviour of the likes of Achan and Ananias which led to their immediate condemnation. Such small scale dishonesty by slaves was extremely common, and is often mentioned by contemporary writers; to the point that a servant was called a 'thief' in Latin slang. No matter how common a sin may be, this doesn't change how seriously God sees it. That's a simple take away from all this.

But showing integrity in everything; that they in all things may make attractive the doctrine of God our Saviour- The psychological breakout from the awful mental trap of slavery... this was a huge advertisement for the teaching of the Gospel, and of the practical success of God's plan of salvation in Christ.

2:11 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men*- "The grace of God… bringing salvation to all men…" is an allusion to the great commission to *preach* salvation to all men. But here, grace is said to do this. The conclusion seems unavoidable: grace and the preacher are inextricably linked. The experience of grace is the essential motive behind all witness, and the witness itself is about God's saving grace. That salvation is by grace enables us to look forward with eagerness rather than uncertainty to the second coming, and our lives are thereby changed. "The grace of God… teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts… looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:11-13). The word 'appearing' refers both to the appearing of grace now,

and the appearing of the Lord at the second coming (:13). The ultimate outworking of grace will be at the Lord's return, when we shall be raised from the dead and this mortal shall put on immortality. The basis for our confidence at His appearing is that it is grace which will appear.

The Greek for “all men” suggests that God’s grace that brings salvation to all has appeared; but we have to take that salvation to others and they must respond to it. "All men" and "us", we who have heard it, are paralleled (:12). Or we could conclude that potentially all men could be saved, but they will not be because the preachers haven’t taken the message of God’s grace to them and they haven’t all responded to it. See on 1:3. In the context, Paul has just addressed various categories- old men, old women, elderly female alcoholic Christians, young men and slaves. God's grace has appeared to "all men" in the sense of all kinds of people; and His desire to save teaches all people, of whatever type and station, the transformation of their lives which is appropriate in their situation.

2:12 *It trains us*- "Teaching us", although the word is elsewhere often translated 'to chasten'. Feeling and experiencing God's grace does chasten us, far more strongly than direct discipline in terms of punishment. Just as God’s grace is likened to a king in Romans, reigning over us, here it is likened to a teacher. From the time of our spiritual birth at baptism, we are trained up by grace. The contrast is with how Paul was trained up from a child in the things of the Law (Acts 22:3); Titus was up against converts who were prone to influence by legalistic Judaism, as noted on chapter 1. If we grasp the wonder of salvation by grace, that we are saved by status, counted as righteous right now, we can’t be passive to it; we have to respond by living a spiritual life. Knowing we are saved by grace can alone enable us to look forward eagerly to Christ’s return (:13). The initial aim of the letter is to guide Titus as to how to teach and who to appoint as teachers. But he is reminded that the most powerful teacher is the experience of grace. The Gentile converts on Crete were tempted by Judaistic legal obedience; but as noted on chapter 1, this wasn't achieving spiritual characteristics in them. It is grace which teaches them.

To renounce ungodliness and worldly passions- "Worldly" is only used elsewhere about the Jewish world (Heb. 9:1). The lusts or passions of the Jewish world were those provoked by living under law, believing that obedience to commandment and avoidance of sin is the way to salvation. Paul's autobiographical section in Romans 7 describes this in his own experience; obsession with law bred lust and sinful desire. Living under grace is the way to 'deny' those lusts; believing that we are saved by grace, already in the status of 'saved', totally independent of our obedience or disobedience. Our response to that will be so powerful that we reject or overcome the passions of the flesh.

And to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives in this present age- These are all internal, mental characteristics brought forth by God’s “grace”, or gift. That gift is the work of the Holy Spirit within our spirit.

2:13 *As we look for the blessed hope*- Grace and faith in the forgiveness of sins teaches us to look for the blessed hope and the appearing of Jesus. It is not the apparent fulfilment of Bible prophecy in geopolitical events which makes us look for the blessed Hope. Rather it is God's grace and the certainty of salvation which makes us look for it the more eagerly. The same word is used in Jude 21, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life". It is confidence in this which allows us to be as men who wait in constant expectation of our Lord's return (s.w. Lk. 12:36

"men that wait for their Lord"). We look not simply for His coming, but for the Hope of salvation. The Greek *elpis* doesn't mean a 'hope for the best' kind of hope but rather refers to a solid certainty. If we aren't sure of salvation at His return, we can hardly look forward to it. A firm grasp of salvation- definite salvation- by a real grace alone means we can look to that day with confidence and expectation. See on Col. 1:5. The 'blessed' hope is literally 'the happy hope'; and we "look for" this, or as the Greek suggests, we admit it, we accept it. God's grace therefore gives us the joy of certain salvation and joyful anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus. The good news of the Gospel really is of joy and peace and security. But too often the only real message seems to be 'Learn to read the Bible effectively, understood a package of true doctrines, then you will be responsible to judgment, and hopefully, you may be accepted for eternity'. This is a non-Gospel. It is hardly good news, which brings joy and peace along with it.

The manifesting of the glory of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ- The same Greek word used in :11 for 'the appearing' of God's grace. The point is that when grace appeared in our lives, we were assured of salvation at the Lord's return- in the sense that we should be able to say that if the Lord comes now, or we die now, then we shall surely be saved. If God's glory is to be eternally revealed, we are to live that same glory within our own minds now; in this sense we "have eternal life", the kind of life we shall eternally live begins now.

2:14 *Who gave himself for us*- The phrase 'to give self for' is used several times in the NT; it doesn't necessarily have to refer to the crucifixion, although that is surely largely in view. The Lord's 'giving of Himself' resulted in purification and redemption, according to this verse. But those things are elsewhere predicated upon the Lord's blood, shed on the cross.

That he might redeem us from all iniquity- "Redeem" or 'ransom' suggests that we are bought out of slavery to our master- "iniquity". As Romans 6 puts it, we are no longer slaves of sin once we accept the Lord's death in baptism. We are totally forgiven of all sin once "in Christ"; by grace and not by our works. The Lord's death didn't simply redeem us from all kinds of sin because we are forgiven those sins; but rather, because the grace shown us results in us quitting sin.

And purify to himself a people for his own possession- There is another aspect attaching to the fact that the Lord obtained our freedom from our sins. Because we are forgiven, not because of our works of repentance but simply by grace are placed in a status of 'saved', we cannot be passive. We respond to this by allowing ourselves to be 'purified' by His Spirit, and zealously responding in good works. This purification, whereby He possesses / dwells within us, is by the Spirit.And thus we become His very own personal possession. We are His, and He thereby abides in us. The argument is so similar to that in Romans. "Purify" translates a Greek word often used about ritual, legal purification. The reference is to the fact that Jewish false teachers had been pressurizing these Gentile converts with their various theories of purification (1:15). The Lord is now at work to purify *us*, rather than us having to perform rituals to purify ourselves. We are to respond to His actions by purifying ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). But the Biblical emphasis is upon *His* cleansing / purifying action, which we respond to. The gift of the Spirit is described as God purifying our hearts in response to our having believed the Gospel (Acts 15:9). The Holy Spirit is a holy mind / disposition, a working within us, rather than any external ability to perform miracles. The sacrifice of Christ means that our conscience, our mind, is "purged from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). Believing we are totally redeemed from sin means that we wish to respond in

good works of service. And we are empowered to do so by the conscience being purified. The language of Heb. 9:14 is very similar to what we have here in Titus. There are many parallels between Titus and the letters to Timothy; in them we read of the pure / purified heart and conscience of the believer (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; 2:22). This purifying of the heart is a reference to the Lord's work through His spirit, in the hearts of all those who have accepted His redemption of them by grace. All this is in pointed contrast to the way the Jewish false teachers in Crete were offering sinful Gentiles a conscience about sin which was defiled rather than purified (1:15,16).

Zealous of good works- As noted above, these good works arise from believing that we have been redeemed from sin by grace and not works. The wonder of that is so great that we can no way be passive to it. The Greek for "zealous" is usually used about zeal for the Mosaic law, which was an attraction for the group on Crete. But the "good works" in view are not works of obedience to legal statutes, but the good works planned by God from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10). Everything was set up for us; to encounter God's grace in the cross, and His forgiveness of us for our specific sins; and therefore our response to Him will be of a uniquely personal nature, doing specific, unique good works which were prepared for us to do. And we are never better than when living in response to the cross in the way intended.

2:15 *These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority*- The authority was the Spirit-guided word of Paul in the letter to Titus. The "things" refer to the wonderful message of salvation by grace, and transformation in response to it. These things were what should be taught from the platform, and not Judaistic legalism. And they were to be a comfort to the hearers [the idea of 'exhort'].

Let no one despise your teaching- See on 1 Tim. 4:12 *Let no man despise your youth*. People did despise the teaching; but we allow others to despise us. It is our choice whether we allow them to despise us. The Judaists would have mocked the message of salvation from sin by grace; they were arguing for purification by ritualistic obedience rather than by the Lord's work in our hearts by the Spirit. But Titus was to be unashamed of the message.

TITUS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities- to be obedient, to be eagerly ready to do every good work*- These terms could refer to authority figures within the church i.e. elders. But they more naturally refer to local magistrates etc. The picture presented of the Cretan congregations is very negative. There were problems with alcoholism, slander, aggression, laziness, in trouble with the law and not obeying court judgments. They were keen to obey Mosaic Law, but not the civil law around them. They needed to be exhorted not to be "disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (:3). And yet never is there any talk about restricting the breaking of bread to these folks or casting them out of the church. Rather the focus is on having the right teaching mechanisms to try to improve these folks.

"Every good work" continues the thought from Tit. 2:14, where in response to the Lord's death for us, we are to be zealous for good works. The Greek for "zealous" is usually used about zeal for the Mosaic law, which was an attraction for the group on Crete. But the "good works" in view are not works of obedience to legal statutes, but the good works planned by God from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10). Everything was set up for us; to encounter God's grace in the cross, and His forgiveness of us for our specific sins; and therefore our response to Him will be of a

uniquely personal nature, doing specific, unique good works which were prepared for us to do. And we are never better than when living in response to the cross in the way intended. This is why this same chapter will go on to encourage us to "devote ourselves... to good works" (:8,14).

"Eagerly ready" means 'prepared'. A related word is used in Eph. 2:10. Good works were prepared for us to do from the beginning. And we in our turn are to be eagerly ready to do them. "Beforehand prepared" suggests we were prepared for the performing of our good works from a specific beginning point. And that surely was at 'the beginning'. Our entire genetic history, the nature of our early childhood experiences and surrounding family, was prepared so that we would be born with the wiring required to do the works intended. To turn away from those works, through disinterest, laziness, wilful lack of perception... is to waste so much. We on our side must be prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21); "be ready [s.w. prepared] unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1). We are to be on the look out, prepared, for those good works . We were "beforehand prepared to glory" (Rom. 2:10, the only other usage of the Greek word). We were intended for salvation, the Kingdom and our place at the Messianic wedding banquet were "prepared" (a related word; Mt. 22:4; 25:34). But not all shall be saved, because they have wasted God's intention and not responded to it. We note the word "intention" in Eph. 2:7. By sitting at the Lord's table now we show our willingness to go along with His intention that we shall sit there eternally. We note the usage of the same word, repeatedly, about how the last supper [breaking of bread] was "prepared" ("Where will you have us *prepare* for you the Passover to eat?... he will show you a large upper room *prepared* and ready; there *prepare* it for us. And the disciples went into the city and found as he had said to them. And they *prepared* the Passover", Mk. 14:12,15,16). The first breaking of bread was prepared for them ahead of time [just as our good works were "beforehand prepared"], although they had to prepare it. This all speaks of how our place at the final Messianic banquet is prepared for us, but we must accept the invitiation; and we show that by sitting at the banquet now.

3:2 *To speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, but to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men*- One theme of Titus is that God's amazing grace and the certainty of salvation should be perceived so strongly by us that we will not argue about words and have strife with others (:9,10; 2:12). Those who trigger divisions amongst brethren over strife about words and meanings are reflecting their own insecurity concerning their personal salvation by grace alone. The Greek is literally 'not quarrelling', using the same word as we will meet in 3:9 for "quarrels about the law". As observed on chapter 1, the Cretan converts were generally worldly and still very influenced by alcohol and the laid back, lazy life. But they were tempted to get involved with endless strivings about Jewish legal interpretation... And that makes psychological sense. They thought their uncommitted Christian life could be made right by a few acts of legalistic obedience, and getting involved in argument about abstract matters of interpretation. And the same has been seen so often in conservative Protestant circles.

Titus was to teach the Cretan brethren that because they had been washed and regenerated in baptism, therefore they were not to speak evil of others, because it was *in the past* that they used to be like that (Tit. 3:2-6). But they still *were* acting like that, even after baptism! They are called upon to remember the implications of their baptism, and live out the status they thus attained before God.

3:3 *For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another*- Paul says that this catena of poor behaviour was *him* before his conversion. Yet he was legally obedient to the Law. But it didn't elicit a spiritual person within him. So he holds up his own conversion as an example to those on Crete who were tempted to turn to the Law as a means of spirituality. Legalistic obedience just would not elicit spirituality, and Paul was the parade example of that. He wished them all to follow his pattern (:4), just as he wrote to Timothy of his being a Christ-appointed model of conversion (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

3:4 *But when there appeared the kindness of God our Saviour*- Paul refers to the Lord's appearance to him on the Damascus road, and sees this as programmatic for each believer. "God our Saviour" reflects how God's kindness was manifest through the Lord Jesus, Yahoshua, 'Yah's salvation'. Eph. 2:7 clarifies that the path of expression of God's kindness is through the Lord Jesus: "His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus". His kindness is "in Christ Jesus". And we cannot be passive to that, for we are often exhorted to show "kindness" (s.w.)- in response to His kindness towards us in Jesus. The "kindness" of God is "His love toward man" which was shown on the cross (Jn. 3:16). His kindness is therefore "in Christ" and more specifically in the death of Christ. We are therefore to be "kind" to each other because God forgave us- in the cross (Eph. 4:32 s.w.). The goodness [s.w. "kindness"] of God [displayed above all through the cross] leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), which is why we naturally examine ourselves at the breaking of bread or whenever we engage with the cross.

And His love toward man- See on :3 *For we also...* . God's love towards man was specifically manifest, or 'appeared', in the cross. This is the continual reference of the love of God or Jesus. God so loved the world, He loved the world in this way, that He gave His Son, as the serpent lifted up on the pole in the wilderness. The Lord appeared / was made manifest to take away our sins- which was achieved on the cross.

3:5 *Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us*- This is a warning against the tendency towards Judaism in the Cretan congregations which we noted in chapter 1. The idea was that by doing works, there was a chance of future salvation. Paul's point is that we have been saved, we are in the 'saved' status, in that every believer should be able to say that if the Lord returns now, or we die now, then by grace we shall surely be saved. Hence the significance of the past tense: "He saved us". God forgives men on the basis of their *faith* in the blood of Christ, and association with it by baptism; "*not* by works of righteousness, which we have done" (Tit. 3:4-8). God's basis of salvation is *not* works. We must be careful not to insist on 'forsaking' sins in physical terms to the extent that we too preach justification by works. Just one sin deserves death. No amount of forsaking that sin can change that sentence. God's way of escape is for us to be in Christ, so that He looks upon us *as if* we are Christ, imputing Christ's perfect character to us. Therefore forsaking sin is not in itself the basis of salvation; rather is it faith in Christ. Of course, true faith shows itself in works. But none of us has the degree of faith which we ought to have, and therefore none of us does the amount or type of works which we should. To insist that someone shows their faith by specific works, e.g. certain changes in their marital status, is to insist that there is a direct, definable relationship between faith and the precise type of works which that faith leads to. Yet we are not

so strict with ourselves. The faith and works of each of us are far from complete. Exactly because we are not saved by works but by God's mercy, *therefore* Paul wished to "affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:5,8). In this sense, as Paul says in Romans, grace reigns as a King. It has power over every department of human life and thinking.

The grace of God guarantees our salvation. Yet we find it so hard to believe- that I, with all my doubts and fears, will really be there. Israel were warned that they were being given the land (cp. salvation) "not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart... for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Dt. 9:5,6). These words are picked up in Tit. 3:5 and applied to the new Israel: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit"- by His grace alone.
The spiritual life renews (Tit. 3:5), giving us that new*ness* of life, that ongoing baptism and resurrection experience, which Rom. 6:4 promises. This way of life, as it develops, creates its own momentum for further change.

Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit- "Washing" is literally 'the laver', suggesting that through baptism we come closer into the sanctuary to offer sacrifice. It is a clear reference to how baptism saves us; not, as Peter says, by the simple ritual in itself, but because it unleashes within us the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. When Paul says that after baptism, we walk in "newness of life", he has the same thought in view (Rom. 6:4). But here Paul explains the mechanism of how that works. The making new, the regeneration, is through the Holy Spirit. The only other usage of "renewing" is in Rom. 12:2, where we read of our being "transformed by the renewing of your mind". The idea is that this renewing is being done to us; it is not an appeal to renew our own minds by our own steel willed efforts, but rather to allow the renewing process to operate. Our own steel will isn't enough to renew our minds; we are to allow the process enabled at baptism, the laver of regeneration, to have its work in us. This renewing is an ongoing, daily process ("the inward man is renewed day by day", 2 Cor. 4:16); the renewing is unto the knowledge of the image of Christ (Col. 3:10 Gk.). The purpose is to actually create the mind of Christ in us, to make us after His image; for this is what we are counted as being, and Christ through the work of the Spirit within our spirit / mind is seeking to make us like Him in reality. Romans 8 expounds this in more detail. The "regeneration", or re-birthing, spoken of here has obvious connection with Jn. 3:3-5, which speaks of water baptism giving rise to a spiritual rebirth; and here Paul is filling out the details. This renewing by the Spirit comes about "through Jesus Christ" (:6), perhaps meaning 'on account of our baptism into Jesus Christ'.

Baptism is a washing away of sins (cf. Acts 22:16). The descriptions of the believers as being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ therefore refers to their doing this by means of baptism (Rev. 1:5; 7:14; Tit. 3:5 [NIV] speak of this as "the washing of rebirth", referring to our being "born of water" at baptism [Jn. 3:5]). "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5) connects with Christ washing the church with the water of the word (Eph. 5:26). Baptism is therefore done by Him, in a sense; His washing of us then speaks of His ongoing psychological renewal of us afterwards.

3:6 *Which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour*- This term is used for the shedding of the Lord's blood (Mt. 26:28 etc.) as well as for the outpouring of the Spirit. As noted on :4, the Lord's death and what it achieved is never

far away from Paul's inspired thought. It is the Lord's death which compels us forward, from *behind* as it were, more powerfully than ever dangling *in front of us* the carrot of future salvation in the Kingdom. The Spirit was given as a result of the Lord's death (Jn. 7:39; symbolized by the Lord's breathing His last breath in the direction of His people, and water gushing from His smitten side). It's not only that His sacrifice enabled our salvation, and that salvation in practical terms involves our transformation by the Spirit in this life. He there on the cross is to be the inspiration for a truly spiritual, Spirit filled life. The Spirit was poured out on Pentecost (Acts 2:17,18,33); but that gift was the purifying of our hearts (Acts 15:9; see on 2:14). The Holy Spirit gift results in the love of God being shed into our hearts / minds (Rom. 5:5). We must pause to consider how the converts on Crete were a rough lot, and apparently were still the same. Paul is saying that the Spirit has been poured out richly into their minds. Why then were they not transformed? Because the Spirit does not force spirituality; we are enabled to be spiritual, we have now this huge potential for transformation. And here we are all being urged to make far fuller use of it.

3:7 *This was so that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*- The gift of the transforming Spirit was so that we might receive eternal life. Our salvation involves change now; that is why when the Lord's death enabled our salvation, the Spirit was given and made available for all who would believe. So being *made* heirs speaks of the Spirit *making* us appropriate to be heirs- by grace, for of our own strength we shall never conform our minds and lives as is appropriate. We are "made heirs" by baptism into the Lord Jesus, the seed of Abraham who is the singular "heir"; but the whole process doesn't end there. We are "made heirs", made in practice who we are by status, by the ongoing operation of the Spirit after our baptisms. Hence the NT emphasis that it is baptism which results in the gift of the Spirit. It is therefore too simplistic to argue that baptism alone makes us heirs (on the basis of Gal. 3:27-29). Baptism effects this only in that it symbolizes and demonstrates our faith in God's work, by grace through the Spirit, which will 'make us heirs'. By status, we are made heirs of the Kingdom by baptism into the Lord Jesus, Abraham's seed. But we must allow the Spirit to work in us to make us who we are by status- people with the actual faith of Abraham. The wonder of certainly having the Hope, the certainty of eternity, lays the basis for the subsequent warnings against wasting time with fruitless questions; and the simple advice to avoid heretics, literally 'schismatics', those who force a choice (Gk.) and thereby divide us. If we are truly rejoicing in the Hope, we will keep away from anything which distracts from this- even if those things are apparently connected to 'religion'. Ignore the divisive and their fruitless issues, in the light of the wonder of certain salvation. Those who do waste their times on those people and issues are in fact reflecting their own insecurity about their eprsonal salvation. For if you have the certain Hope, your sphere of thought and action will simply be different.

The connection is clearly with Heb. 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned concerning things not seen as yet, moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith". The ideas are the same as here- "being justified by His grace ['given righteousness by grace through faith'], we might be made heirs [s.w. 'became heir'] according to the hope of eternal life". Noah was 'made an heir' of imputed righteousness through building and entering the ark, which Peter says represents baptism.

3:8 *This teaching is trustworthy*- AV “A faithful saying”, one of the collection of "faithful sayings" Paul often refers to, which perhaps formed a corpus of pastoral material for the illiterate church to commit to memory, and meditate upon.

And I want you to insist on these things- The teaching about the Spirit in the preceding verses is not just a nice theological extra. This is utterly fundamental to Christian life in practice; the 'insistence' was because of the desire to justify themselves by legalistic obedience to Jewish laws. We too must insist on the ministry of the Spirit and acceptance thereof. This is not just a nice idea, to be casually meddled with on the level of exposition or interpretation. This is the essence of Spiritual life and is the path towards our salvation. No wonder it was part of a "faithful saying" to be firmly committed to memory and meditated upon.

So that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works- The whole message of salvation by grace and not works is what actually provokes good works in practice; in thankful response to the salvation *without* works which we have received. The wonder of it is such that none who believe it can be passive to it. Paul told Titus to affirm the faithful sayings “confidently, *to the end* that they which have believed… may maintain good works” (Tit. 3:8 RV). The congregations’ spirituality was related to the confidence of their pastor’s presentation. Those “good works”, as ours, have been “afore prepared” in the Father’s plan for us to perform (Eph. 2:10); but we have to be inspired to live up to the potential which He has prepared for us. Num. 14:20 records how the Father forgave Israel according to Moses’ word. And in just as real a sense, He has placed the reconciliation of this world in the hands of our ministry. The belief that we will be saved is the only real anchor in life’s uncertain storm. “When the kindness of God our saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us… that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life… and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works” (Tit. 3:4-8). The confident, regular reassurance of other believers was to be part of the ecclesial diet with which the Cretan brethren and sisters were constantly fed. And this assurance was to be the foundation of ecclesial growth as members individually developed the mind of Christ.

These things are excellent and profitable for people- The key issue in teaching is being helpful to others; and not simply talking about what we want to talk about.

3:9 *But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law*- The controversies and genealogies were therefore related to Jewish arguments. Compared to the wonder of transformation by the Spirit spoken of in the preceding verses, arguments about interpretation are to be seen as distractions which are to be avoided. The 'avoiding' in practice meant not allowing this kind of thing to be taught in the early churches.

For they are unprofitable and worthless- Compared to the teaching about the Spirit, leading to good works; which are "profitable" and "excellent" (:8).

3:10 *A divisive person, after a first and second warning, reject*- The context is of divisions caused by teaching about the Jewish law, and any provocation of argument about interpretation which distracted from the path of Spirituality outlined in :5-7. The rejection was not from the church but from the pool of teachers. A teacher was

not to provoke endless questions, doubts and arguments about interpretation; but to positively inculcate spirituality and following of the Spirit.

3:11 *Knowing that such a one is perverted and sins*- "Perverted" is better "subverted"; taken over and used as an agent of the Jewish program of infiltrating and subverting the early churches, by distracting them from the essence of Christianity by arguments about interpretations of Jewish law.

Being self-condemned- If we examine / judge / condemn ourselves now in our self-examination, God will not have to do this to us at the day of judgment. If we cast away our own bodies now, the Lord will not need to cast us away in rejection (Mt. 5:30). There is a powerful logic here. If we pronounce ourselves uncondemned, we condemn ourselves (Tit. 3:11); if we condemn ourselves now, we will be uncondemned ultimately. See on 1 Cor. 11:29.

3:12 *When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, give diligence to come to me at Nicopolis, for there I have decided to winter*- Paul wanted the personal presence of Titus, but he was sending others to replace him in Crete during his absence. And when the replacements arrived, then Titus was to leave. We recall Paul's later begging for Timothy to personally come to him. Paul needed his brethren, very deeply. He was no self-motivated maverick.

3:13 *Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing*- A Jewish lawyer who had converted to Christ? Perhaps such a person was needed to address the Judaistic influence on Crete. But maybe he was indeed a secular lawyer who had been converted.

3:14 *Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, to help those in urgent need, and not to be unfruitful*- The call for good works is frequent here and in the letters to Timothy; but the works, as explained, were to flow from the experience of grace, and not as acts of isolated obedience which it was hoped might give a better chance of salvation.

3:15 *All that are with me greet you. Greet those that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all*- There was a difference between those who loved Paul, and the "all". Yet for all of them, including those who didn't accept Paul's authority, he wished the experience of God's gift / grace of the Spirit. If some do not accept us personally, we are still to follow Paul's example and treat them as brethren and wish them God's grace.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: PHILEMON

PHILEMON

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

PHILEMON CHAPTER 1

:1 *Paul, a prisoner of Christ*- Paul clearly resented his imprisonment, but he sees his captors as representing Christ; just as he asks slaves to consider their masters as Christ and live 'as unto Him' through secular experience. And Paul was no hypocrite; he saw his imprisonment as being served as unto Christ.

And Timothy our brother- So Timothy was with Paul in Rome, possibly in prison with him. At the end of 2 Timothy, Paul begs Timothy to come to him, apparently before he dies. It could be argued that Paul was in fact released; for perhaps Timothy came to him, and now he writes to Philemon as if he expects to shortly be released and would come and visit him and settle any financial loss incurred by Onesimus (:19,22). Yet Paul does write in 2 Tim. 4 as if is at the end of his life, and the situation in prison has radically changed from the period at the end of Acts when he lived in his own rented accommodation

within the prison. So perhaps during that period, Timothy came to him; and then on the second imprisonment, he asked for Timothy to come again to Rome and be with him. Seeing Paul had left Timothy with the difficult charge of running the rather wild church at Ephesus, this is itself a picture of how Paul took much encouragement from Timothy, a brother far weaker than himself. And this sets us an important principle.

To Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker - Paul shows an increasing fondness for the *syn* prefix in his letters, if we arrange them chronologically. He came to perceive, in his spiritual maturity, the need for our brethren, even if we disagree with them and have to rebuke their weaknesses.

:2 *And to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house*- Why mention these two? Probably Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus his son. Or maybe they were elders in the house church which Philemon ran. "Fellow soldier" might reflect how Paul, writing surrounded by soldiers guarding him, considered *himself* to be the soldier of Jesus. We note Paul addresses his personal letter to Philemon to the whole household and church. He certainly comes over as rather manipulative in how he deals with this difficult issue. I'd have been inclined to just leave Onesimus as my helper in Rome and not stir up the hornet's nest of interpersonal issues. But Paul saw unity and reconciliation, and possibly Philemon's own salvation over this matter, as so important that he wanted Onesimus to return and reconcile with Philemon. We note that this story has an open ending- we don't know if Philemon did as asked, or what happened. This is intentional. So that we in turn search our hearts as to what our response would have been, and what it is in essence today as we encounter such situations.

:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- This was no mere formal greeting. Onesimus had run away from Philemon for a reason; and Onesimus feared that Philemon would show him no grace on his return. These greetings and conclusions of Paul in his letters were a real prayerful wish for grace and peace to be theirs. He wanted Philemon to know God's grace, and to have the peace which came from it. Fretting about the evil of his runaway slave and the financial loss caused (:18,19) was not the way of peace.

:4 *I thank my God always, making mention of you always in my prayers*- This is clearly alluding to the Is. 62:6,7 passage, about always making mention of Jerusalem in prayer. But for Paul, the true city of God was now the scattered group of Christian believers around the Roman empire of the first century. Jewish minds would’ve picked up Paul’s purposeful allusion to the ‘always’ prayers for Jerusalem; and would’ve marvelled that he saw the great holy city as now the bunch of guys whom he’d baptized around the place, and that instead of a city, it was those very real men and women who filled his thoughts, prayers and yearnings. Paul saw himself indeed as the watchman upon Zion’s walls- but watching over the people of God, not a physical city.

:5 *Hearing of the love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints*- Because Philemon believes the Lord Jesus, he must believe what His brethren say. And so it is with us. In some parts of our community there is constant doubt of our brethren and suspicions as to their motives and words; and yet this, as with *all* attitudes we adopt to our brethren, is the mind we are showing toward the Lord Jesus Himself. See on Jn. 8:42. Paul would have heard about all this faith and love towards all believers from Onesimus. But Onesimus feared that in his case, Philemon would not show him much love. And presumably there was a reason why Onesimus ran away from Philemon- probably connected with abuse of him. This is a lovely picture, of a man recognizing that another brother who treats him badly does in fact have many good points, and treats others differently to how the brother treats him. And Paul thanked God for the good points in Philemon, even though he considered him deficient in grace (see on :3). Dealing with believers who lack grace is a real challenge; and Paul's positive approach to Philemon, thanking God for his good points, is a great example to us.

:6 *I pray that our fellowshipping of your faith may result in our coming to acknowledge every good thing which is in you in Christ*- The crucial importance of personal, Christ-like example empowering our witness is brought out here in the AV: "The communication [sharing] of thy faith may become effectual [Gk. 'energized'] by the acknowledgment [i.e. recognition, by others] of every good thing which is in you in Christ". There's a lot compacted into these words, strung together as they are in a rather awkward sentence. Our sharing of the faith is energized, it takes on power and compulsion as a witness, when others can acknowledge that we are "in Christ" because they see His characteristics reflected in us. This is why effective witness can only be made by those "in Christ", those who show His personality written in theirs. This will 'energize' their sharing of the facts of the Gospel with others. As I have pointed out at such length in *The Power Of Basics*, each doctrine of the Gospel is designed to elicit practical changes in human life. Where those changes are apparent, the preaching of a doctrinal Gospel becomes empowered and energized. Proffering mere doctrinal propositions to this world and nothing else, will never be successful. It will lack power, energy and the compulsion required for conversion.

What was good in Philemon was counted to him because he was "in Christ". We must perceive that others too are counted as righteous because they are in Christ, and we will likewise seek to count them as having imputed righteousness even as we feel and know God has so counted us. For frankly, Philemon was lacking in grace, and the good things about him are being almost exaggerated- because he is being seen as "in Christ". The power to share our faith ["fellowshipping of your faith"] is rooted in realizing that we have been counted righteous through our being in Christ. As God reckons us righteous, so we must reckon each other (Rom. 3:28; 4:3,5,24 RV). This is an immense challenge,

but it comes directly from the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Our being justified / counted righteous by God's grace is the very basis and essence of our salvation. And yet, as ever, we can't be passive to this wonder. We too are to seek to count others as righteous, seeing them for who they are as 'in Christ'. Every time we are sinned against, or perceive the weakness and spiritual incompletion in our brother or sister who is in Christ... we have a wonderful opportunity to count them as righteous, in the same way as we are counted righteous through being in Christ. The Hebrew word *tsadaq*, to count righteous, to justify, is used about our justification of others in Dan. 12:3- those who count many as righteous will shine as the stars for ever [AV "turn many to righteousness" rather misleadingly gives the idea of converting others by preaching, but that's not the idea of the Hebrew].

:7 *Already I had much joy and comfort in your love*- Paul gives an excellent pattern to us in how he dealt with Philemon, whom, it would appear, had not treated neither Paul nor Onesimus in a Christ-like way. Paul genuinely rejoices in the good deeds of Philemon in other contexts: “We have great joy... in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother”. But he goes on to ask Philemon to do this to him: “Brother, let me have joy of you... refresh my heart” (Philemon 7,20). The two verses are clearly linked to each other- the words “joy”, “brother”, “refresh”, “bowels” etc. recur. Paul appears to be saying: ‘I fully recognize, brother, that you’ve done many good things, given other brethren joy, refreshed their hearts. But, you’ve not done that to your slave, brother Onesimus, neither to me. But I acknowledge the good, Christ-like things in you that I see, in other contexts (:6). But please, expand that love to include me; please, treat me in the same good way you’ve treated other brethren; treat me too as a brother in Christ’. Now this sets a wonderful example to us. To acknowledge some good things even in our bitterest enemy in the ecclesia. Because they are in Christ. To realize that how they are treating us is not actually how they treat all brethren. And to plead with them as does Paul, “for love’s sake”, to treat us in the graceful way they treat their other brethren.

Because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you- See on :20 *Refresh my heart*.

:8 *Thus although I have all boldness in Christ to command you to do what is required*- Because Philemon was "in Christ" he had to act as Christ; he actually *had to* receive his slave back as a brother and not punish him as many slave owners would. This was a command, an imperative arising from being "in Christ". Paul could be bold about this- without doubt, Philemon should accept Onesimus back. Paul likewise opens his heart to the Corinthians, when he asks them if they want him to come to them with a rod, or with the spirit of meekness (1 Cor. 4:21). Paul is remarkably open hearted in his letters. He shares openly his internal questioning- whether to take a tough line, or to beg and implore in gentleness. Both would have been legitimate. And the "rod" or 'I command

you, Philemon' would have been the approach he as a former legalist would have been more comfortable with. But he had now learned of Christ... to be different, and to take the gentler and more sensitive path.

:9 *Yet I prefer to appeal to you for love's sake- I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus*- It could be argued that this is a human way of appeal, and Paul would have been better sticking to spiritual principle rather than emotional appeal. But he says that he does at times put things "in human terms" (Rom. 6:19; Gal. 3:15); he shows a remarkable humanity and sensitivity to the human situations of the folks and situations he addresses.

:10 *I appeal to you for my child Onesimus*- The fact that the Lord intercedes for us means that we should be open to others interceding with *us* on behalf of another. Paul explains what I mean. In one of his countless allusions to the Gospels, he speaks of how he 'beseeches' or 'appeals' Philemon to be generous and gracious to his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul uses the word *parakleo*- well known for its repeated use in the Gospels to describe how the Lord Jesus is our *parakletos*, our comforter, interceder, beseecher of the Father for us. Surely he means us to get the connection. As the Lord Jesus beseeches / intercedes the Father for us, Philemon included, so we, and Philemon, should be open to others beseeching *us*- and respond with a like grace and lavish response. And there's another allusion to the Gospels in the very next verse of the letter to Philemon.

Whose father I became in my imprisonment- Paul had presumably converted or baptized Onesimus in prison. And yet he uses the same language of 'my child' regarding Timothy, whom he did not baptize, but spiritually influenced to a formative extent. Perhaps Onesimus had been baptized and was a brother in Philemon's house church. But he had run away and ended up either in Rome, or in prison there. And Paul's outreach even in chains had reached this runaway slave, just as it reached the Praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13). Those who feel shut in and unable to do much preaching can take great encouragement from how Paul managed to witness.

:11- see on Col. 1:6.

He was once unprofitable to you- The unprofitable servant of Mt. 25:30 is all of us, the Lord taught. And so when Paul appeals to Philemon to be gracious to his unprofitable servant Onesimus (Philemon 11), he's alluding back to that parable. And making the point that Philemon is himself an unprofitable servant, graciously received by his Lord; and so he should be likewise gracious to *his* unprofitable servant.

But now is profitable to you and to me- By receiving Onesimus with grace, there would be "benefit" and "profit" for Philemon (Philemon 11,14 Gk.). Humanly speaking, there was only loss. For Onesimus had defrauded Philemon (Philemon 18 Gk.), and Paul was implying that Onesimus send him back to Rome to help him, with Philemon's

‘agreement’ [AV “mind”] (Philemon 13,14 GK.). Losing a slave was a material, financial loss. But by showing grace in this case, the material loss would become a spiritual profit for Philemon in the last day.

:12 *He is as my very heart*- Paul's spirit or heart was in Onesimus; they thought the same way. In this sense the spirit of Christ was in Noah and as it were preached to people in 1 Pet. 3:18, although Christ Himself was not there in Noah's time; the spirit of Christ was in the prophets although He didn't exist then (1 Pet. 1:11); Paul's spirit was present at the church gatherings in Corinth even though he was absent (1 Cor. 5:4). So in Onesimus, insofar as he had the spirit of Christ and Paul did too, Paul's spirit / mind / presence was standing before Philemon. This is "the unity of the Spirit".

And it is he whom I have sent back to you- That might seem obvious, but the idea is 'My very heart is in his very own person'.

:13 *I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel*- If Onesimus returned to Rome and served Paul there, he would be ministering to Paul as if Philemon was doing this- “on your behalf". So as Paul was represented by Onesimus (:12,17), so likewise Onesimus would represent Philemon. This is the John 17-style unity which there is in Christ. It would seem that if Onesimus could be so useful to Paul in Rome, he was not therefore in prison; therefore Paul's outreach from within prison had reached to a runaway slave outside prison. And of course Onesimus was free to travel back from Rome to Philemon. Maybe Paul's teaching about grace in the letter to the church at Rome had been heard by Onesimus, and so he had come to ask Paul about working it all out in practice.

We learn more about Onesimus from Col. 4:9: "Tychicus... Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you, they shall make known to you all things that are done here". Paul's whole game plan appears to have worked out. Onesimus was from Colosse, "one of you" [as Philemon presumably also was], who was later used by Paul as one of the "messengers of the churches", taking news around the Roman world, to and from Paul in Rome. Paul stresses that Onesimus is a faithful brother and "one of you", whether they liked it or not- one with them in the Lord's body and service.

:14 *But I preferred to do nothing without your consent, so that your goodness*- Gk. 'your profit'. See on :12 *But now is profitable*. The picture we get of Philemon is that he was an active and good brother in many ways. He had an ecclesia that met in his house, probably, by implication, comprised of his own family / “house” whom he had converted. The “beloved Aphia” refers to a female [*agapete*]- probably his wife. He was well known for a truly generous spirit to the brethren, and for a deep faith (:5-7). And yet he his whole standing with the Lord, Paul implies, was going to be revealed, and stood

now under question, over the issue of his attitude to his runaway slave who had now accepted Christ. If he wouldn't accept him, then all this good upright living was in vain. Paul was giving him a test. He could've just kept Onesimus with him in Rome. But he sent him all the way back home to Philemon, to get his 'agreement' (Philemon 14, AV "mind") that Philemon accepts Onesimus as a brother, and sends him back to Rome to serve Paul. He could've "retained" Onesimus; but instead, he seeks a "benefit" [spiritually] for Philemon by bringing the issue to a pointed head (:13,14). And so it can be with us, that providence brings one specific case or person into our lives to test whether or not we have really accepted grace in the very core of our hearts. And on this, all else ultimately depends. And these things 'God works oftentimes with man'. We find ourselves living out the situations of both Onesimus and Philemon. The crucial challenge of grace comes to us time and again in ecclesial life, and we too present it to others. Upon our response to it, our salvation-by-grace depends.

Might not be by compulsion but of your own free will- It is quite possible to do good works because we are somehow forced to. The collection bag comes around, others put into it, and all eyes are on us when it's our turn. And so we too donate. But Paul elsewhere simply teaches that we must "let love be sincere". There can be an appearance of love without love. We can pray as Israel did but with no real connection with God; or like Elijah we can 'pray in our prayer'. Paul thought of ways to make Philemon bear spiritual fruit; so he leaves the choice over to his free will. Likewise he says that he had asked for and taken support from the believers in Philippi "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17). We likewise should sensitively consider our brethren and try to set up situations whereby they will produce spiritual fruit which will be credited to them. This is the way of spiritual maturity. We must not just do what *we* wish in the Lord's service, but think of what others need to do, for their own fruitfulness. For we seek the Lord's glory and for Him to be pleasured by them as well as by ourselves. Too often we can embark on a project for the Lord because it is what *we* want to do. But the bigger picture of the Lord's glorification must be ever in view.

:15 *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever-* But the idea was that Onesimus would return to Philemon and then depart back to Rome and serve Paul there. So the "forever" sounds like a reference to the life eternal together in the Kingdom. The whole situation, of Onesimus apparently committing fraud, running away, probably from abuse by Philemon; his meeting with Paul in Rome and conversion, or at least, deeper conversion; Paul's desire to send him back to Philemon... all this was so that they might live eternally together forever. *Aionos*, "forever", is usually used of the life eternal and not for the remainder of this life. Perhaps Philemon's eternity depended upon his forgiveness of and reconciliation with Onesimus. Paul speaks of how Philemon would "receive" Onesimus "for ever"- and yet he is implying Onesimus should be sent back to minister to him in Rome. Surely what

Paul has in mind is that if someone is truly our brother, then we will eternally “receive” them as such in the Kingdom ages- and therefore we ought to be doing that right now. The baptism of Onesimus was a hard call for Philemon. He had to believe that that difficult man who had defrauded him was now his brother, even though he hadn’t baptized him. Many an ecclesial upset has been caused by this kind of thing. Perhaps it was quite possible that for all the good works and faith of Philemon, his eternity depended upon his attitude to this one difficult man, Onesimus. And I notice that for about all of us, there are individuals in our lives whom we find it very hard to forgive and accept as brethren. And perhaps our eternity hinges upon our achieving it with them. We think of Saul and David, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers.

:16 *No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother-* This is just the term Paul has used about both Philemon and Archippa, presumably his wife. Paul's patient love for Philemon was to be reflected in Philemon's love for Onesimus.

Especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord- "In the flesh" perhaps refers to how after reconciliation, the parties are closer to each other than before.

:17 *So if you consider me your partner-* Paul asks Philemon to prepare a room in his home because he was planning on visiting after his release from prison (:22). Paul is really saying that Philemon is to accept Onesimus as much as he would accept him; and if he didn't, then he was effectively separating himself from partnership with Paul.

Take him into your home- 'Receive him'. The point is made twice (Philemon 12,17). Paul had written to the Romans years before that they should receive one another, as God for Christ’s sake has received us (Rom. 15:7 s.w.). It seems that the case of Onesimus gave Paul an opportunity to practically exemplify what he had meant- now that he was in Rome. Time and again, the theory of the Romans letter has to be lived out by Paul once in Rome himself. Paul says that if Philemon received Onesimus, then he received Paul. Paul was one with his new brother Onesimus (:12).

It is no coincidence that Paul concludes this letter by asking Philemon to prepare *him* a lodging place within the home of Philemon. And he speaks of how he Paul will be "restored" to Philemon (:22). A strange term to use- unless he is arguing that he hopes that that prepared bedroom will actually be given to Onesimus. Because Onesimus is Paul and Paul is Onesimus, "my very heart". But Paul hopes that he will be released from prison, and he and Onesimus will come together. But even if not, Paul is going to come to Philemon but in the person of Onesimus. We see here how being "in Christ" binds men together.

As you would [receive] me- Paul parallels loving the Lord Jesus with loving “all saints” (Philemon 5). To receive Onesimus was to receive Paul (Philemon 12); and “if thou count me therefore a partner [Gk. *Koinonos*- ‘one in fellowship’], receive him as myself”

(Philemon 17 AV). Paul's mind or spirit was in Onesimus (:12). Paul is saying that if we receive any brother, then, we receive him. He clearly has in mind the Lord's teaching, that if we receive Him, then we are to receive His brethren. So if we receive any brother, we not only receive the Lord Jesus, but we receive all other brethren in Christ; for each brother represents the entire body of Christ. This shows the utter fallacy of division within the one body. It is an utter nonsense to accept one brother, but not the other brethren, e.g., of his ecclesia. According to the logic of Philemon 17, if we don't accept a true brother, then we are not treating our other brethren as being in fellowship. For Paul says that if Philemon considered *him* to be in fellowship, then Philemon ought to accept Onesimus. Likewise, he reasons that he saw in Onesimus the face of Philemon; for Onesimus ministered unto Paul "in thy [Philemon's] stead" (Philemon 13). The implications of this are far reaching. For by refusing fellowship with our brethren, we are effectively declaring ourselves outside of the body of Christ. And hence Paul's sober warnings in 1 Cor. 11, to discern / recognize the Lord's body; for if we refuse to break bread with our brethren, then, he says, we are eating and drinking damnation to ourselves, because we refuse to accept our part in the Lord's body.

:18 *But if he has wronged you at all or owes you something*- Philemon clearly thought that Onesimus had wronged him or stolen something from him. Or since he had bought Onesimus, he maybe meanly considered that all the time Onesimus was away in Rome, he was losing money because he had to take on another slave to replace him. If Philemon had bought Onesimus as a slave, but the slave had run away or was going to go and serve Paul in Rome, then he had lost his money. He had not got the service he had bought. So it could be argued that Paul here is offering manumission, paying to get someone out of slavery. And that is exactly the figure he has used to describe the Lord's redemption of us from slavery to sin. He was responding in practical terms to his own manumission, his own redemption and freedom from slavery. He was asking Onesimus to reconcile with Philemon and then return to Rome and serve *Paul*- a change of masters. The law of the Roman empire required that runaway slaves were to be punished in some form- and Paul is asking Philemon to treat Onesimus as if he were Paul, to not apply the law. He is asking that all punishment be forgotten, thanks to Paul's intercession for Onesimus; to prepare him a bedroom, and not a beating. We note that Paul says nothing about the penitence or otherwise of ONesimus; he doesn't say "And he is very sorry". The whole redemption is based upon Paul's intercession. And so the allusion to redemption in Christ is complete. We too are to live out in practice our experience of manumission. To do for other men what the Lord did for me… that is what it is to be a Christian.

Put that on my bill- Literally, 'on me'. Again Paul is directly identifying himself with Onesimus. Attitudes to a brother in Christ are effectively our attitudes to others in Christ. This is why there can be no respect of persons at all in Christ.

:19 *I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay any debt*- Paul was writing from his hired house within the Roman prison, in the period at the end of Acts 28. He seems to have access to money. But by 2 Tim. 4 he is in prison [again] and can't afford even a cloak, and needs writing equipment. He knew how to abound and be abased when it came to money and wealth.

Even though you owe me your own self- Continuing the theme of 'profit', Paul says that Onesimus 'owed' him his very self because Paul had converted him; therefore any material debt that Onesimus 'owed' Philemon should be forgiven with pleasure (Philemon 18,19). The unpayable debt that we have should lead us to be forgiving of whatever others owe us. Note in passing how Philemon 'owed' his very [eternal] life to Paul. This is the power and responsibility of witnessing to others. The saviour is the Lord, and yet the preacher manifests that salvation to others to such an extent that effectively we owe our salvation additionally to the person who converted us. See on :22. Philemon owed his salvation to Paul's preaching, and was therefore eternally obligated to him. We too can be a tree of life to those with whom we live; we can win their souls for the Kingdom (Prov. 11:30). The Thessalonians would be accepted in the final glory of judgment day simply "because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:10). Eve, taken out of the wounded side of the first man, was a type of the ecclesia; and her name means 'source of life', in anticipation of how the church would bring life to the world.

The idea of two men in debt, one [Onesimus] more than the other [Philemon] recalls the Lord's parable of Mt. 18 about two men like this; and also to another parable of two indebted men who were both frankly forgiven, and the one forgiven most loved his master the most (Lk. 7:42,43). There are several allusions to the parables in the letter to Philemon. The man with the bigger debt was being unreasonable to the other servant who was indeed in his debt, but not so seriously as he was. The debt of Philemon was partly to Paul for saving him, but it could be argued that Onesimus had a similar debt. The rest of his huge accrual of debt was therefore from something else which Onesimus had not done. So it would seem that Philemon, pastor of his own house church, renowned for good deeds... had some pretty dark secrets, and perhaps it was the practice of them which had led Onesmius to steal money for a journey and then run away from him. The "frank forgiveness" of the Lord to the bigger debtor is picked up in :22 *I shall be restored to you*.

:20 *Yes, brother, let me profit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ*- Paul recognized that Philemon "refreshed the hearts of the saints", and he rejoiced that this was the case. Yet there was one saint whose bowels Philemon had not yet refreshed- and that was Paul himself. For Paul uses this very phrase in asking Philemon to rejoice *his* bowels by receiving Onesimus (:7,20). Here we see grace to the extreme. Paul could rejoice that a brother was genuinely loving and encouraging to other brethren, even

though that brother had not been so to him personally. It's so easy in personal disputes to write a brother off as totally no good because he was unkind or inappropriate or downright wrong in his treatment of us personally; we so easily forget that in many *other* walks of his life, he is a wonderful servant of the Lord. Yet Paul modelled the very grace which he asked Philemon to show to Onesimus.

:21 *I write to you having confidence in your obedience*- Paul believed his prayers would be answered and wrote, felt and acted accordingly. He goes straight on to ask for a room to be prepared for him on his release from prison (:22), so confident was he that the prayers for his release would be answered.

Knowing you will do what I ask- Gk. '*more than* I ask'. In the same way as God had done for us exceeding abundantly *above* all we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20), so Philemon was to do *more* [s.w.] than the grace that Paul was suggesting (Philemon 21, 16 s.w.). It's not just a case of forgiving each other because we were forgiven; it's a question of lavishing the grace upon each other which the Lord has upon us. And notice the context of all this. Paul says that as Philemon's elder, he could just "enjoin" him to do that which was required of those in Christ. But he prefers not to work through a command from an elder, demanding obedience. Instead, he appeals to Philemon's own experience of personal grace, and sees in *that* an imperative, a command to be 'obeyed' (Philemon 8,21). God's generosity to us in answering us "above all we ask of think" should be reflected in our doing things for others over and above what they have requested.

:22 See on Acts 20:25 *I know*.

But meanwhile also prepare for me a lodging- This sounds as if Paul was hoping to come to Philemon along with Onesimus- hence the word "Also", with the emphasis on "for me" [also]. This plan highlighted Paul's argument- that if Philemon would fellowship Onesimus, then he was fellowshipping Paul. And if he wanted to only fellowship Paul and not Onesimus, then this was effectively not fellowshipping Paul.

For I hope that through your prayers- On :19 *Even though* we saw that a third party can be responsible for the fortunes of another brother. Here too, Paul trusted that through the prayers of Philemon he would be released; and he was so confident in the answer to that prayer that he asked him even to prepare a room for him ahead of time!

I shall be restored to you- Or AV "given unto you". This rather awkward phrase is another allusion to the parable of the two debtors. It is translated "forgiven" in Lk. 7:42,43. Perhaps Paul's point is that he too is a big sinner, and through their prayers he would be released from the debts arising. He doesn't want Philemon to feel that Paul is as it were getting at him unkindly by suggesting he is like the bigger debtor; he is now saying that he himself is also in debt to the Lord and even more so.

:23 *Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you*- Paul has twice referred to himself as a prisoner in Christ. He is practicing what he has preached elsewhere- that e.g. slaves should consider their service to their masters as done unto Christ. He saw himself not as a prisoner of Caesar but of Christ. This is likely the same as the Epaphroditus of Phil. 2:25; 4:18. It could be argued that Paul may be using "prisoner in Christ" in a spiritual sense (Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 10:5), which would not require Epaphras to actually be in prison with him. Rather, his sense of being a prisoner of Christ in a spiritual sense was so great that he felt one with Paul who was literally in prison, and Paul is noting that.

:24 *As do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow-workers*- From within prison, Paul had been able to 'convert' Onesimus and also some in the Praetorian guard. But this would have required the assistance of others, and it seems Paul had a faithful group of helpers who came to live in Rome and assist him in his witness. He calls them here his co-workers. He in prison, apparently stranded, was still able to “work”. We wonder what role the church at Rome played in all this; for none of them stood with him at his final trial (2 Tim. 4:16). Paul had been so eager to get to Rome to witness, and had written to the church there ahead of his coming there; and it seems when he got there, they didn't really support him much.

:25 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*- See on :3. Philemon needed to have the grace of Jesus in his spirit / mind in order to make the right decisions about Onesimus, and Paul wishes this for him. The *charis* or gift of our Lord Jesus is *His* spirit or mind / disposition. And Paul wished that the Lord's Spirit would be with and in the spirit of Philemon; for this is the essence of Christianity, that Christ should dwell in our hearts / minds.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: HEBREWS

HEBREWS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

HEBREWS CHAPTER 1

1:1 I have suggested on Heb. 13:22 that Hebrews was originally a transcript of a sermon at the breaking of bread meeting at the Jerusalem church, turned into written form, with a few practical comments appended to it at the very end. This accounts for various stylistic features in the book which would otherwise appear rather odd. The style and use of language is very clearly Pauline; that is beyond serious denial. Paul's major concern was that there was going to be a great falling away from the faith, and the initial cause of this was the Judaizing campaign against him and his converts. The large Christian church at Jerusalem, along with the other Palestinian congregations, were under particular pressure to return to Judaism. And it was against this background that Hebrews was written.

I noted throughout commentary on Acts 7 that there are so many connections between Stephen's speech and Hebrews. The Jerusalem church, to whom Hebrews was primarily addressed, would have known Stephen well. Hebrews is full of allusions to Stephen's speech, and my suggestion is that it was not Stephen writing to his own church before his death, but rather Paul expanding upon Stephen's speech. As the bitterly angry Saul, keenly listening to Stephen and grasping his every allusion, he would

have felt the goads of Scripture sticking into his conscience. He remembered every word, and after his conversion, he took Stephen's thoughts further. Hebrews, I suggest, is his development of Stephen's words and ideas. The historical characters mentioned by Stephen are also mentioned by Paul in Hebrews 11. Paul draws his sermon in Hebrews towards a conclusion by speaking of how we as Christians have come into association with "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22,23). It seems to me certain that Paul had Stephen in mind at this point, a clearly 'just man', who had asked the Lord Jesus in Heaven to receive his spirit, as one of "the spirits of just men made perfect", and whose name as a martyr was for sure "enrolled in Heaven". The anonymity of the letter would be appropriate, as Paul was seen as a heretic and *persona non grata* among many of the Jewish Christians who were turning back to Judaism.

1:1 *God, who at various times and in various ways- Polymeros... polytropos* is framed in such a way as to aid memorization, and would be typical of a spoken address; see on 13:22 and 1 Thess. 2:1.

Spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets- The Lord was “the word made flesh"; having spoken to us through the words of the prophets, God now speaks to us in His Son (Heb. 1:1,2 RV). His revelation in that sense hasn’t finished; it is ongoing. Right now, the Lord Jesus speaks with a voice like many waters and a sword of flame- according to John’s vision of the Lord’s post-resurrection glory.
In the first century, you usually began a letter with a preface, saying who you were and to whom you were writing. The letter to the Hebrews has a preface which speaks simply of the greatness of Christ (Heb. 1:1-3), tackling the devaluing of the Lord Jesus and the role of Messiah generally which was being done by the Judaizers. The higher critics speak of how the preface has been lost or got detached. But no, the form of Heb. 1:1-3 is indeed that of a preface. The point is that the greatness of Christ, of which the letter speaks, is so great as to push both the author and audience into irrelevancy and obscurity. It’s significant that the New Testament writers speak so frequently of Jesus as simply “the Lord”. This would’ve been strange to first century ears. Kings and pagan gods always had their personal name added to the title ‘the Lord’- e.g. ‘the Lord Sarapis’. To just speak of “the Lord” was unheard of. The way the New Testament speaks like this indicates the utter primacy of the Lord Jesus in the minds of believers, and the familiarity they had with speaking about Him in such exalted terms.

1:2 *Has in these last times spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, on account of whom also He structured the ages*- The immediate purpose of the exalted language appplied to Jesus in Hebrews was to tackle the devaluing of Him by

the Judaist element within the church. Judaism understood the likes of David and Moses to be far higher than Messiah, whoever He was (hence the Lord's argument that David called Messiah his Lord, Lk. 20:44). This has of course led to passages like Heb. 1:2 being misunderstood to believe that Jesus created the earth. It could be argued that the prologue to Hebrews is based upon the prologue to John's Gospel. The same ideas recur- the Word of God from the beginning come to expression in Christ, "all things", glory, etc. Note the similarity between "apart from him not one thing came into being" (Jn. 1:3) and Heb. 2:8, "not one thing is not left put under him". Jn. 1:3 stated that "all things" were created by the Word, i.e. the logos / intention which God had of the Messiah. Heb. 1:2 clarifies this (because of misunderstandings in the early church?) to define the "all things" as all the ages of human history. These were framed by God with the Christ in mind. Later in Hebrews we meet the same idea- Heb. 11:3 speaks of how the ages were framed and then goes on to give examples of Old Testament characters who displayed their faith and understanding of the future Messiah.

It should be noted that the 'ages' which Christ was to be involved in creating refer to "the world to come"- for Heb. 2:5 says that this passage is speaking about "the world to come". Heb. 9:26 adds indirect support by commenting that Christ died at the end of "the (singular) age"; the ages [plural] to come are the eternity of God's Kingdom which is made possible through His work. Thus the idea is not that He created the world, but rather that through His work, the ages /to come/ were made possible through Him. And therefore those ages before Him find their meaning in the context of He who was to come and open the way to eternal ages.

We read of “the Son... by whom [Gk. *dia*] He [God] also made the worlds [Gk. *aion*]”. '*Dia*' can mean ‘for whom / for the sake of / on account of'. It doesn’t *always* mean that, as it’s a word of wide usage- but it very often does mean ‘on account of’ and actually frequently it *cannot* mean ‘by’. There are stacks of examples listed in Appendix 11 of *The Real Christ*. Thus in a creation context, we read that all things were created *dia*, for the sake of, God’s pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Significantly, when 2 Pet. 3:5 speaks of how the world was created “*by*” the word of God, the word *dia* isn’t used- instead *hoti*, signifying ‘causation through’. This isn’t the word used in Heb. 1:2 about the creation of the *aion* on account of, *dia*, the Son. Eve was created *dia* Adam- she wasn’t created *by* Adam, but *for the sake of* Adam (1 Cor. 11:9). 1 Cor. 8:6 draws a helpful distinction between *ek* [out of whom] and *dia*- all things are *ek* God, but *dia*, on account of, Christ (1 Cor. 8:6). The context of Heb. 1:2 features many examples of where *dia* clearly means ‘for the sake of’ rather than ‘by’. Just a little later we read in Heb. 1:14 of how the Angels are “ministering spirits” who minister *dia*, for the sake of, the believers. Because of [*dia*] Christ’s righteousness, God exalted Him (Heb. 1:9). The Mosaic law was “disannulled” *dia* “the weakness and unprofitableness thereof” (Heb. 7:18). The weakness of the law

didn't disannul the law; the law was disannulled by God *for the sake of* the fact it was so weak. Levi paid tithes *dia* Abraham (Heb. 7:9), not *by* Abraham, but *for the sake of* the fact he was a descendant of Abraham. Jesus was not an Angel *dia* the suffering of death (Heb. 2:9). Clearly here the word means 'for the sake of' rather than 'by'. Jesus was born a man *for the reason that* He could die. He was not an Angel who was then made 'not an Angel' *by* the fact of death. That makes no sense.

Note that *aion* [AV "worlds"] is a plural- if this verse means 'Jesus created the earth', then, did He create multiple, plural 'earths'? That the word means 'the ages' or 'an age' is again clear from seeing how else *'aion*' is used. In almost every case where the word *aion* occurs in the New Testament, it doesn't mean 'the physical planet earth', but rather an age or situation on the earth, rather than the physical planet. In Eph. 2:7 we read of "the ages to come"- and it is the word *aion* again. The church will glorify Jesus "throughout all generations", and this is paralleled with the phrase 'the *aion* of the *aions*' [Eph. 3:21- AV "world without end"; the same parallel occurs in Col. 1:26, "hid from *aions* and from generations"]. Clearly *aion* refers to periods of time rather than a physical planet. Just a few verses after Heb. 1:2, we read that the son will reign 'for the *aions* and the *aions*', or in English "for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). Surely the combined message is that the previous ages / *aions* existed only for the sake of Christ, and He will rule over all future *aions*. There is the *aion* to come [AV "the world to come", Heb. 6:5], and Christ will be a priest "for ever" [Gk. 'for the *aion*', Heb. 5:6]. The *aion* to come is the eternity of God's Kingdom. It will be, in somewhat hyperbolic language, an eternity of eternities. Later in Hebrews we read that Jesus made His sacrifice for sin "in the end of the world / *aion*" (Heb. 9:26). If an *aion* ended at the death of Jesus, then clearly the word doesn't refer to the physical planet- but rather to the age which then ended. The Hebrew writer clinches this view of *aion* in Heb. 11:3, where he prefaces his outline of Bible history from Abel to the restoration from Babylon by saying that the ages / *aion* are framed by the word of God. Response by faith to God's word, seeing the invisible with the eye of faith, occurred amongst the faithful in every *aion*. The *aion* [AV "worlds"] were framed by the word of God. Consider other uses of the word *aion* where clearly it refers to the ages and not to a literal planet (Mk. 4:19; Lk. 1:70; 16:8; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:6,8; 3:19; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:10).

The whole of history, with all its ages, and all that is to come, exists solely for the sake of Christ. He is the One who gives meaning to history. Further, if this verse means 'Jesus created the earth', then OK, question: Genesis and many other passages say *God* created. If this says Jesus was the actual creator, then is Jesus directly equal to God? Also, if Heb 1:2 is saying that *Jesus* is the creator of earth, the One through whom God did the job, then, *why* do we have to wait until Hebrews to know that? There's no indication in Genesis or even in the whole Old Testament nor in the teaching of Jesus that Jesus was the creator of earth on God's behalf. That's my problem with the pre-

existence idea- it's nowhere in the Old Testament. So would believers have been held in ignorance of this fact for 4000 years? If so, then, is it so important to covenant relationship with God? I am sure David, Abraham etc. believed that *God* and *not* Messiah created the earth. If they'd have been asked: 'Did *Messiah* create the earth, or God? Does Messiah now exist?', they'd have answered 'No' both times. Surely?

It is argued by trinitarians that *dia* + the genitive, as we have in Heb. 1:2, means that the ages were made by the instrumentality of Christ. But *dia* + genitive doesn't only mean 'by whose instrumentality'. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised ,* p. 90 explains the uses of *dia* with genitive:
"1. With a genitive, through
a. Used of place or medium through
b. Used of time, during in the course of; through
c. Used of immediate agency, causation, instrumentality, by means of, by; of means or manner, through, by, with
d. Used of state or condition, in a state of".

Meaning (b) appears relevant to Heb. 1:2 because it is *dia* Christ that the *aions* (a time reference) were created. This would require us to read in an ellipsis: "Through the (period of the ministry of) the Son, God framed the ages". Or, "Through(out) the Son, God framed the ages", i.e. all God's purpose throughout the ages was framed with Christ in mind. Acts 3:18 uses *dia* + genitive to explain how God had spoken of Christ "by" or throughout the period of all His "holy prophets".

1:3 *Who being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person, upholds all things by the word of his power-* Nearly all the titles of Christ used in the letter to the Hebrews are taken from Philo or the Jewish book of Wisdom. The writer to the Hebrews is seeking to apply them in their correct and true sense to the Lord Jesus. This explains why some titles are used which can easily be misunderstood by those not appreciating this background. For example, Philo speaks of “the impress of God’s seal”, and Hebrews applies this to the Lord Jesus. The phrase has been misinterpreted by Trinitarians as meaning that Jesus is therefore God; but this wasn’t at all the idea behind the title in Philo’s writings, and neither was it when the letter to the Hebrews took up the phrase and applied it to Jesus. This sort of thing goes on far more often than we might think in the Bible- existing theological ideas are re-cast and re-presented in their correct light, especially with reference to the Lord Jesus. Arthur Gibson notes that “there is an important second level within religious language: it is a reflection upon, a criticism of, a correction of, or a more general formulation of, expressions which previously occur”.

3 Enoch [also known as *The Hebrew Book Of Enoch*] spoke much of an Angel called Metatron, "the prince of the presence", "the lesser Yahweh", who appeared as Yahweh to Moses in Ex. 23:21, sat on "the throne of glory" etc (3 Enoch 10-14). Early Jewish

Christianity appears to have mistakenly reapplied these ideas to Jesus, resulting in the idea the first of all Jesus was an Angel, and then coming to full term in the doctrine of the Trinity. J. Danielou devotes the whole fourth chapter of his survey of the development of Christian doctrine to the study of how Jewish views of Angels actually led on to the Trinity. Paul's style was not to baldly state that everything believed in by the Jews was wrong; he recognized that the very nature of apostasy is in the mixing of the true and the false. He speaks of how Jesus truly has been exalted and sits at God's right hand (Rom. 8:34) and has been given God's Name, as the Angel was in Exodus (Phil. 2:9-11); but his whole point is that whilst that may indeed be common ground with the Jewish ideas, the truth is that Jesus is *not* an Angel. He came into physical existence through Mary ("made / born of a woman", Gal. 4:4), and as the begotten Son of God has been exalted above than any Angel. The language of Heb. 1:3-6 clearly alludes to the Metatron myth and deconstructs it in very clear terms. For Jesus is described as "being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image / pattern of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son? And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him".

When he had accomplished the purification of sins- In a sense, all sins were purged by the Lord's death. Sin, the 'devil' of Heb. 2:14, was destroyed; He "made an end of sins" (Dan. 9:24). We can easily forget the wonder of this; Peter uses the same word about those who had forgotten their purging [s.w.] from their old sins (2 Pet. 1:9). They lacked the spiritual vision to look back to the cross and perceive that now, human sin is no longer a barrier between God and ourselves. The Lord's blood is therefore of such power as to purify even our conscience from the guilt of past sins (Heb. 9:14; Tit. 2:14). But this was all achieved at a specific historical point- when the Lord died on the cross. We receive not only the word of pardon, that we are forgiven; but the deep cleansing from sin on a psychological level, achieved by the Lord Jesus working through His Spirit in the believer.

The allusion is to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. The Lord sits down having done this, whereas the priests remained standing, as their work was never done. We note that sin has been dealt with- we have been purified. We are saved. As Daniel 9 prophesied of Messiah, He "made an end of sins".

He then sat down on the right hand- In his time of dying, Stephen saw the Lord Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). But about 13 times in the New Testament, the point is made that the Lord *sits* there, unlike the Mosaic priests who stood (Heb. 10:12). The Lord Jesus was passionately feeling for Stephen; and He just as emotionally

and passionately feels for us in our struggles. This alone should lift us out of the mire of mediocrity. Prayer will have meaning and power. It won't just be the repetitious conscience-salver it can descend into. Many of those 13 NT references to the Lord being seated at the right hand of God are in Hebrews; and this again encourages us to see Hebrews as Paul's deeper reflections upon Stephen's speech. This would especially be the case if the Jews in the council actually saw something of what Stephen saw.

Of the Majesty in Heaven- It is a majestic, glorious theme of the Bible that God is revealed as a real being. It is also a fundamental tenet of Christianity that Jesus is the Son of God. If God is not a real being, then it is impossible for Him to have a Son who was the "image of His *person*" (Heb. 1:3). The Greek word actually means His "substance" (RV). Further, it becomes difficult to develop a personal, living relationship with 'God', if 'God' is just a concept in our mind. It is tragic that the majority of religions have this unreal, intangible conception of God.

1:4 *He thus became so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they*- Judaism was obsessed with Angels, reflecting the pagan notion that there were various 'spirits' controlling various aspects of life. This idea likewise entered the Catholic and Orthodox churches. But the point is laboured here that the Lord Jesus as begotten Son of God is far better than Angels. The more excellent Name would appear from :5 to be connected to His Sonship. Angels are also "sons of God" but not in the ultimate sense in which the Lord Jesus was the only begotten Son. Angels too can bear and manifest the Yahweh Name just as we can, but the Lord inherited that Name in a "more excellent" sense than them; for He had achieved the characteristics of that Name within His own personality. This all adds even more wonder to the fact that by being "in Christ", all that is true of Him becomes true of us; and we are co-heirs with Him, inheriting as He did (Rom. 8:17), fully sharing in all His glorification.

Hebrews stresses the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and how true faith is Christ-centered. The audience were those who had initially been convicted of their sins against Him, had accepted His resurrection and exaltation, and had repented. They had been baptized into Him and accepted His full forgiveness, and rejoiced in the absolute certainty of their salvation. And so they were characterized by "boldness" in their preaching. They are being urged to maintain that boldness and confidence *in Him*. But they had drifted from that. The pull of the Jewish system, the human desire to return to your culture of origin, weariness from persecution, the spirit of the world around them urging them to get caught up in anti-Roman Jewish nationalism, arguments within the church, false teaching... the loneliness of the long distance runner... had all taken its toll. And so they are being urged to get back to Jesus, and to the original message they had responded to- that the crucified Lord Jesus was not only alive, but highly exalted in Heaven. This is why Hebrews 1 begins with all this talk of the Lord's highly exalted status- to get them back

to their Christian roots, their "original confidence" (Heb. 3:6,14). Their drift into 'we can be Christian but not see anything so unique in Jesus, we can remain within Judaism quite comfortably' is, in essence, akin to the drifting of Christians in our age towards the post modernism which surrounds us. Hebrews 1 uses extreme language about the Lord's exaltation, rather than seeking to put it to the Hebrew Christians in terms which they might be more comfortable with. The language is so extreme that careless expositors have pressed it into service to justify the paganic idea of the Trinity. But the extreme language is there in order to force the audience to realize that Jesus is indeed highly exalted- and they had to live in response to that. There was no way to compromise nor renegotiate His high exaltation- and the response required from us who accept Him as our Lord and Master.

1:5 *For to which of the angels said He at any time: You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again: I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son?*- The "more excellent Name" which the Lord inherited (:4) therefore appears to be "My Son". Now we can understand why :2 strangely speaks in Greek of simply "by Son", not "His Son". Rom. 1:4 says the same- He was "declared to be the Son of God with power" by the resurrection. This is why Psalm 2, about the Lord's birth, is applied to different points of His career. He was presented as God's Son in the fullest sense when He received Divine nature at His resurrection. Note that His Name now given is "Son" and not 'Yahweh'. And this is why confession of faith in Jesus as "Son of God" is seen as the essence of belief in Him.

Ps. 2:7 is applied to the Lord's resurrection in Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4. But the rest of Psalm 2 is quoted about various points of the Lord's work; at His birth, death, resurrection, return and at the time of the final rebellion against Him. And the original application appears to be to David and then to Hezekiah. Clearly it is not always so that if a verse is quoted in one context in the New Testament, then the surrounding context of the original quotation must refer to the same time. And it is likewise clear that the same scripture can have multiple fulfilments; Psalm 2 is a classic cse of that. The insistence upon context as the guiding light of interpretation is often misplaced; because the mind behind the word of God does not work according to the Greek influenced linear thinking of the European mind, with its emphasis upon logical corrolary and linear progression and development of thought and context.

James Dunn quotes Tertullian, Justin, Epiphanius and Clement as all believing that the Lord Jesus was an Angel: "So too Jewish Christians of the second and third centuries specifically affirmed that Christ was an angel or archangel... Justin's identification of the angel of Yahweh with the [supposedly] pre-existent Christ". It was this Jewish obsession with Angels, and the desire to make Jesus understandable as an Angel, which led to the idea that He personally pre-existed and was not quite human. And hence the specific

and repeated emphasis of the New Testament that the Lord was *not* an Angel but *because* He was a man and *not* an Angel He has been exalted far *above* Angels (Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:16; 2:8-10; Heb. 1; 1 Pet. 1:12; 3:22; Rev. 5:11-14). It's the same with the idea of Melchizedek, whom the Qumran community and writings understood as an Archangel. The commentary upon Melchizedek in Hebrews stresses that he was a *man* ("consider how great this *man* was...", Heb. 7:4)- therefore *not* an Angel. He was a *foreshadowing* of Christ, and not Christ Himself. It would appear that the commentary upon Melchizedek in Hebrews is actually full of indirect references to the Qumran claims about Melchizedek being an Angel and somehow being the Messiah. Sadly, too many trinitarians today have made the same mistake as the Jews- arguing that Melchizedek was somehow Jesus personally. The Jews of Qumran were quite obsessed with Angels- they also suggested that Gabriel was somehow the pre-existent Messiah. Bearing that in mind, it would appear that the descriptions of the Angel Gabriel announcing the conception and birth of Jesus are almost purposefully designed to show that Gabriel and Jesus are *not* the same but are two quite different persons (Mt. 1:20,24; 2:13,19; Lk. 1:11,19,26-38; 2:9).

Hebrews 1 can be a passage which appears to provide perhaps the strongest support for both the 'Jesus is God' and 'Jesus is not God' schools. Meditating upon this one morning, I suddenly grasped what was going on. The writer is in fact purposefully juxtaposing the language of Christ's humanity and subjection to the Father, with statements and quotations which apply the language of God to Jesus. But the emphasis is so repeatedly upon the fact that God did this to Jesus. God gave Jesus all this glory. Consider the evidence: It is God who begat Jesus (Heb. 1:5), God who told the Angels to worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6), it was "God, even your God" who anointed Jesus, i.e. made Him Christ, the anointed one (Heb. 1:9); it was God who made Jesus sit at His right hand, and makes the enemies of His Son come into subjection (Heb. 1:13); it was God who made / created Jesus, God who crowned Jesus, God who set Jesus over creation (Heb. 2:7), God who put all in subjection under Jesus (Heb. 2:8). And yet interspersed between all this emphasis- for that's what it is- upon the superiority of the Father over the Son... we find Jesus addressed as "God" (Heb. 1:8), and having Old Testament passages about God applied to Him (Heb. 1:5,6). The juxtaposition is purposeful. It is to bring out how the highly exalted position of Jesus was in fact granted to Him by 'his God', the Father, who remains the single source and giver of all exaltation, and who, to use the Lord's very own words, "is greater than [Christ]" (Jn. 14:28).

1:6 *And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world He says: And let all the angels of God worship him*- "Brings" is strictly 'brings again' and refers to the resurrection, as noted on :5. The quotation is not from the Masoretic Text but from the Septuagint of Dt. 32:43 and perhaps Ps. 97:7. This indicates that the inspired writer considered that material in the LXX which is not in the Hebrew text is inspired by God and worthy of quotation as such. The context of both those passages is hardly that of the Lord's

resurrection; but as noted on :5, the New Testament writers tend to quote without attention to context. Dt. 32:43 LXX is also quoted by Paul in Rom. 15:10. Another example of this kind of thing would be how in Romans 3 there is a quotation from Ps. 14:1-7 LXX; but six of the quoted verses are not in the Hebrew text.

We might well wonder why Paul is quoting verses only found in the LXX in order to prove that the Lord Jesus is greater than Angels; and why he insists on quoting only from the LXX. It's as if he is making some kind of point about the Septuagint. I suggested on 1:1 that Paul was appealing to the Jerusalem Christians, in terms which recalled the witness of their famous martyr Stephen. What brought about Stephen's demise was his apparent backing of the Greek speaking Jews in the Jerusalem church. This might explain why Paul is appealing specifically to them by quoting so insistently from the Septuagint and even from passages which are only to be found there and not in the Hebrew text.

1:7 *And of the angels He says: Who makes His angels winds, and His servants a flame a fire*- The quotation from Ps. 103:4 LXX only demonstrates the Lord's supremacy over Angels by stating that God makes the Angels into winds / spirits and flames- we recall the Angel seen by Samson's parents ascending in a flame of fire- whereas He has made His Son to be a king with a sceptre. The Lord Jesus is able to rule and decide issues on His own volition and agenda, rather than simply be sent as Angels are sent to obey the Father's agenda. The idea may be that the fact the Lord Jesus was human, not a fame of fire nor a wind / spirit, actually places the Lord ultimately above the Angels. He was made lower than them for the experience of death, but because He was a human, and humans are made in the form of God, His perfection led Him to be exalted far above them.

1:8 *But of the Son He said: Your throne, O Mighty One, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness*- See on :7. The Angels are sent out with temporary power to perform specific tasks they are given to perform; whereas the Lord Jesus is an eternal Kingdom, with a seceptre, i.e. ruling and issuing orders Himself rather than taking them. Ps. 45:6,7 quoted here is clearly about Solomon in its initial application, so it is fruitless to argue that "Mighty One" refers only to God Himself. For it can be applied to human kings.

1:9 *You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows*- We should not see sin as something to be regretfully avoided and denied; the Lord's example was of hating sin. And that hatred of sin arose out of the depth of His love for righteousness. Being loved and exalted above his brethren is a Joseph allusion. The idea of "your God" anointing Messiah with joy above His "fellows" is all impossible to make sense of within the standard Trinitarian paradigm. The connection between anointing and joy is that there

were traditionally expressions of joy and praise when a man was anointed or chosen for some special task such as rulership. David in writing this surely had his heart on the way that he had been anointed above his brethren. And yet "fellows" is being interpreted as referring to the Angels; the Lord Jesus was anointed above them.

And yet the "fellows" of the Lord Jesus also have ourselves in view. The idea may be that the Angels are the Lord's "fellows" in that they are identified with us, whose guardian Angels they are. The same identity between believers and Angels is found in Revelation. The same word is used of how we are "partakers of Christ... of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 3:1,14; 6:4; 12:8), because He likewise partook [s.w. shared / fellowshipped] our humanity (Heb. 2:14). "For we are all partakers in that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17,21 s.w.). We too are anointed with the oil of the Spirit; but the Lord Jesus was anointed with it without measure. His gladness or joy is beyond anything we experience, because of the depth of His sufferings as the ultimate man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

1:10 *And: You, Lord, in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands*- Heb. 1:10 appears to quote words about God (from Ps. 102:25) and apply them to Jesus. To take a Psalm or Bible passage and apply it to someone on earth, even a normal human, was quite common in first century literature (Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology Of The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1971) p. 234). It's rather like we may quote a well known phrase from Shakespeare or a currently popular movie, and apply it to someone. It doesn't mean that that person is to be equated with Romeo, Juliet, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth etc. By quoting the words about them, we're saying there are similarities between the two people or situations; we're not claiming they're identical. And seeing that the Son of God was functioning for His Father, it's not surprising that words about God will be quoted about the Lord Jesus.

In the same way as the Angels are so closely associated with their charges that they are identified with them, so the Angels are described as the things in the natural world which they have created. The quotation of Ps. 102:26 in Heb. 1:10 can appear to pose major problems for belief in the humanity of Christ and that the world will never be destroyed. The context in Hebrews is again Christ's superiority over the Angels; however, the context in Ps. 102 is of Christ on the cross thinking of the eternity of God, how that "of old", "in the beginning" (clearly alluding back to the beginning of the natural creation in Gen. 1), God created the Heavens and earth by His Angel-hands. But "they shall perish... wax old like a garment... as a vesture shalt thou change them" (Ps. 102:26). This language is similar to that used elsewhere about the ending of the Angel-oriented Mosaic Law (e. g. Heb. 8:13). Thus the literal Heavens and earth will not perish, but the Angelic system that created them will do. Thus both the natural creation and the Mosaic system are identified exactly with the Angels that created them.

1:11 *They shall perish, but You continue; and they all shall wear out as does a garment*- As noted on :10, the purpose of the quotation is to demonstrate the Lord's superiority over Angels. One approach is to understand the Hebraic way of stating that 'even X shall happen to prove the greatness of Y'; e.g. heaven could pass away [X] but the Lord's words would not [Y] (Mt. 24:35). This is not to say that X shall literally happen; it is stated as a hyperbole, to demonstrate the greatness of Y. And that may be the case here too. God's eternity is contrasted with the [relative] passing of the Heavens, which were made by Angels. "They shall perish" may not therefore mean they shall literally perish.

The context of Ps. 102 is however pertinent. The "set time [had] come" suggests that the Psalmist is writing maybe in captivity in Babylon as the predicted 70 years of Judah's captivity there came to a close, and he looks forward to the promised restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. He enthuses in :16 that "Yahweh has built up Zion"- although He had not then done so (:13). The earlier part of the Psalm laments this. But the Psalmist believed in God's prophecies of doing so, and considered them as good as already fulfilled. Faith is all about adopting God's perspective, seeing future promises as if they have already been fulfilled, thereby enabling us to live the Kingdom life now in its essence. Then in Ps. 102:25 we read of how "Of old, You laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the work of Your hands". The language of laying foundations is nearly always used about the laying of the foundations of the new, rebuilt temple at the time of return from exile (Ezra 3:10-12; 5:16; Is. 44:28; Hag. 2:18; Zech. 4:9; 8:9); and this is the context of this Psalm (see on :13 and :16). The 'heavens and earth' refer to Israel (Is. 1:2) and the temple. Although they had 'perished' in the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the first temple, God remained and would, the Psalmist believed, install a new temple system (as outlined in Ez. 40-48). However, this never quite happened as God intended due to Judah's weakness, and so these prophecies were reapplied to how the entire Jewish system based around the temple and Law of Moses would 'perish' and God's new temple system based around the exalted Lord Jesus would come into existence (Heb. 1:10 and context).

1:12 *And like a cloak You shall roll them up as a garment, and they shall be changed; but You are the same and Your years are without end*- See on :10 and :11. The Jewish system would be rolled up (see on :11), as a scroll that is not going to be read any more; the Law would end. But Messiah would remain eternally. It was the Lord Jesus by His sacrifice which changed the Jewish system. The same word is used of the Lord's 'changing' the customs delivered by Moses (Acts 6:14).

1:13 *But of which of the angels has He said at any time: Sit on my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?*- Again the contrast is between the Lord being given a throne to sit on, from whence He can direct and control; and the Angels who are servants, sent forth to fulfil the will of Him that sits upon the throne (:14). See on :3 *He then sat down on the right hand*. The footstool refers to that which the King reigns over;

we the enemies who were reconciled become the Lord's footstool, and we are 'made' like this by the Father's will and desire to glorify His Son in this unique way.

The sitting down of the Son is because His priestly work is done. This is to be quite a theme in Hebrews. As the High Priest on the Day of Atonement pronounced the people cleansed, because he had done the required rituals, so the Lord Jesus pronounces us clean- not simply morally clean of sin, but psychologically purging us by some mental deep-cleaning through His Spirit. And yet the Lord stood in Heaven when Stephen was dying. His work as mediator in another sense is ongoing, and He is able to enter into the passion and immediacy of our times of need.

1:14 *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of those that shall inherit salvation?*- "All" Angels are obedient servants; this of itself rules out any argument for some Angels being sinful. Their 'sending forth' from the Heavenly throne room has a literal aspect to it- see on Is. 37:36; Ex. 7:4. But in this context the argument is that the Lord Jesus is the enthroned King, whereas Angels are servants sent forth to serve us; and thus the Lord's supremacy over Angels is established. Indeed it could be argued that the position presented is that the Lord Jesus has been enthroned by the Father, and He sends forth the Angels to do His service for the sake of our salvation. The Lord Jesus is therefore the Lord of Angels.

"Shall inherit salvation" implies more that 'they are about to inherit', as if the receipt of the inheritance, eternal life (Tit. 3:7; 1 Cor. 15:50), was imminent. This language of expecting the Lord's return imminently is very common. It reflects how the Christian faith requires us to live *as if* His return is imminent. Although we can also consider that the second coming was potentially planned for the first century, but has been delayed. If we are heirs of salvation, then it is certain that we shall receive it. "For He is faithful that promised". The same word for "inherit" has just been used about how the Lord "by inheritance obtained" His glorification, and so shall we (:4). Salvation, the Kingdom, eternal life, blessing... are all termed our "inheritance". Receiving them is not therefore a vague possibility. It simply depends upon whether we believe it. From God's side, it is absolutely certain. He is "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His word [of promise]". He promised, then confirmed it with an oath, and then confirmed this covenant of salvation again through the death of His Son. We take the cup of the new covenant to remind us of the utter certainty of the salvation promise- from His side. It is there for the taking by all who truly say "Yes" to that offer.

The argument of Rom. 8:17 and Gal. 4:1,7 is that because we are in Christ, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. He as the only begotten Son of God inherits all that is God's; He is "appointed heir of all things" (:2). We too have "all things" as ours ("For all things are yours. Whether... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come- all are yours" 1 Cor. 3:21,22) because we are "joint heirs with Christ". We are no

longer adopted sons, but actually turned by the Spirit into the actual Sons of God in that we are in Christ (so Gal. 4 reasons). He was the "heir" ("this is the heir..." is repeated in Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14). And so are we if we are in Him. The Lord Jesus has already received "salvation", and if we are in Him, then that same inheritance is absolutely certain for us. We are justified by grace, counted as if we are Christ; and "being justified by grace, we are made heirs according to the hope [the definite certainty] of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7).

And yet with Abraham we ask: "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Gen. 15:8). The answer was in the death of the animals with Yahweh Himself passing through the midst of them, cutting a unilateral covenant with Abraham; all looking forward to the Lord's death to confirm the covenant. All this was whilst "a deep sleep fell on Abram. Now terror and great darkness fell on him". He was impotent to *do* anything. There were no terms and conditions attached- apart from Him to simply accept this grace, notwithstanding his trembling and nervousness that this was really true for him. This is exactly our position, as his seed.

The whole metaphor of inheritance appears to break down in that you only receive an inheritance when someone dies. Metaphors all break down at some point. But inheritance, being heirs of salvation, the Kingdom, eternal life... is such a major Bible theme. The point is, the Lord died. And we then received the inheritance. Just as in the natural, we can squander that inheritance, as did the prodigal son. But we have it...

HEBREWS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest attention to the things that we heard, lest we drift away from them*- The *more* earnest attention continues the theme of chapter 1, that the things of the Lord Jesus are of greater moment than those spoken by Moses and declared by Angels (:2). "That we heard" suggests they would have heard rather than read the Gospel message. All they had was their memories of the word spoken; we therefore can the more understand the significance of the New Testament being written down. Hence the appeal to give attention to those things. Those things were about their personal salvation (:3). The more we believe that we really have been redeemed, the more evident it becomes that these things demand our whole and total devotion. If we “neglect so great salvation”, we will have ‘drifted away’ (RV) from the solid assurances which are in the Gospel we first heard. Clearly, it *is* a temptation to drift away from those assurances, even if we ‘hold’ to the doctrinal propositions of the Gospel in theory. The wonderful reality of it all for us can so easily drift away. But; we will be there!

2:2 *For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution*- "Transgression" is more 'inattention'. Although the judgments of the Mosaic law were not put into effect by the priesthood, the intention was that every act of violation, conscious or otherwise, had retribution. And God to this day is a sensitive responder to the works and thoughts of His people (s.w. 11:6). We should realize that under the new covenant, behaviour is

even the more significant, and every act of life and thought is therefore the more culpable in light of the fact that God's Son shed His blood for our salvation.

2:3- see on Acts 1:1.

How shall we escape- The rejected will have a desire to escape but having no place to run (Heb. 2:3, quoting Is. 20:6 concerning the inability of men to escape from the approach of the invincible Assyrian army). Rev. 20:11 likewise speaks of the rejected 'heavens and earth' fleeing from the Lamb's throne and finding no place to go. Before the whirlwind of God's judgment, the false shepherds of Israel "shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape" (Jer. 25:35). The rejected will see that the Lord is coming against them with an army much stronger than theirs, and they have missed the chance to make peace (Lk. 14:31). They will be like the Egyptians suffering God's judgments in the Red Sea, wanting to flee but having no realistic place to run to. Uzziah hasting to go out from the presence of the Lord after he was judged for his sin was a foretaste of this (2 Chron. 26:20). But the "escape" in view may specifically refer to escape from the tribulation to come upon Jerusalem in the last days (Lk. 21:36 s.w.), and this had special relevance if indeed as suggested on 1:1 Hebrews is addressed primarily to the Jerusalem church.

If we neglect so great a salvation?- "So great a salvation" is the LXX for "A great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7), brought about by the suffering of Joseph-Jesus at the hands of his brethren. “Such *great* salvation" (Heb. 2:3) might imply that a lesser salvation could have been achieved by Christ, but He achieved the greatest possible. "He is able also *to save them to the uttermost* that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25) may be saying the same thing. Indeed, the *excellence* of our salvation in Christ is a major NT theme. It was typified by the way Esther interceded for Israel; she could have simply asked for her own life to be spared, but she asked for that of all Israel. And further, she has the courage (and we sense her reticence, how difficult it was for her) to ask the King yet another favour- that the Jews be allowed to slay their enemies for one more day, and also to hang Haman's sons (Es. 9:12). She was achieving the maximum possible redemption for Israel rather than the minimum. Paul again seems to comment on this theme when he speaks of how Christ became obedient, "*even* to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8), as if perhaps some kind of salvation could have been achieved without the death *of the cross*. Perhaps there was no theological necessity for Christ to die *such* a painful death; if so, doubtless this was in His mind in His agony in the garden. “If *it* be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mt. 26:39) may not simply mean 'If it's possible, may I not have to die'. The Lord could have meant: 'If *it*- some unrecorded possible alternative to the cross- is *really* possible, then let *this* cup pass'- as if to say 'If option A is possible, then let the cup of option B pass from me'. But He overrode this with a desire to be submissive to the Father's preferred will- which was for us to have a part in the greatest, most surpassing salvation, which required the death of the cross.

Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those that heard- This is the standard proof for a non-Pauline authorship of Hebrews. But see on 1:1. The "us" and "we" in Hebrews refers to the wider readership and don't have to demand that the author includes himself in the reference. There are other examples of this e.g. "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32). "We" should no longer be tossed around by false teachings (Eph. 4:14) surely precludes Paul personally. In Hebrews, the "we" who need to take more earnest heed to the Gospel is surely the readership rather than the author (Heb. 2:1). The personal notes at the end of chapter 13 are hard to interpret as written by anyone other than Paul. Even

if the "we" must include Paul, "Those that heard" would refer to the disciples, whom Paul was not among. They "confirmed" the Lord's own message. It could be argued that Paul is saying that he had heard the message directly from the Lord on the Damascus road, as he emphasizes in Galatians; and what he heard was corroborated by the witness of the disciples. Read this way, the argument would be that the "us" referred to someone who had heard the message spoken through the Lord Jesus directly, and had the content of it confirmed to him by the disciples. And that "us" could only be Paul personally. In this case, this verse confirms rather than questions Paul's authorship.

2:4 *God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various powers and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*- The purpose of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit was to confirm the spoken word of the disciples, the eye witnesses and first hearers of the Lord Jesus (2:3). This clear purpose of these gifts is proof of itself that they were not for all time; once the Lord's message and the inspired interpretation of it had been codified in the New Testament, there was no need for these miraculous gifts to confirm the authority and veracity of the preachers.

2:5 *For not to angels did He subject the world to come, of which we speak*- Paul now returns to his theme of the Lord's superiority over Angels. The great salvation made possible by the Lord's death means a place in God's Kingdom, when the world shall be subject unto us- and not to Angels. Whatever their future role, Paul implies that our status in the future Kingdom will be far greater than that of the Angels currently. "Did He" rather than "will He" reflects suggests that the whole plan of our salvation has already been effected in God's purpose and will. The subjection of the world to us was what Paul spoke about- in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God coming on earth.

2:6 *But one has somewhere testified*- As noted on 13:22, this is the kind of language appropriate to a transcript of a talk or lecture.

What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that You visit him?- The parallel between mankind generally and "the Son of Man", Messiah, clearly places this "Son of man" as one of mankind, and not God. But it is this total humanity of the Lord Jesus which is the basis of His exaltation above Angels, as the argument goes on to demonstrate. This is also answering the tendency within parts of Judaism to think that the Messiah would be some kind of Angel or pre-existent spirit which visited earth. Note that God is mindful of man because He visits him- which He does through His Angels (visiting is Angelic language). Thus God is mindful (literally mind-full!) of us because of the Angels "visiting" us with trials and observation "every moment" (Job 7:18). His mind was full of us in that He 'visited' humanity in His Son. Note that the Son did not visit earth; God visited not the earth but mankind, in that He manifested Himself in His Son who was born of our human nature. And who were we, a tiny planet in an infinitely expanding cosmos, and just a few of us two legged beings on its surface, that God Almighty should plan our salvation and high exaltation through the nature and sacrifice of His only begotten Son...

Heb. 2:6-9 is an example of the inspired writer using expected reader response and expectations in order to make a point. Having spoken of how the world to come will be given to redeemed human beings and not to Angels, the writer goes on to quote from the Psalms to prove that point. We begin reading the quotation assuming it's talking about humanity generally; but as it goes on, we realize it's talking about the pre-eminent Son of Man, i.e. the Lord Jesus. Notice how in :9 He is called "Jesus",

with no 'Lord' or 'Christ' added on. The point of it all is to make us perceive how totally identified is Jesus with humanity as a whole; a passage which speaks in its context of humanity generally is allowed to quite naturally flow on in meaning to apply to the Lord Jesus personally. It's a majestic, powerful way of making the point- that the Lord Jesus was truly one of us.

2:7 *You made him a little lower than the angels, You crowned him with glory and honour and did set him over the works of Your hands*- The context of Ps. 8:5 is of David's exaltation after killing Goliath. David sees in his victory the possibility for the exaltation generally not only of Israel but of all humanity. The individual in view is interpreted specifically as Jesus (:9). And it is likewise true that His exaltation is the possibility for the exaltation of all Israel and all humanity, insofar as we are "in Him" and identified with Him in baptism. The making of man or the Lord Jesus for a short time lower than the Angels is no evidence of His pre-existence or Divine incarnation in Him; for the words in their original context apply to the man David and to "man" generally. The idea is that man, and the Lord Jesus, is made for a little while / period lower than the Angels, and Paul takes this as implying that both the Lord Jesus and ourselves shall be exalted higher than the Angels, seeing we are only for a short period made lower than them.

2:8 *You did put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He subjected all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not see all things subjected to him*- The "him" is mankind generally and also specifically the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. 15:27,28; Eph. 1:22;5:24 use the same language to describe our subjection under the Lord's feet, becoming thereby His footstool. But the Gospel must yet advance, and those obedient to it must yet subject more parts of their lives to His kingship. Through His Spirit, we are progressively subjected to Him (Phil. 3:21). And finally, all things on earth shall literally be subject unto the Lord Jesus; and that includes Angels. For His superiority over Angels is the context of this passage. The same word is used of how Angels have been made subject unto Him (1 Pet. 3:22).

2:9- see on Rom. 3:19; Phil. 2:8.

But we behold him who has been made a little lower than the angels- Jesus- crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering of death, whereby, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every person- The focus is now moved from mankind generally to the Lord Jesus, the pre-eminent "son of man". He has been exalted to glory and honour, perhaps by implication a glory greater than of the Angels because of His suffering of death. The implication might be that Angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35,36) but the Lord did, and was thereby exalted above them. The Lord's exaltation is ours, and repeatedly we read in Hebrew 2 of the Lord's total connection with humanity in order to save and exalt us. That connection was not with Angels but with humans; for the Lord was not an Angel, seeing His mission was identification with men and thereby to achieve their salvation. His death was supremely a tasting of death for every man. Seeing Angels cannot die, the Lord's death was a clear enough statement He was no Angel but human, dying for His people. Death is the ultimate human fear and problem; and the Lord tasted every man's death, every man's ultimate fear and struggle. This was by God's grace because what is man, that He should be so mindful of us as to give His only begotten Son to identify with us and save a few of us.

By God's grace, the Lord tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (Heb. 2:9 NEB). In His death

He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. “To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)" (Phil. 1:29). He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). “His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link “*our* sins" and “his *own* body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for* us, and we must lay down our lives *for* Him (1 Jn. 3:16).

Heb. 2:9 seems to describe the Lord *in His time of dying,* in the suffering [not just the experience of, but the suffering associated with] death, as “crowned with glory and honour". There He was crowned not with thorns but glory and honour, from God's perspective. The physical sufferings of the cross were an especial cause of spiritual temptation to the Lord; just as physical pain, illness, weakness etc. are specific causes of our temptations to sin. Heb. 2:9 defines the Lord's 'sufferings' as specifically "the suffering of death", the sufferings associated with His time of dying. Heb. 2:18 RVmg. then goes on to say: "For having been himself tempted in that wherein he suffered". The sufferings of death were therefore an especial source of temptation for Him. Truly did He learn obedience to the Father specifically through the process of His death (Heb. 5:8). Let's seek to remember this when we or those close to us face physical weakness, illness and pain of whatever sort. The Greek words *charis* [grace] and *choris* [apart] differ by one very small squiggle. This is why there’s an alternative reading of Heb. 2:9: “So that apart from God [*choris theou*] he [Jesus] tasted death for us”. This would then be a clear reference to the way that the Lord Jesus felt apart from God at His very end. Not that He was, but if He felt like that, then this was in practice the experience which He had. Thus even when we feel apart from God- the Lord Jesus knows even that feeling.

2:10 *For it became Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation*- The God for whom are all things wishes to bring many sons to glory- not just one, the Lord Jesus. He who could do all things, whose are all things, worked out His purpose of having many glorious sons through giving them an author of salvation who was perfected through sufferings. That salvation has to be authored for each son makes it personal, and the relationship between the author and the authored the more intimate. The false idea of each person having an inherent "immortal soul" totally destroys the wonder of eternal salvation being personally authored for each of us. The same word for "author" is used in this sense in 12:2, where Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. By His grace He began faith in people, and the grace / gift of His Spirit finishes our faith in salvation. Through that path the Lord Jesus is the author of our salvation.

Perfect through sufferings- The Lord Jesus alone could say, with full meaning, “I am”. Who He appeared to be, was who He essentially was. He alone achieved a completely integrated, real self. He was what Paul called the “perfect man”, the completed, integrated person (Eph. 4:13). But He had to work on this. Hebrews always speaks of Him as “perfected”, as a verb (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28)- never with the adjective ‘perfect’. Apart from being a major problem for Trinitarian views, this simple fact sets Him up as *our* pattern, whom the Father seeks like wise ‘to perfect’. Yet the path the Lord had to take to achieve this was hard indeed. His final point of

perfection was reached at the moment of His death; the sufferings of death elicited within Him that final point of completion / perfection. Which was why He died at just that point. And this adds infinite meaning to the sufferings of death which are our common experience.

2:11- see on Heb. 11:26.

For both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of the same nature- This is yet more evidence that the Lord was not an Angel. He had the nature of those whom He sanctified in order to achieve that sanctification. This inspired principle is profound and underpins the representative nature of the Lord's work and sacrifice. The sanctifier must be of the same nature as the sanctified. This raises a serious question about the validity of the Mosaic sacrifices; they were only acceptable by reason of the truly representative Messianic sacrifice to which they pointed forward. And as Paul will later point out, it was therefore not possible for the blood of animals to take away human sin; the sanctification had to be achieved by a sanctifier of the same nature. But "of the same nature" is literally "out of one". The argument could equally be that they were of the same Father, which is why He is not ashamed to call us brothers, for we are of the same one Father. In this case, Paul read the virgin birth as no fundamental barrier to the Lord's identification with us, for we and Jesus are all "of the same one", i.e. God.

For this cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers- The very fact Christ calls us His brothers (as in Mt. 12:50) is seen as proof of Christ's humanity, that it was men and not Angels who were His brothers. The Lord shall be ashamed of His association with some at the last day, and of us He will not be ashamed in that day (s.w. Mk. 8:38). But His unashamed association with us begins now in this life. Because God's Son is unashamed now of having us as His brothers, therefore the Father is not ashamed to be known as our God (11:16 s.w.).

2:12- see on Mt. 28:10.

Saying: I will declare Your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation will I sing Your praise- The Psalm quoted predicts the Lord's crucifixion. His prayer thoughts to the Father then included His awareness that the *ekklesia*, the church or "congregation", were His brothers. For He realized that it was through His sacrifice that a new family was being created. The declaration or preaching of the Father's Name to us was supremely through the Lord's death on the cross. The cross was the supreme declaration of the Name (Jn. 17:26); the first letters of the Hebrew title over the cross spelt 'YHWH'. And that declaration of the Name in the naked, bleeding, betrayed and crucified Christ was to us. And the Lord looked forward, perhaps in literal terms, to singing praise to the Father in the midst of His brothers. This all hardly sounds as if the Lord Jesus was "God the Son". He positioned Himself in the midst of His brethren, singing God's praise- even after His exaltation.

2:13 *And again: I will put my trust in Him*- The fact the Lord Jesus needed to trust the Father is cited as an example of His humanity, and therefore proof of His not being an Angel- for Angels do not need to exhibit trust or faith in God. The quotation from Is. 8:17 goes on to state that God is hidden from the majority of Israel- relevant to the Hebrew Christians who were wondering how so many in Israel could be wrong, and who were returning to the majority, the broad way of Judaism. The original context speaks of the isolation of Isaiah and his family within Israel; "I", even if Israel *en masse* do not, "will put my trust in Him"; the majority in Israel had stumbled (Is. 8:15), a figure Paul elsewhere uses about Israel's stumbling on the rock of Jesus as

Messiah. And it was all because they had not truly understood God's law (Is. 8:20) which spoke so fully of Jesus as Christ.

And again: Behold, I and the children whom God has given me- Isaiah is a confirmed type of Christ, and his school of prophets typical of the saints. "I (Isaiah) and the children (prophets - Is. 8:16) whom the Lord hath given me" (Is. 8:18) is quoted here as referring to Christ and His brethren. Other instances of Isaiah being a type of Christ can be found by comparing Is. 6:10 with John 12:39-41 and by appreciating that "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me... to preach good tidings... to comfort all that mourn" (e.g. Hezekiah) is primarily concerning Isaiah's message of hope to Israel during the Assyrian invasions, although it is quoted concerning Jesus (Is. 61:1,2 cp. Luke 4:18). Is. 8:16-18 could be taken as Isaiah saying that he had decided not to teach his school of prophets any longer, but rather to just personally focus upon his own relationship with God: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him". The next verse is however quoted in Heb. 2:13 about the Lord Jesus and His brethren being of the same nature: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts". The Hebrew writer therefore understood this statement to reflect an intense unity between Isaiah and his "children", be they his literal children [Immanuel and Mahershalalhashbaz] or his spiritual children. It seems to me that Immanuel could've been some kind of Messiah figure- but for whatever reason, he didn't live up to it and the prophecy was therefore given a greater application to the Lord Jesus. Likewise, the "children" Isaiah refers to in Is. 8:18 became the faithful children in Christ under the new covenant, according to how Heb. 2:13 quotes it.

2:14- see on Gal. 1:4; Rev. 20:5.

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same nature; so that through his death he might bring to nothing him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil- The language of sharing and partaking does not mean that the Lord only shared part of our nature; for we the children are sharers or partakers in flesh and blood, and we are fully human. He likewise participated or shard fully in our condition. Not an an actor, playing out a theological necessity that was scripted in the heavenly text, but in full total reality.

“Him that had the power of death, that is the Devil” (Heb. 2:14) may refer to the fact that “the sting (power) of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the (Jewish) Law” (1 Cor. 15:56; see also Rom. 4:15; 5:13;7:8, where ‘the Law’ that gives power to sin is clearly the Jewish law). Bearing in mind that the ‘Devil’ often refers to sin and the flesh, it seems significant that ‘the flesh’ and ‘sin’ are often associated with the Mosaic Law. The whole passage in Heb. 2:14 can be read with reference to the Jewish Law being ‘taken out of the way’ by the death of Jesus [A.V. “destroy him that hath the power of death”]. The Devil kept men in bondage, just as the Law did (Gal. 4:9; 5:1; Acts 15:10; Rom. 7:6–11). The Law was an ‘accuser’ (Rom. 2:19,20; 7:7) just as the Devil is. Hebrews 2:14 states that the Devil was destroyed by Christ’s death. The Greek for ‘destroy’ is translated ‘abolish’ in Ephesians 2:15: “Having abolished [Darby: ‘annulled’] in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”. This would equate the Devil with the enmity, or fleshly mind (Rom. 8:7) generated by the Mosaic Law; remember that Hebrews was written mainly to Jewish believers. The Law itself was perfect, in itself it was not the minister of sin, but the effect it had on man was to stimulate the ‘Devil’ within man because of our

disobedience. “The strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor.15:56). “Sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me (Rom. 7:8,11). Hence “the wages of sin (stimulated by the Law) is death” (Rom. 6:23). It is quite possible that the “sin” in Romans 6, which we should not keep serving, may have some reference to the Mosaic Law. It is probable that the Judaizers were by far the biggest source of false teaching in the early church. The assumption that Paul is battling Gnosticism is an anachronism, because the Gnostic heresies developed some time later. It would be true to say that incipient Gnostic ideas were presented by the Judaizers in the form of saying that sin was not to be taken too seriously because the Law provided set formulae for getting round it. The Law produced an outward showing in the “flesh”, not least in the sign of circumcision (Rom. 2:28).

This passage places extraordinary emphasis upon the fact that the Lord Jesus had human nature: “He *also himself likewise*” partook of it (Heb. 2:14). This phrase uses three words all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. He partook “of the *same*” nature; the record could have said ‘he partook of *it* too’, but it stresses, “he partook of the *same*”. The passages hammers home the same truth multiple times: "Himself... likewise... in like manner... partook... the same". The Lord's humanity was of huge moment to Paul. It is the basis for our salvation. The Lord partook in our nature, and we are made partakers in Him unto salvation (Heb. 2:14 cp. 3:14; 12:10; 2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13). As He partook in our nature, so we partake in Him and symbolize it by partaking at His table (s.w. 1 Cor. 10:17,21,30). His humanity, when preached and understood, is a powerful invitation to partake in Him by baptism and a life lived in Him. A Divine "God the Son" has no such appeal.

2:15- see on Heb. 5:7.

And might deliver all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage- The reference is to Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The "devil" who was slain in :14 could then allude to Pharaoh. But Israel were delivered from a greater bondage- to the law and the inevitable fear of death which it inculcated in sinful man (see on :14). It is the fear of death, the subconscious awareness in every human being that they have sinned and must die, which is here defined as the psychological bind which keeps people in bondage. The message of freedom from sin and death which is in Christ is only attractive to those who are honest enough to get in touch with themselves and realize that this is indeed the psychological tie that binds them. We can only experience the joy of release from bondage if we perceive we were in bondage; and such joy can only come from a firm persuasion that if the Lord were to return right now, we really will be saved. For anything less than that is not good news, just a fearful sense of responsibility to judgment to come, against which we vainly hope our knowledge of some true theology will somehow triumph.

The fear of death grips our society more than we like to admit. The Swiss psychologist Paul Tournier observed the huge “number of people who dream that they are locked in, that everywhere they come up against iron-bound and padlocked doors, that they absolutely must escape, and yet there is no way out”. This is the state of the nation, this is how we naturally are, this is the audience to which we preach. And we preach a freedom from that fear. Because the Lord Jesus was of our human nature- and here perhaps more than anywhere else we see the crucial practical importance of doctrine- we are freed from the ranks of all those who through fear of death live their lives in bondage. For He died for us, as our representative. How true are those inspired words. “To release them who through fear / *phobos* of death were all their

living-time subject to slavery" (Gk.). Nearly all the great psychologists concluded that the mystery of death obsesses humanity; and in the last analysis, all anxiety is reduced to anxiety about death. You can see it for yourself, in how death, or real, deep discussion of it, is a taboo subject; how people will make jokes about it in reflection of their fear of seriously discussing it. People, even doctors, don't quite know what to say to the dying. There can be floods of stories and chit-chat… all carefully avoiding any possible allusion to death. This fear of death, in which the unredeemed billions of humanity have been in bondage, explains the fear of old age, the unwillingness to accept our age for what it is, our bodies for how and what they are, or are becoming. I'm not saying of course that the emotion of fear or anxiety is totally removed from our lives by faith. The Lord Jesus in Gethsemane is proof enough that these emotions are an integral part of being human, and it's no sin to have them. I'm talking of fear in it's destructive sense, the fear of death which is rooted in a lack of hope. There's a passage in *Hamlet* which speaks of not so much fearing death as "the dread of something after death" (some of the sentiments in Job 18 are similar). And modern psychoanalytical studies have confirmed this. A large part of the fear of death is the fear of what follows. For those in Christ, whilst like their Lord they may naturally fear the process of death, their future is secured; they know that death is unconsciousness and will end ultimately in a bodily resurrection at the Lord's return, after which they will share in His eternal life. For them, "the fear of death" in its ultimate form has been removed (Heb. 2:14-18).

This passage in Hebrews 2 says that the Lord can deliver us from such bondage because he is our representative, our brother, of our nature, not ashamed of His connection with us (2:11). Reasoning back from this, we can see that Moses' ability to redeem Israel from Egypt, his appropriacy for the task, was because he had openly declared that he was one of them. Yet the wonder of that was lost on them. And if we are not careful, the wonder of the fact that the Lord had our nature, that He was our representative and is *therefore* mighty to save, can be lost on us too. The thrill of these first principles should ever remain with us.

All the Judges in some way prefigured the Lord; for they were "saviours" raised up to deliver God's weak and failing people in pure grace, when according to God's own word, they should have received the due punishment of rejection (Neh. 9:27,28). He who delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15) was typified by all those earlier deliverers of God's people from bondage (cp. Mt. 1:21). The "great salvation" of Heb. 2:3 which the Lord achieved was foreshadowed by the great deliverance wrought by Samson (Jud. 15:18).

2:16 *For truly not to angels does he take hold in association; but he took hold of the seed of Abraham*- The tense of "take hold" suggests the Lord is doing this now. He does not take hold of Angels to associated with them, but of humans; because He had been intended through His nature to take hold of the seed of Abraham. The Lord Jesus is therefore an active Lord, calling men and women, taking hold of them by His calling. But the word translated "take hold" is used in the Gospels of the Lord taking hold of men literally (Peter on the water in his loss of faith, Mt. 14:31; the blind man of Mk. 8:23; the little child of Lk. 9:47 with his immature faith and understanding; the paralyzed man of Lk. 14:4). In all these incidents we see acted parables of how the Lord takes hold of people in all manner of situations; and He does so on account of having fully shared our nature. The seed of Abraham referred to a singular seed, not a plural (Gal. 3:16)- the Lord Jesus personally. But He takes hold of men and women and His humanity is a beckoning to them to become 'in Him' by baptism, so that they too are part of the seed (Gal. 3:27-29).

Angels cannot die: “Death... does not lay hold of angels” (Heb. 2:16 Diaglott margin). If Angels could sin, then those who are found worthy of reward at Christ’s return will also still be able to sin. And seeing that sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), they will therefore not have eternal life; if we have a possibility of sinning, we have the capability of dying. Thus to say Angels can sin makes God’s promise of eternal life meaningless, seeing that our reward is to share the nature of the Angels. Heb. 2:16–18 repays closer reflection in this context of Angels and possibility to sin. It speaks of the reasons why the Lord Jesus had to be of human nature: “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the [nature of the] seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”. Exactly because the Lord Jesus had to be tempted to sin, He did not have Angelic nature but human nature. His mission was to save humanity from human sin and death, not the Angels who cannot die. So, He had to have human nature so that He could be tempted to sin; and so this section so labours the point that therefore He did not have Angels’ nature. Which, by inference, is *not* able to be tempted to sin. Note how the Bible speaks of “Angels” as if there is only one category of Angel– obedient Heavenly beings.

2:17- see on Lk. 24:6; Jn. 19:13.

Therefore in all things he had to be made like his brothers- The same Greek word is used in 1 Jn. 3:2 of how finally, we shall be "made like" Him. His experiences of life, of our humanity, brought Him into identity with us- so that we might reach final identity with Him. The language of 2:14-18 may well be intended to be talking specifically about the Lord's death. This ongoing process of being 'made like' us came to particular intensity at that time. The hymn of Phil. 2 makes the same point- that the Lord was made like us mentally particularly through His experience of crucifixion and death. His death became ours, so that His resurrection and life shall likewise become ours. But "made like" implies a process, as if through His life experience He progressively came to identify with all men, and this process of identification and total understanding of all men came to a peak culmination in His time of dying. "Made like" means fundamentally 'to assimilate'. He assimilated all that there is in man, so that nobody can ever now complain that there is nobody who understands them. On earth there indeed is not, but there is the Heavenly man who does.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: “I will raise them up a Prophet *from among their brethren* like unto *thee* (Moses)". The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example. Moses was *made like* his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively *made like* us by his life of temptation.

So that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people- The Jewish High Priest was doing a job, and had no personal dispensation which allowed him to be merciful / compassionate (Gk.) to the offerers who came to him or to the people for whom he interceded. The Lord Jesus is a High Priest who has the capacity to show compassion,

who is faithful or trustworthy to do the required work of obtaining our forgiveness. "Things pertaining to God" is an attempt to translate *pros theos*, the very phrase used in Jn. 1:1, "with God" and Jn. 13:3 "to God" (also Jn. 20:17 "I ascend... *pros* my Father"). The Lord is not simply "with God" in a literal sense but He is before God and with Him in the sense that He and the Father are 'together'; and the Lord Jesus is very much with us, on our side. He therefore is able uniquely to get our forgiveness. For He wants to save us... quite simply so. He is God "with us", Emmanuel, bringing God to be on our side in the crucial area of dealing with our sins. When we read of prayer being made by believers *pros theos*, with or before God (e.g. Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:7; Phil. 4:6), this is possible on account of the Lord's mediation for us there. It also explains how Paul could have a clean conscience *pros theos* (Acts 24:16), when there had been a time when he had walked against the goads of conscience. But his heavenly mediator *pros theos* brought him too *pros theos*, because he was "in Christ". There in heaven itself, before God, we have peace and every confidence *pros theos* on account of our Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 3:4; 1 Jn. 3:21). For we are "in Christ", and are therefore and thereby acceptably *pros theos* in Heaven itself (1 Thess. 1:8,9).

2:18 *For because he himself suffered when tempted, he is able to succour those who are being tempted*- This succouring of tempted persons is surely psychological, seeing that temptation is internal to the human heart (James 1:13-15; Mk. 7:15-23). The succouring is therefore through the gift of the Spirit in the hearts / psychology of the believer. The Lord was tempted because He was human; God Himself cannot be tempted (James 1:13). And because He overcame, therefore He is now able to give His Spirit, the mindset He had, to those who are "in Him" and desire to truly be as Him. This verse suggests that in the heat of temptation, at the very moment of it, He is able to provide psychological strength to overcome it. And this is the path to salvation, it is how He saves us in practice. Now is the day of salvation, and so now is the time when He will provide us this "succour" or aid (see on 2 Cor. 6:2). We can boldly say that the Lord Jesus is my helper / succourer [s.w.], so we need never fear a situation that could spiritually swamp us (Heb. 13:6). "Suffered when tempted" doesn't mean that He simply suffered in the sense of experienced temptation. The word is used many times of the Lord's suffering on the cross, and later in Hebrews it is used in this way (5:8; 9:26; 13:12). His identity with our temptations came to a climax of total identity on account of His final sufferings, when He was the most sorely tempted.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Therefore holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus*- Chapter 2 has emphasized that we are the "brothers" of the Lord Jesus. And yet the focus now moves on to the greatness of that supreme "brother". The argument is to counter the relatively low status assigned to the Messiah figure within the Judaism which was beckoning the Christians. Even if they accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, the view of Messiah was far too low, and was not giving due respect to the high status and work of the Lord Jesus. Judaism was at best an earthly calling; we are "partakers" in Christ (3:1; 2:14-18), and thereby of a calling from Heaven, i.e. of God. They were to "consider"/ 'observe or perceive fully' (Gk.) the real nature and wonder of the exalted Lord Jesus. He was a 'sent one', an Apostle, just as He sent us into the world. As the Father sent Him, so He sends us to the world in the great commission (Jn. 20:21). "Confession" means literally that, and

implies that faith involves a literal confession or profession of faith to others. Paul uses it three times in Hebrews (also 4:14; 10:23).

Concentration on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is something which the Hebrew writer so often encourages, in his efforts to encourage the Hebrew believers. After perhaps 25 years of believing (they were probably converted at Pentecost), they were starting to get bored with God's Truth; the will to keep on keeping on was no longer what it was. But because of the cross, because *He paid dearly for you*, because He is now thereby our matchless mediator: hold on, hold fast, *therefore* (a watchword of Hebrews) endure to the end (Heb. 3:1,6; 4:14; 10:21,23). For that great salvation will surely be realized one day. So, concentrate *personally* on the fact that He hung there for you, honour your solemn duty to at least try to reconstruct the agony of His body and soul.

3:2 *Who was faithful to Him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house*- "Appointed" is literally 'made'. The Lord was 'made' High Priest for us at His resurrection (5:5; Acts 2:36). The tense of "was faithful" implies that He was and still is. This High Priest can be trusted; the Mosaic High Priests simply did a job and it was over to God to grant forgiveness and acceptance. But our High priest has a role to play in the granting of forgiveness and mediation of blessing. The reference may be to how God 'made' or appointed Moses and Aaron (1 Sam. 12:6). Although Moses was not the High Priest, he effectively acted as such due to Aaron's inadequacy; hence the Lord's High Priestly role is contrasted to that of Moses, with the hint that the Aaronic High Priest was never fully adequate. One like Moses, but greater than Moses, was required; and that is how Messiah is defined in Dt. 18:15. The language of Moses being faithful in God's house is quoted from Num. 12:7, where "My servant Moses is not so. He is so faithful in all My house" is stated in the context of Moses' superiority over Aaron the High Priest. The house or family / people of Moses was Israel, but Messiah's house is universal in scope.

3:3 *For he has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in that he that built the house has more honour than the house*- Judaism considered Moses worthy of higher glory than any Messiah figure. Again Paul is attacking their concept of Messiah as inadequate. The "house" of Messiah is different to that of Moses; Messiah built "his own house" (:6) and was and is faithful over it. Moses did not build the house of Israel; God did. Moses was placed over it. Messiah built His own house and was faithful over it. "He that built the house" doesn't mean that Christ built the house of Moses. It has a general reference to the fact that Messiah built and rules over *His* house, whereas Moses built no house but was simply placed over the house of Israel at the time. To build a house / family means to have children and raise them. This is what the Lord Jesus has done by having spiritual children of His own nature, as taught previously in 2:13, where the Lord is likened to Isaiah building up his faithful family, and we are as Isaiah's children of prophetic witness. Judaism had so glorified Israel as a people that they were effectively saying that they had as much glory as God who built them. They were confusing the creator and the created, as Paul points out in Romans 1. Effectively, Judaism was making Moses equal to God. The Rabbis argued that by gematria the numerical value of “Moses our Rabbi” was 613, which is also the value of the letters of “Lord God of Israel”. Paul is seeking to refocus them upon the basics- that God is greater than Moses, and Messiah likewise is, for He has built a greater house which He is Lord over.

3:4 *Every house is built by someone; but He that built all things is God*- The Lord Jesus, Messiah, is the builder of the spiritual temple, the house of God (Zech. 6:12). But it was God working through Him to build it, in ultimate terms. Moses was not the

builder of any house, and so God was not in that sense manifested through Him in such work as He was through Messiah.

3:5 *And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken*- Moses was a servant over his house, whereas Messiah had God manifested through Him in building *His* house over which He therefore was and is a true Master *over* His house (:6), and not simply a servant within the house. Moses is frequently called the "servant" (Josh. 1:1,2; 9:24 etc.). But the builder of a house is more than a servant; as the Son of the Divine Builder of all things, He is "over" His own house in a far superior way to that in which Moses served as a servant within his house. The faithfulness of Moses was a testimony towards someone far greater, Messiah Jesus.

If Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

3:6 *But Christ, as a Son over his own house*- As explained above, the Messiah was to "over" His own house / family because He, on God's behalf, was the maker of it. Moses was a servant set over a household, but the Lord's household was made by Himself with God's manifestation through Him. We are that household.

Whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, remaining firm to the end- Clearly enough, we must endure to the end to be saved (Mt. 10:22). We can, by implication, leave the household of Christ. We need to assess any exit from a church community in that light; for so often, disaffected individuals leave a local community and go nowhere, to then fade away in their faith. "Hold fast" is the same word used for the "good ground" 'keeping the word' in their hearts (Lk. 8:15). Without a written New Testament, they would have needed to quite literally remember and mentally keep hold of the word preached. They were to hold fast [s.w.] the confidence they had at the beginning (:14), in those heady days when thousands of Hebrews were baptized in Jerusalem. The same word for "confidence / boldness" is used four times about the early believers speaking "boldly" (Acts 2:29; 4:13,29,31). They were confident of salvation; but with the passing of the years, that joy which came from being confident of the outcome of the judgment seat had subsided. Whether we are still joyfully confident of "the hope", the *elpis*, the firm assurance, is what is finally the litmus test for our faith. We will be confirmed as the Lord's "house" at "the end"; He shall eternally be the master over the family which we have no joined, but which shall be eternally solidified, as it were, at the last day.

We see here that confident rejoicing that we really will be saved is utterly critical. This is what defines whether we are actually the household of the Lord Jesus. This is the lead characteristic of the family. That household is not, therefore, simply predicated upon a joint set of positions on theology. It all depends whether we are confident in the Hope, to the point of rejoicing in it. Rom. 5:2 teaches the same: "through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and in which we *rejoice in hope* of the glory of God". See on :14.

The word for "boldness" is so often used about our lives now, including our boldness before God in prayer- and this will seamlessly become our attitude when we come before God at the day of judgment, with a similar boldness. For our attitude before Him then will be our attitude we have before Him now. It's all about continuity of relationship. This boldness or confidence is not arrogance nor is it self confidence; but the confidence which comes from being in an assured, stable relationship, with none less than God's Son:

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16); Heb. 10:19 "Therefore brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus". Eph. 3:12 "In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him". 1 Jn. 3:21,22 "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him".

2 Cor. 3:12 "Having therefore such a hope [the utter certainty of our personal salvation], we use great boldness of speech".

Heb. 10:35 "Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has great reward"

1 Jn. 2:28 "And now, little children, abide in him. That, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming"

1 Jn. 4:17 "In this way is love made perfect with us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, even so are we in this world".

"Remaining firm to the end" uses the word elsewhere used about the firm certainty of our Hope, because of the Lord's death. Thus Heb. 9:17 "For a will is of force where there has been death"; the New Covenant promises came into personal effect for us through the death of the Lord Jesus. They are thereby "of force" or "firm", and so our Hope is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast [s.w.]" (Heb. 6:19). The solid firmness of the Hope is to be reflected in a "firm" holding on to faith, a solid character built upon this definite Hope.

3:7 *Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit said-*

The understanding is that the words of the Old Testament are God's Spirit speaking; for this is the meaning of the Scriptures being Divinely inspired or in-spirited. The argument begun by "therefore" is picked up again in :12- therefore, "take heed".

Today, if you shall hear his voice- The Hebrew is an appeal: "Oh that today you would hear His voice". The emphasis upon "today" is in the context of appealing for confidence in the certain hope of salvation (:6). We should be able to say with confidence that "today" if the Lord comes or if we die, we shall be saved. This is the meaning of the emphasis upon "today"; Peter has the same idea when writing of our rejoicing in "the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12), the ultimate truth that today at this moment we shall be saved if the Lord returns or we die. In this sense "now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). "This day" we can be that confident- if we hear His voice. And the simple message of that voice is that we really are saved; for Hebrews begins by saying that God has spoken to us in His Son, the message of sure salvation. At this moment we can seek and find the Lord, "while He may be found" (Is. 55:6). The Lord repeats the same argument by saying that "If any man hear My voice... I will come in to him" (Rev. 3:20). Hebrews opened with the statement that the God who spoke by the prophets has spoken to us in His Son; and it is directly from Him that we are appealed to. Hearing the Lord's voice may well allude to the Lord's statement that His sheep hear His voice; and the context of the Psalm 95 quotation is that “He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Ps. 95:7 ASV). The voice of God is therefore mediated to us through the shepherd voice of the Lord Jesus. The simple message we are to believe is that indeed, we are His sheep. We are His household, in the context of the argument here. We are His flock, being led to salvation. And we are to encourage each other in this, whilst ['insofar as now'] it is called "today", because we are in that "today" of salvation (:13).

Whilst the "rest" in view in Psalm 95 is indeed entry into Canaan / salvation, we note more specifically that Ps. 132:14 speaks of Zion as “This is my resting place forever”. Eternity in Zion spoke of eternal fellowship together in His house. The

temple was to have been "a house of rest" for Yahweh (1 Chron. 28:2; 2 Chron. 6:41; Ps. 132:8). Insofar as this Psalm must have relevance to the restoration, as do all the surrounding Psalms, we must see the connection with God's insistence in Is. 66:1 that His place of "rest" ["where is the place of My rest?"] is no longer in any physical location nor temple, but in the humble hearts of His true people. There He will "rest" or abide. Just as the wilderness generation didn't enter the "rest" of the promised land, so He would not "rest" / abide in the physical temple any more. Hebrews 3 quotes these words and interprets the "rest" as a play on the Sabbath rest, and thereby meaning two things: 1) The experience of assurance of salvation now without works but by grace alone, entering into the "rest" of assured salvation; and 2) The future Kingdom of God, the rest which remains for the people of God to enter. This therefore becomes a classic case of Old Testament words having multiple applications over the course of God's working with man towards our final salvation. Heb. 4:4 reminds us that God entered into His rest after six days of creative work (Gen. 2:2). But the rejected Israel will not enter that rest- because they were not part of the new creation God was trying to work with them. This explains why Ps. 95:11 says, "They shall never enter *My* rest," not "they shall never enter *their* rest".

Hebrews was written approaching 40 years after the Lord's death. Perhaps the idea was that God's Kingdom could have been established in AD70. But the Hebrew Christians were falling away from the faith, and in this sense likewise would fail to enter the "rest" of God's Kingdom that was possible in AD70. Paul changes "that generation" to "this generation" in :10 when he quotes it in Heb. 3. This is in line with the argument that "Today..." (Ps. 95:7) appeals to every generation to know that right now, today, this argument is true for them too. And specifically, Paul perhaps saw that a 40 year period from the Lord's death was coming to an end, and the potential establishment of the Kingdom on earth, the entry into "rest", was not going to happen because like Israel, the new Israel were turning away from their Shepherd.

3:8 *Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, like the time of testing in the wilderness*- We note that it was the Jews who hardened their hearts when Paul preached to them (Acts 19:9). The entire period of wilderness wanderings was characterized by Israel putting God to the test; they were not confident of their final salvation, and were ever looking for evidence from Him. He had brought them out of Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb; and there were daily miracles of provision in the bread and water which pointed forward to the Lord Jesus. This desire for yet further proof is seen in various guises today; from the phlegmatic, wavering believer who wants more 'scientific proof' of God to those in the Pentecostal movement ever seeking visible evidence that the Lord is amongst them. The word of promise regarding salvation is to be believed and that faith and joy held on to (:6).

"Do not harden your hearts..." (stressed in :15; 4:7) must be compared to the threat "lest any of you be hardened" (:13). The whole context here is of attitudes within the heart. And God will confirm us in those attitudes, hardening those who harden their hearts. Clearly the allusion is to Pharaoh, in the context of the wilderness experience of Israel. He is recorded as hardening his own heart; and God hardened his heart in response. Mental attitudes will be confirmed by God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, confirming us in spirituality; and the evil spirit from the Lord which hardened Saul in the positions he himself chose to adopt.

"The time of testing" refers to how man puts God to the test (:9). The quotation from Ps. 95 is in turn a quotation from Ex. 17:7, where Israel are spoken of as taking out a law suit against God, 'putting to the test' in the sense of a legal test. The same word translated 'test' is also translated 'plead' in a legal sense of pleading in court (Jud.

6:31,32; Ps. 43:1; 1 Sam. 24:15 "judge between me and you, and plead my cause"; Is. 3:13;). Paul in Romans 3 develops this idea, saying that God has been put in the dock by men who disbelieve His grace and utterly certain promise to save. And He will be justified in His word of promise, and every man who legally probes Him will be found a liar. Israel put God in the dock, "to the test", over the same issue- whether He would really give them Canaan, and whether 'Yahweh is really with us or not' (Ex. 17:7). The answer to that question is ultimately in Emmanuel, the Lord Jesus, 'God with us'.

3:9 *Where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years*- See on :8. They continually tested God even though they saw His works daily; the manna, water from the rock, shekinah glory over the tabernacle, the cloud by day and the fire by night. But still they tested Him. As noted on :8, this is our warning against ever seeking 'hard proof'. Even if we were to be daily given it, this would not take away the desire to test God. It is total faith in the word of promise which is required (:6), and the confirmation is not in petty experimentation day by day which 'proves' God, but rather has it already been provided in the Lord's death and resurrection.

3:10 *Therefore I was displeased with this generation, and said: They do always err in their heart. They did not know My ways*- This 'displeasure' or 'grief' lasted 40 years (:17 s.w.); it was a daily grief that they did not trust Him. To believe in God is to trust Him. In Hebrew, belief is trust. And no amount of petty testing of God will give us that trust. Psalm 95 gives us a unique insight into God's internal thought processes. He "said" within Himself that they problem was in Israel's hearts. They had seen "His way in the [Red] Sea" (Ps. 77:19), He had "made known His ways to Israel" (Ps. 103:17), but their heart was far from Him. But "My ways" refers so often to God's commandments; Israel were repeatedly asked to "walk in His ways" as they walked through the wilderness (Dt. 10:12; 11:22; 26:17 etc.). He sought not so much total legalistic obedience to His ways / commandments as to "know" them, to appreciate them, to perceive them in their hearts. The Hebrew word translated "err" is that used for Israel's "wandering" in the wilderness for 40 years (Ps. 107:4). They wandered in their minds, just as humanity does today- from this passing passion to that, toying with that principle or fantasy and then with this... and that mental lack of stability was reflected in how they literally wandered. This aimless wandering through life is the parade characteristic of the unbelieving world. Only a firm hope in Christ and our future salvation can give us this mental and emotional stability which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The error in the heart was simply not believing in salvation. They did not know His ways in that His ways are of salvation and grace.

3:11 *As I swore in My anger: They shall not enter into My rest*- God has emotion. The generation that were promised the rest, permanence and stability of the promised land were not given it, because in their hearts they wandered. And this, as noted on :10, was reflected in their wandering in the wilderness. This implies that God changed His mind about letting Israel enter the land; for He had promised that generation "rest" in that He promised them the land (Josh. 1:15). Or as Num. 14:34 (A. V. mg.) says: "Ye shall bear your iniquity, even forty years, and ye shall know the altering of My purpose". These were the words of the Angel to Moses. The apparent change of plans could be seen as more appropriate if it concerned the Angel which led them; and yet the Angel all the same was manifesting God. This oath they would not "enter into My rest" was solely because they did not believe (:18). The immorality, idolatry etc. were relatively incidental to the essential issue- that they did not believe He would give them rest in the promised land. And therefore He did not give it to them. The

context of all this is Paul's appeal for confident hope in our future salvation (:6). It is unbelief and a constant demand for 'proof' which was their problem which cost them salvation.

3:12 *Brothers, take care, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, causing you to depart from the living God*- The problem was in their hearts (:10), their unbelief (:18). The appeal to "take care" was not just to the Hebrew believers as individuals, but to them as "brothers" to ensure that not only in themselves personally but amongst none of them there should be this heart of unbelief. The immediate issue was of not believing in the Lord Jesus. This was the reason why they were no longer confident of salvation; because Judaism had eroded their faith in the saviour, their real confidence in salvation was waning, and likewise their joy (:6). It was this heart of unbelief in Messiah as Saviour which would cause them to depart from God, the God who is alive in His risen Son. This was the great tragedy- that Judaism which so prided itself in theism was actually turning people away from real faith in God. Because faith in Him is predicated upon faith in His Son.

The unbelief in view is not atheism, but rather disbelief in God's offer of salvation (:18). To disbelieve it is not simply a polite refusal of a proffered gift; it is described here as "evil". They are departing from the living God, from the God who is so alive in His grace to save; and so that will be confirmed by being told to "Depart from me" (s.w. Lk. 13:27). Rejection is simply confirming people in the way they have chosen. By turning away from total confidence in salvation, people are turning away from God. Even if they remain church attenders and professing acceptance of a set of doctrines about Him.

3:13- see on 1 Cor. 10:21.

But encourage one another day by day, so long as it is called today, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin- See on :7 for the significance of "today"; "so long as..." has the idea of 'insofar as now...'. Because we are in the today of salvation, confident of acceptance if the Lord comes now, we should encourage each other in the certainty of our salvation. As noted on :12, the Hebrews were to not only worry about their own salvation but that of others. They were to encourage one another daily, which suggests the audience were daily with each other. This would fit the situation in the Jerusalem church, where it seems they daily encountered each other (Acts 2:46). It was the deceitful nature of sin which could harden their heart; but the 'heart' problem was a disbelief in the sure salvation available in Jesus. But ultimately it was sin which was deceiving them, albeit under the guise of claiming to be more rigorously legally obedient to Judaism. The final issue is between sin and righteousness; the kingdom of this world or the eternal Kingdom of God and His Son; the life of the flesh or the Spirit. It was sin which was attractive to them, and we can infer that this was the fundamental reason they were shying away from confident faith in their salvation. For if we are sure we are to live eternally in God's Kingdom in the spiritual life, we can hardly be enthusiastic for the way of the flesh in this life. So it is the desire to sin which militates against total confidence in salvation.

3:14 *For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to our original confidence, remaining firm to the end*- The word for "partakers" is used of how we are His "fellows" or co-partakers (1:9); we partake in the heavenly calling (:1) and in the Holy Spirit (6:4). We are saved, and yet not finally; we are partakers, but only completely so at the last day, after we have held firm unto the end. The "original confidence" implies they were totally confident of their salvation when they were first baptized; "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16) rang so simply true to them. Salvation is on account of being "in Christ", but we must abide in Him

to the end of our lives. It is then that we are "partakers of Christ". Paul envisaged the Lord's return in the lifetime of believers, and so uses "the end" as a reference to both the end of a believer's life and also to the Lord's coming. The Lord Himself several times defined "the end" as the day of His return (Mt. 24:6,13,14). Paul asks us to hold our faith unto "the end" (6:11), which seeing death is unconsciousness means that he intended us to hold the faith until "the end" of our lives. And yet in effect, our death is His return, for the next conscious moment for us will be His return.

"Our original confidence" suggests that the converts were originally confident of salvation when they first believed. They were full of joy in prospect of definite salvation (:6).This very much sounds like the joy of the early Hebrew converts in Jerusalem in Acts 2, and I suggest that they are the audience of this letter to the Hebrew Christians. The same word for "hold fast" is used in Heb. 10:23 about the need to "hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering- for He is faithful that promised". Their confession of faith was not therefore a profession of doctrinal positions; but a confession that they absolutely believed that they would be saved, that they would live for ever; that Jesus was indeed their Saviour, He on the cross had saved them, they had eternal life [in the terms of John's Gospel]. And all their lives they were to retain that same faith in salvation, exactly because "He is faithful that promised".

3:15 *It is said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion*- The idea of "today" as expounded on :7 is that if we right now hear the Lord's voice, we can rejoice that if today is our "end", then we shall be saved. We have heard in essence the same voice as Israel heard in that the Gospel was preached to them as well as to us (4:2). "The rebellion" is a phrase used only elsewhere in :8, where it refers to the whole period of Israel's testing of God in the desert, rather than some particular moment of rebellion. But the quotation from Ps. 95:8 specifically uses the Hebrew word *meribah* for "the rebellion" or "provocation". Their provocation at Meribah was that they had specifically challenged God to prove He was amongst them, despite having been given so many signs that He was; and they did this at a place called Meribah twice, at the beginning (Ex. 17:7) and at the end of the forty year wanderings (Num. 20:2-13). The observation is made in Ps. 78:18,41 that this latter testing of God was done "in their heart", and it is the heart which is Paul's concern in this section. The hardening of hearts was therefore in refusing to perceive all the evidence which God had already given in Christ and indeed in the miraculous signs which had been witnessed by the Hebrew Christians. Perhaps Paul felt that the 40 year period from the Lord's death was coming to a close, and the Hebrew Christians likewise at the end of a similar period were testing God and desiring to return to Egypt, which is what happened at Meribah (Num. 20:2-13). But the element of 'return' was in that they were returning to Judaism, which Paul sees as 'Egypt'. Stephen made the same connection in his speech (see on 1:1).

3:16 *For who, having heard, still rebelled? Was it not all those who followed Moses out of Egypt?*- The implication could be that having heard the message of salvation, they should not have rebelled. The argument and rhetoric is typical of one which would be used in a verbal address (see on 13:22); as if to say 'And let's remind ourselves, folks, who are we talking about? Who are these rebels who heard the good news but still rebelled? Was it not all those who followed Moses out of Egypt?'. The implication was that it was Christians who had followed Christ out of the world and through the waters of baptism towards salvation (1 Cor. 10:1,2)- who were now turning back to where they had come from. The total failure of that generation is cited as a sober example of a mass collapse of faith; "your whole number" were to perish as

described in :17 (Num. 14:29 "Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number"). Paul in 2 Thess. 2 envisaged a great collapse of faith just before the Lord returned. And here he seems to hint at the same thing by suggesting that the Hebrews were at the point Israel were at in Meribah, at the end of their journey / 40 years, where they turned away and wished to return to Egypt.

3:17 *And with whom was He displeased for forty years? Was it not with those that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?*- The sustained series of rhetorical questions is appropriate to a verbal address- see on 13:22. The displeasure for forty years could suggest that the incident of Meribah, "rebellion" / "provocation", was the one at the start of the forty years; see on :15. Heb. 3:17 RVmg speaks of their “limbs [which] fell in the wilderness”- the picture is of condemned men staggering on through the desert, discarded limbs wasted by some terrible and progressive disease. This is the picture of the condemned. Israel wandering in the wilderness until their carcasses lay strewn over the scrubland of Sinai connects with Cain also being a wanderer after his rejection. He was made a "fugitive", from a Hebrew root meaning to shake, to totter, to reel. He was to wander, shaking with fear, reeling. The word is also rendered 'to bemoan'. It's an awful scene: bemoaning his lot, shaking, wandering, reeling, nowhere. The same image is found in Prov. 14:32: “The wicked is driven away [Heb. to totter, be chased] in his wickedness”.

God grieved over the carcasses of those wretched men whom He slew in the wilderness for their thankless rebellions against Him their saviour. The apostle makes the point: “With *whom* was He grieved?". Answer: with the wicked whom He slew! A human God or a proud God would never grieve over His victory over His enemies. Even in the fickleness of Israel's repentance, knowing their future, knowing what they would subject His Son to, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Jud. 10:16). He delays the second coming because He waits and hopes for repentance and spiritual growth from us. But He praises the faithful for patiently waiting for Him (Is. 30:18; Ps. 37:7). Here we see the humility of God's grace.

The "sin" is defined as unbelief in :18,19- lack of faith in the simple assurance that they would be given the Kingdom. They were idolaters at this time, having taken with them the gods of Egypt. But their sin is defined as one thing- disbelief that they would be in the Kingdom.

3:18 *And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to those that were disobedient?*- Disobedience is paralleled here with "unbelief" (:19) in that faith and works are related. Faith without works is dead. If we really believe that we shall be saved, and can say at this moment of time that in this "today" I shall be saved... then we will naturally seek to be obedient. But what was Israel's particular act of disobedience in the wilderness which led to their being excluded from entering the land? I suggest the reference is to Dt. 1:26: "Yet you wouldn’t go up [AV "refused to go up"], but rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God". They were told to enter the land but refused. Refusal to accept the Kingdom of God is tantamount to disbelief we shall enter it (:19). This is where it is critical to understand "faith" as not simply belief in the rightness and logical correctness of a set of theological propositions. Faith is trust / confidence that we shall be saved. It is to say "Yes!" to the command to enter the Kingdom. If we cease believing this, then we are in that sense disobedient to the command to enter the Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. We thereby judge ourselves as those who shall be rejected from the Kingdom, in that we did not wish to be there ourselves.

3:19- see on Jn. 3:3.

So we see that they were not able to enter in because of their unbelief- See on :18. The essential problem with Israel was not their moral failure but their disbelief that really they would be saved. They did not enter in because they chose themselves not to. But once rejected, they then did attempt to enter the land, not by faith but in their own strength; and they were not able to enter (Num. 14:40-45). This again was a pertinent challenge to the Hebrew Christians returning to Judaism. Entry to the Kingdom of God can only be by faith that we shall do so; any attempt to enter in our own strength will leave us realizing all too late that we "were not able to enter in" because we lacked faith, even if we had belated desire and human effort. The *dunamis* ('ability') to enter the Kingdom is the *dunamis* of the Spirit gift, which is predicated upon faith alone (Eph. 3:16-20); the idea is parallel with not being able to see the Kingdom [cp. Moses seeing the promised land] unless we receive the birth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3,5). "Cannot enter into" in Jn. 3:5 translates the very Greek phrase found here ["not able to enter in"].

HEBREWS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Therefore, while the promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear*-As explained on 3:6, we should be able to say that "today" we shall be saved, and be confident in it, if the Lord returns today or we die. The promise of entering salvation in this sense remains to us; all we have to do is believe. But as in Rom. 11, there is the command to fear because of the real possibility of our being like natural Israel. There is a very powerful parable in the account of the wilderness journey through life, whereby the Red Sea represents baptism, eating the manna daily corresponds to daily feeding on the word etc. This parable is alluded to in so many parts of Scripture. However, only a minority of those baptized in the Red Sea actually reached the promised land. Can we expect the parallel with the new Israel to break down at this point? Just look back at your own Christian experience if you can't believe it. Add to this the number of those who spiritually fall asleep, and the frightening similarity between natural and spiritual Israel comes abruptly into focus.

"Let us fear lest any one of you..." rather than "one of us" could imply that the concern should be that others might fall away. Given the huge blessing ahead, it is the acutest tragedy of the cosmos if any one individual should 'fail to attain it'. And we need to sense that, and be sensitive and caring for all on the path there, lest they stumble from it. The same idea is in Heb. 12:15, "Looking diligently, lest any man [i.e. any other person] fail of the grace of God".

An element of fear is not wrong in itself. Israel in the wilderness had the pillar of fire to remind them of God's close presence, and to thereby motivate them not to sin: "His fear (will) be before your faces, that you sin not" (Ex. 20:20). Notice how Isaac's guardian angel is described as "the fear" in Gen. 31:42,53 cp. 48:15,16.

Lest any one of you should seem to have failed to attain it- The idea is 'be counted / judged to have arrived at it too late'. The same word is used in stating the concern that a man "*fail* of the grace of God" (Heb. 12:15). The events of Kadesh-Barnea seem so often in mind in Hebrews. The people were rejected from entering the land, and yet they then desperately tried to enter the land- but were not allowed. They as it were 'arrived at it too late'. This is the tragedy of rejection- arriving at the truth all too late.

4:2- see on Jn. 15:27.

For indeed we have had good tidings preached to us, even as also they did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard it- The Gospel was preached to Abraham as it is to us (Gal. 3:8). That good news in its simplest form is not a set of theological propositions but the simple promise that by grace we shall receive an eternal Kingdom. The promise of inheriting the land is therefore a key part of the Gospel preached to us. They like the Hebrew believers in Jerusalem had "heard" rather than read this good news. But the message preached must be "united... with" us. This act of unity with the promise of the Kingdom is baptism and abiding in Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). The breaking of bread service is another opportunity to demonstrate our unity with the Kingdom promise in Christ, but unity with it is primarily in living the Kingdom life now. The ultimate "benefit" is that we enter the Kingdom of God (s.w. Mt. 16:26). The word of the Spirit is what profits or benefits us (Jn. 6:63 s.w.). By turning away from the word of promise, the Hebrew Christians were not going to be benefitted or [s.w.] 'profited'. The Jewish rituals upon which they wre now relying would "profit nothing" (Gal. 5:2; Heb. 13:9 s.w.). The idea surely is that Christians cannot assume that they have responded better than did Israel. The same Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached to us as it was to them. Because they were broken off, Paul reasons in Romans 11, we cannot assume that as a community, we shall do better. And clearly only a small fraction of the Old Testament people of God shall enter God's Kingdom. The positive upshot of this approach is that we will not be so easil disillusioned with the church as we know it- if we understand that probably only a minority of them are serious Kingdom people.

The Greek here is difficult. The sense could well be "they were not united in faith with those who listened". The "those who did hear / listen" would then refer to Joshua and Caleb. As at several points in Hebrews, it seems that the events of Kadesh-Barnea are being alluded to. Israel turned against Joshua and Caleb rather than being united to them.

4:3- see on 2 Cor. 4:6.

For we who have believed do enter into that rest, even as He has said: As I swore in my anger: They shall not enter into My rest- The emphasis is upon the word "They". Because some would not enter the rest, the implication is that some would. This is a parade example of a cup half full rather than half empty attitude. It is typical of Paul's positivism, which should be seen in our thinking too. We "do enter" in the sense that we shall enter if we believe; a futuristic present middle indicative. Here we have the 'now but not yet'. We are in that rest, in that we do not trust in works. And yet in another sense, we labour today as God laboured, in order to come to that rest when the Lord returns.

Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world- The Kingdom has been prepared for us "from the foundation of the world" and we are to "enter" it as they were to enter the "rest" of Canaan (Mt. 25:34). So the tragedy was and is that those who have heard the word of promise of the Kingdom and who do not believe it... are missing out on a possible future that was carefully prepared for them from the beginning. It was not a question of doing enough works- all the necessary works had been done, the Kingdom prepared. They 'just' didn't believe it, didn't want it. To disbelieve in salvation is to spurn what was finished and totally prepared for us from the beginning.

4:4 *For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: And God*

rested on the seventh day from all His works- "A certain place" is again language appropriate to a verbal address, where the reference would not be turned up in the synagogue scrolls (see on 13:22). Again we see the doctrine of inspiration- for the author's comment that "God rested..." is quoted as God speaking. God's "rest" was not from exhaustion; He ceased working then. The works of creation were finished; and the finished works of :3 are our salvation. All the work of the physical creation was done with our eternal salvation in view. To spurn it is to spurn creation and all its intentions, to turn away from all things into the darkness of nothingness. This theme of works being finished and ceasing is picked up in 4:10; if we have believed, and "today" have effectively entered the Kingdom rest by faith, then we too have ceased or 'rested' (s.w.) from reliance upon our works. And this was just the message needed by the Hebrews who were falling away from faith and turning to works for justification.

4:5 *And in this place again: They shall not enter into My rest*- The point is being made that the "rest" of Gen. 2:2 is the same "rest" which God intended His people to share in Psalm 95. The sabbath rest therefore speaks of the Kingdom. It is as if God invites us to identify with Himself as having laboured, but now ceasing from that labour in 'rest'. The idea has been put forward that the seventh day of creation represents the 1000 years of the Millennium, and therefore this should begin at the end of the 6th day, i.e. 6 days or 6000 years after creation, if one day is as a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8). The view is therefore pushed that the Lord must return around the year 2000 AD, taking Biblical history as spanning 4000 years from creation to the Lord Jesus; and seeing His appearance as that of the sun on the fourth day. But this view whilst ingenious is problematic. Hebrews quotes almost exclusively from the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text, and so do many of the inspired New Testament writers. But the chronology presented in the Septuagint is very different from that in the Masoretic text; and the history from creation to the Lord Jesus is significantly shorter as the ages and order of the genealogies are different from the MT. And the idea of a literal millennium is also open to serious question, as noted on Revelation 20. The "rest" in view is a cessation from work and enjoyment of God's grace.

4:6 *Seeing therefore it remains that some should enter therein, and they to whom the good tidings were earlier preached failed to enter in because of disobedience*- God's plan will not totally fail. Some will enter the Kingdom rest. The good news of inheriting the Kingdom was preached to the Hebrews in Egypt and afterwards, but they disbelieved. But the rest of the Kingdom is still planned, prepared from the foundation of the world. Here in :6 "disobedience" is cited as the reason for their failure to enter; but the obedience in view was obedience to the challenge to simply believe that they would enter the Kingdom. See on 3:18,19.

4:7 *He again defines a certain day, a today, saying through David a long time afterwards (in the words already quoted): Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts*- As explained on 3:6, that "today" is our today; in that right now at this moment, if we hear and believe His voice that promises us eternal inheritance in the Kingdom, we can be saved. We can be assured that if we die today or the Lord returns today, we shall be saved. By grace. This is the crucial importance of life and living today. And again we see the point made about Divine inspiration- God spoke through David in his Psalms. This emphasis upon inspiration was necessary because there were sectors within Judaism which denied the Divine inspiration of anything apart from the Pentateuch. The appeal to not harden hearts is of course alluding to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who hardened their hearts and were confirmed in it by

being hardened by God. The point is that the Israelites who left Egypt repeated the same attitude- they too hardened their hearts, they thought like Egyptians. Despite, like the Egyptians, having seen evidence of God's hand through the signs and wonders done. The Hebrew Christians were in the same position.

4:8 -see on Josh. 22:4.

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day- The argument of Judaism was that Joshua-Jesus had given Israel rest. But of course Paul is arguing that a greater Jesus-Joshua offered the rest still to come. The "another day" is the "today" of :7. The today of entering the rest can be our today if we believe we are saved and shall enter into the rest. It's a case of 'now but not yet'; in a sense we are saved and have entered the rest, having ceased from justification by works; but in another sense we still await literal entry into the Kingdom of God.

4:9 *There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God*- God's people are not therefore the same as Israel after the flesh. Israel were not given "rest", their temporary possession of parts of the territory promised to Abraham was hardly entering the Sabbath rest. For they were removed from that land and did not permanently possess it, neither did they inherit the entire territory promised from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The argument in :8 has been that Israel as a people did not enter the 'rest'; they perished in the wilderness. But the 'rest' is to be given to the true "people of God", thus redefining God's people away from purely natural Israel. The 'rest' they will receive is entrance into the Kingdom of God. The idea may therefore be that Israel could have not only entered Canaan instead of perishing in the desert, but if obedient, some form of the Kingdom of God could have come in their national experience.

So often in Hebrews, the Day of Atonement is in view. The descriptions of the Tabernacle in chapter 9 are all from the viewpoint of that day. So it is possible that the Sabbath that is in view here is not the weekly Sabbath, but the Day of Atonement sabbath, when the people had been cleansed from sin. That will be the ultimate "rest".

4:10 *For he that is entered into His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*- The sense may be that we are no longer justified by works insofar as in prospect we have entered the rest, as explained on :8. The "he" in view is the believer who is also doing part of God's creative work; as God ceased from works, so does the believer. But we are not yet entered into that rest, and must "give diligence to enter into that rest" (:11). In that sense we are continuing to work as God did during the six work day of creation. The works were finished from the foundation of the world (:3; see note there), but in another sense the Father and Son are working continually because their Sabbath rest has not yet come (Jn. 5:17 and context). Our work is therefore part of God's creative work, leading towards the re-creation of Eden on earth, the Kingdom of God in its full literal establishment when the Lord Jesus returns.

"Ceased from his own works" could imply 'has stopped trusting in his own works'. But the phrase for "own works" is that used in Mk. 13:34, where each believer is given "his own work" to get on and do until the Master returns. On one hand, we are saved, we are in the "rest". But in another sense, we are still working, doing creative work, looking to enter that rest at the Lord's return. Perhaps this connects with the concluding thought in Heb. 13:21, that God would "Make you perfect [bring to completion] in every good work to do His will". And it is the same phrase used in Rev. 22:12, promising that at the Lord's coming, He will render "to every man according as his [own] works shall be". In this sense, the ceasing or resting from work

is at the Lord's return. Now, we are in the six days of creative work. Our work for Him is not in vain- it is creative.

4:11 *Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no one fall by the same kind of disobedience*- As noted on :10, we are in a sense in the rest in that our salvation at this "today" is assured, but in another sense, we have not yet entered and are to labour as God did during the six days. Our labour and diligence is not just for ourselves personally, but to the end that nobody falls as the bodies and limbs of disobedient Israel fell in the wilderness. Those who no longer relied on the works of the Law but on faith were living in the spirit of the Sabbath- they had in some sense entered the rest. But despite their reliance on faith, works were still necessary: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God... let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall." (4:9,11). This is a perfect cameo of the whole situation; in prospect we are in the Kingdom, but have a very real possibility of falling from grace, and still need to labour for the final entry into that Kingdom. And that labour is especially in ensuring that others do not fall after the pattern of the Hebrews' fall.

4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart*- The motivation for the receding appeals is that the word of God, as a title for the Lord Jesus, is right now "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of [our hearts]" in mediating for us. Such language is appropriate to a person, Jesus as the word of God, rather than to the book called the Bible. And Hebrews began by saying that as God had spoken through the words of the prophets, so He now speaks to us in His Son. But this is how He was in His mortal life here- for then He was "of quick understanding" too (Is. 11:3). He would have had a way of seeing through to the essence of a person or situation with awesome speed- and this must have made human life very irritating for Him at times. But who He was then is who He is now. It's the same Jesus who intercedes for us in sensitivity and compassion. See on Heb. 4:15. The reference to the sharp knife dividing up the inner parts of the body is an allusion to the priest preparing the sacrifices, and :14-16 develops this theme in relation to the Lord Jesus as our priest. Our innermost parts are laid bare and placed on the altar before God. And it is the state of the heart which is, for this priest, the most significant part of the offering. Hence the earlier appeals not to harden our hearts but to be completely confident in our hearts that in this "today", at this moment, we shall be saved.

4:13 *And there is no creature that is not revealed to his sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to give account*- We must see the urgency of our position as sinners; we are condemned now and yet we can repent; but not then. Heb. 4:13 makes the point that we right now are “naked” before the eyes of Him to whom we right now give account [*logos*]. We will give that *logos* in the last day (Rom. 14:11,12); yet before the Word of God, as it is in both Scripture and in the person of the Lord Jesus, we face our judgment today, in essence. And we are pronounced “naked” before Him. Yet therefore, in this day of opportunity, we can come boldly before the throne because we have “such an High Priest”, as Heb. 4:16 continues. We must realize that we are right now revealed and laid open to the Lord Jesus; just as much as we shall be at the last day. We are to live now as if we are in His judgment presence.

4:14 *Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the*

Son of God, let us hold fast our confession- He endured our nature and temptations *so that* He might be an empathetic High Priest (consider the implications of Heb. 2:10,17; 4:14,15; 5:1,2); the Lord was fully consecrated as High Priest after His death, and it was then that He began to be the sympathetic, understanding High Priest which the Hebrew letter speaks of. The fact that He knows so thoroughly our feelings here and now, especially our struggles for personal righteousness, should *of itself* encourage our awareness of and relationship with Him.

The continuity between the mortal, human Jesus and the exalted Lord of all which He became on His ascension is brought out quite artlessly in Heb. 4:14: "Our great high priest, who has passed through the heavens". The picture is of "this same Jesus", the man on earth, passing through all heavens to 'arrive' at the throne of God Himself to mediate for us there. His ascension to Heaven was viewed physically like this by the disciples, and is expressed here in that kind of language of physical ascent, to bring home to us the continuity between the man Jesus on earth, and the exalted Lord now in Heaven itself. The allusion is also to the Jewish idea of there being many 'heavens'; whether there were or not, Paul's idea is that the Lord has passed through them all. The same Jesus who was once here is now there; He who once experienced temptation can thereby strengthen us in our temptations. We need to realize that nobody can be tempted by that which holds no appeal; the Lord Jesus must have seen and reflected upon sin as a possible course of action, even though He never took it. And for the same reason, several New Testament passages (e.g. 1 Tim. 2:5) call the exalted Lord Jesus a "man"- even now. Let's not see these passages merely as theological problems for |Trinitarians. The wonder of it all is that Jesus after His glorification is still in some sense human. He as "the pioneer of our faith" shows us the path to glory, a glory that doesn't involve us becoming somehow superhuman and unreal.

Because the man of our nature, Jesus, passed through all the heavens to the actual throne of God, so great is His exaltation... therefore we should hold fast to the original confession of our faith. This implies that the Hebrews had originally confessed at their baptisms that they believed that for sure they would be in the Kingdom. We have fled for refuge to lay hold on the Hope, the utter certainty, that is set before us (Heb. 6:18 s.w.). It was this confession of faith which they were to hold on to; holding the hope is the same as holding the confession of faith. For that was faith / trust / belief in the sure Hope, that they really would be in the Kingdom, that the good news of the Kingom applied to them. This is what it is to believe the good news of the Kingdom- to believe that I will be there.

4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things, yet did not sin*- See on :14. Note carefully the tense used: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities". It doesn't say 'which could not have been touched...', but rather "which cannot [present tense] be touched". It's as if He is *now* touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Which opens a fascinating window into what having God's nature is all about. When we by grace come to share it, it's not just that we will dimly remember what it was like to be human. We will somehow still be able to be touched by those feelings, in sympathy with those who still have that nature during the Millennial reign. The only other time the Spirit uses the Greek word translated "touched with the feeling..." is in Heb. 10:34, where we read of how the Hebrew Christians "had compassion of me", the writer of the letter. The link, within the same

letter, is surely to reflect how they had been so compelled by their Lord's fellow feelings toward them, His fellow feeling for them right now, that they in turn came to feel like this for their suffering brother. A related word is found in 1 Pet. 3:8: "Having *compassion one of another*, love as brethren". The wonder of the fact that Jesus feels for us, that He can enter into our feelings, should result in our seeing to get inside the feelings of others, empathizing with them, feeling for them and with them. It's this feature of the Lord Jesus which enables Him to be such a matchless mediator. Stephen saw Him *standing* at the right hand of the throne in Heaven, when usually, Hebrews stresses, He *sits*. The Lord was and is so passionately, compassionately, caught up in the needs of His brethren that this is how He mediates for us. And it's the same Jesus, who walked round Galilee with a heart of compassion for kids, for the mentally sick, for oppressed and abused women... even for the hard hearted Pharisees whom He would fain have gathered under His loving wings, such was His desire for others' salvation. Jesus, despite the moral splendour of Divine nature, is still able to be *touched* with the feeling of our infirmities as He intercedes for the forgiveness of our sins.

4:16 - see on 2 Sam. 7:27.

Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace- Coming boldly before the throne of grace in prayer is again judgment seat language (see on :13). Our attitude to God in prayer now will be our attitude to Him at the judgment; we are 'bold / confident' before Him now, and we can be 'bold' then (1 Jn. 2:28). Before the throne of grace we find grace to help; whereas we will “find” [s.w.] mercy in the day of judgment (2 Tim.1:18). Each time we receive grace to help before the throne, we are anticipating the judgment day scenario. The throne *of grace* suggests that it is prayers of confession and seeking of forgiveness and salvation which are in view. Hebrews so often uses the word "therefore"; *because of* the facts of the atonement, we can *therefore* come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience. This "boldness" which the atonement has enabled will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4); our experience of imputed righteousness will lead us to have a confidence exuding through our whole being. This is surely why 'boldness' was such a characteristic and watchword of the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 4:17).

That we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in our time of need- The throne of grace means the throne from whence grace is given. And if indeed it is prayers for forgiveness and strength against temptation which are in view, then the grace given is in forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit to withstand temptation; this is the 'succouring' spoken of in 2:18 (see note there). The allusion is to Lk. 1:30. When you ask for forgiveness, be like Mary in her spiritual ambition in asking to be the mother of Messiah.

The Lord Jesus is prophetically described as He “that hath boldness to approach unto me” (Jer. 30:21 RV). This is applied to us, who boldly approach the Father in prayer likewise. We are bidden to draw near to the Father in prayer just as the Son drew near (Heb. 4:15,16). He wishes us to share in the loving relationship which there was between Him and His Father, and prayer is crucial to this. Really appreciating that Christ is our personal High Priest to offer our prayers powerfully to God, should inspire us to regularly pray in faith. "Time of need" is literally 'at the right time'; hence GNB "just when we need it". And it is in the moments of temptation and realization of failure that we need grace; and we are given it precisely then. Bear in mind that Paul often uses *charis*, "grace", to refer to the gift of internal strengthening

by the Spirit. It is this which will be our "help", a word only elsewhere used about the rope that undergirds a ship in difficulty in a storm (Acts 27:17). This is what holds us together.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin*- "Taken from among men" continues the emphasis upon the Lord's humanity; the language recalls the Passover lamb being taken out from along the flock. The connection of thought is that the high priest was appointed "for men" because he was "from among men"; this is a repetition of the argument in 2:11 that the sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of one". The Lord's high priestly work is not simply to get forgiveness for our sins; but to enable us to offer our "gifts", the sacrifices of our lives, our thank offerings, in a way acceptable to God.

5:2 *He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray*- The same idea of "going astray" is found in Lk. 11:6 AVmg., where the man “out of his way” comes knocking on the Lord’s door. The image of the shut door is that of rejection; but here the door is opened, and the man given “as much as he needs” of forgiveness and acceptance. It is the same word used of the lost sheep which had "gone astray" and left the flock of God's people (Mt. 18:12,13). But the word is used of how the Judaists had gone astray (Mt. 22:29; M. 12:24), of how the Hebrews ancient and modern had gone astray (Heb. 3:10) and of how Judaism would make many 'go astray' in the last days before His coming (Mt. 24:4,5; 1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7). Even though the Hebrews had been made to go astray, Paul assures them of the Lord's continued compassion, just as much as for them who did not know the true way and were "ignorant". The Lord Jesus has compassion upon those who are ignorant of His Gospel, just as He does upon those who fall out of the way to life (Heb. 5:2, alluding to Christ as the good Samaritan who comes to stricken men). His current activity and range of feeling is amazing. It is He who brings men to faith in God (1 Pet. 1:21; 3:18), revealing the Father to men (Lk. 10:22; Jn. 14:21), calling and inviting them to the Kingdom (1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 22:17), going out into the market place and calling labourers (Mt. 20:3-7), almost *compelling* men to come in to the ecclesia (Mt. 22:8-10), receiving them when they are baptized (Rom. 15:7). He is the sower who sows the word in men's hearts, working night and day in the tending of the seed after it has take root (Mk. 4:27); the one who lights the candle in men's spirituality so that it might give light to others (Mk. 4:21). He permits and sometimes blocks preaching (1 Cor. 16:7,4,19; 2 Cor. 2:12; Phil. 2:24; 1 Thess. 3:11).

Since he himself is also subject to weakness- This speaks of the Mosaic high priests; the Lord likewise was "subject to weakness" and thereby qualified and motivated to be sensitive to the weak. "Subject to" in Greek really means 'impeded by', and is used of being bound with a chain (Acts 28:20) or having a weight tied around the neck (Lk. 17:2). The limitations, impediments and frustrations of human weakness were experienced by the Lord and motivate His sensitivity to us. And yet we notice the present tenses. He is not subject to weakness now, but in a sense the Lord “is” because of His total identification with us. In the same sense, He is described as being right now “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). This is so on account of His intense identification with us now, in all our aspects of weakness.

5:3 *And because of it, he is required to offer sacrifices both for his sins and also for the sins of the people*- The "weakness" of the high priest included moral weakness,

which required him to offer also for his own sins. The references to the High Priest are to present the Lord Jesus by way of both similarity and contrast. Thus the way the high priest served standing is contrasted with the way the Lord serves sitting (10:11); and the contrast here at this point is that the Lord had no sins to offer for. The Lord indeed was subject to weakness (:2), but without the need to offer sin offerings for his own sins.

5:4 *And no one takes this honour to himself, but only when he is called by God, even as was Aaron*- The Lord was likewise "called" and was not self-appointed; but the similarity then turns to contrast when we realize that He was not of the tribe of Levi, and was appointed not by birth from the tribe of Levi but through having been begotten at resurrection from the dead (:5). He was 'called' by reason of being the son of God, not the son of Levi through Aaron.

5:5- see on Rom. 8:26.

So Christ also did not glorify himself to become a high priest, but He that spoke to him: You are my Son. This day have I begotten you- The calling to be high priest was through His resurrection, which was when He was declared God's Son in power (Rom. 1:4). There is no record of the Father ever speaking these words to the Son; perhaps they were spoken in some intimate ceremony at or after the resurrection or ascension. The new kind of high priesthood in view is predicated upon sonship- but not of Aaron, but of God. God's Son was therefore high priest, on account of His begettal from the dead in resurrection. It was this which qualified Him to be High Priest, having been subject to human weakness (:2) and also to glory and power over that weakness.

5:6 *As also He said elsewhere: You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek*- This spoken word of inauguration and appointment was likewise uttered in the "day" when the Lord was "begotten" in resurrection (:5). There is no evidence here for any personally pre-existent Christ. The Hebrew writer alludes to and subverts the defiant language of the Maccabees in repeatedly describing Christ as "priest for ever" (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:3,17,21)- when this was the term applied to Simon Maccabaeus in 1 Macc 14:41. See on Lk. 20:25. The nature of the priesthood was to be eternal; so although there were similarities with the Aaronic priests, the priesthood of Messiah was not identical with it. It was after the order of Melchizedek.

5:7 *Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his Godly fear*- Verses 7-9 lead up to the climactic statement that therefore, the Lord was ordained as high priest at His resurrection and glorification. It could be argued that the prayers offered up refer to the prayers of believers which the Lord offered to the Father even in the days of His flesh. The plural "days" would encourage us to read this offering up of prayers as something which happened during His lifetime; for He did indeed pray the Father for His followers (Jn. 16:26). This was as it were training and preparation for His inauguration as High Priest over God's house which occurred at His resurrection. His behaviour and experience during His mortal life was what qualifies Him for the work He now does. And yet the prayers to be saved from death, offered with crying and tears, surely also reference the Lord's praying for personal salvation in Gethsemane. He "was heard"; not in the form He wished, i.e. immediate deliverance from the crucifixion process, but in that the essence of His prayer was heard, and "for his Godly fear" He was resurrected. The Lord's humanity is so stressed here that Trinitarians really need to recalculate their

positions based on these words. The Lord's prayers for others and His prayers for His own salvation from death are really part of the same nexus. This is why it's not so much a question of two possible interpretations [the prayers offered being of others, or, His own prayers for salvation]; but rather these two options are really part of the same picture, and this is why they artlessly merge into each other. For as Robert Roberts put it, "He died for Himself that it might be for us"; His salvation was so tied up with ours.

"With strong crying and tears" is certainly to be connected with Rom. 8:26, which speaks of the Lord making intercession for us now with "groanings which cannot be uttered". One might think from Heb. 5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross or in Gethsemane. But Rom. 8:26 says that His groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as He hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what He now goes through as He intercedes for us with the Father.

Heb. 5:7 can be understood as describing the Lord on the cross as a priest offering up a guilt offering for our sins of ignorance. He did this, we are told, through "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears". This must surely be a reference to "Father forgive them". Those were said with a real passion, with strong crying, with tears as He appreciated the extent of our sinfulness and offence of God. There is a connection between these words and those of Rom. 8:26,27, which describes Christ as our High Priest making intercession for us "with groanings". "Groanings" is surely the language of suffering and crucifixion. It is as if our Lord goes through it all again when He prays for our forgiveness, He has the same passion for us now as He did then. Think of how on the cross He had that overwhelming desire for our forgiveness despite His own physical pain. That same level of desire is with Him now. Surely we can respond by confessing our sins, by getting down to realistic self-examination, by rallying our faith to truly appreciate His mediation and the forgiveness that has been achieved, to believe that all our sins, past and future, have been conquered, and to therefore rise up to the challenge of doing all we can to live a life which is appropriate to such great salvation. See on Lk. 23:34.

Oscar Cullmann translates Heb. 5:7: "He was heard in his fear (anxiety)". That very human anxiety about death is reflected in the way He urges Judas to get over and done the betrayal process "quickly" (Jn. 13:28); He was "straitened until it be accomplished" (Lk. 12:50). He prayed to God just as we would when gripped by the fear of impending death. And He was heard. No wonder He is able therefore and thereby to comfort and save us, who lived all our lives in the same fear of death which He had (Heb. 2:15). This repetition of the 'fear of death' theme in Hebrews is surely significant- the Lord Jesus had the same fear of death as we do, and He prayed in desperation to God just as we do. And because He overcame, He is able to support us when *we* in our turn pray in *our* "time of need"- for He likewise had the very same "time of need" as we have, when He was in Gethsemane (Heb. 4:16). Death was "the last enemy" for the Lord Jesus just as it is for all humanity (1 Cor. 15:26). Reflection on these things not only emphasizes the humanity of the Lord Jesus, but also indicates He had no belief whatsoever in an 'immortal soul' consciously surviving death. The Lord had a quite genuine "fear of death" which enables Him now to save us from the bondage of fearing death (2:15). This "fear of death" within the Lord Jesus provides a

profound insight into His so genuine humanity. We fear death because our human life is our greatest and most personal possession... and it was just the same with the Lord Jesus. Note that when seeking here to exemplify Christ's humanity, the writer to the Hebrews chooses His fear of death in Gethsemane as the epitome of His humanity.

5:8 *Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered*- A difficult verse for Trinitarians. This learning of obedience doesn't suggest there was ever any disobedience, but rather that the Lord progressed spiritually to the point when He was made fully mature, or "perfect" (:9). That point of final completeness was the same point at which He authored eternal salvation, and that point was at His death. The Lord's Divine Sonship cannot be used as any reason to think that the Lord somehow had spirituality easy; He still had to learn obedience in a progressive manner. And "*a* Son" rather than *the* Son suggests that for the purposes of spiritual growth, His Sonship functioned in a similar way that our sonship to the Father does.

But the learning of obedience through suffering may not necessarily refer to a progressive lifetime of obedience. Rom. 5:19 uses the word in speaking of how through the Lord's one act of obedience, in contrast to Adam's one act of disobedience, many are made righteous. That specific moment of obedience was in the death of the cross; Phil. 2:8 makes this explicit, in calling for us to have the mind of the crucified Christ and to follow Him in His obedience to death, even the death of the cross. This all leads on to the same word being used in :9 in calling for our obedience to Him- to He who was in turn obedient, asking us to follow His pattern. The things which He suffered would then refer to His final crucifixion sufferings rather than to the sufferings of His life. And Hebrews uses the word for "suffering" specifically in the context of the Lord's suffering at the time of His death (Heb. 9:26; 13:12).

5:9 *And having been made perfect, he became to all those that obey him the author of eternal salvation*- The authoring of salvation was on account of the Lord's death; as noted on :8, the final suffering of the cross brought the Lord to the point of total obedience and completion / perfection. The obedience in view in :8 was to the call to be obedient to the death of the cross, as in Phil. 2:8. There in the naked body of the Lord on a stake of wood outside Jerusalem, covered in blood and spittle and apparently defeated and forsaken by all... was the mind which was finally and totally obedient and perfected in every way. This was the moment the Lord had in mind when speaking of all how He aimed to finish or perfect God's work (Jn. 4:34; 5:36). It explains why the same word is used of how the Lord finished or perfected all at the moment of His death (Jn. 19:28), leading to the cry "It is finished". His moment of total moral perfection and completion was as it were eternally set in stone; for the same word is used of how the Son is perfected [AV "consecrated"] for evermore (7:28). And for those in Him, He shares that acme of spiritual triumph and achievement; for we in Him are "perfected for ever" (10:14). We too are on a path towards our spiritual perfection or maturing (12:23 "the spirits of just men made perfect"). In this lies the huge significance of old age and the time of dying; whereas in secular terms, life is seen as closing down once old age is reached, and significance of existence decreases rather than increases, as it does for those who are being led towards a point of completion or 'perfection'.

5:10 *Pronounced by God a high priest*- The Levitical priests became such by reason of age and birth; whereas the Lord's high priesthood was as it were created, He was pronounced a high priest rather than becoming one by default.

After the order of Melchizedek- A non-Levitical priest, greater than Abraham, whose office did not depend upon genealogy, who was both a King and a priest.

In the commentary on Melchizedek in Hebrews Paul admitted he was going deep, speaking of things which could only be grasped by very mature believers (Heb. 5:10,11,14). It is therefore not wise to base fundamental doctrine on the teaching of such verses; nor should the Melchizedek passages loom large in the minds of those who are still coming to learn the basic doctrines of Scripture. "This Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem), priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him" is spoken of as being "without father, without mother, without descent (genealogy), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:1,3). From this it is argued by some that Jesus literally existed before his birth, and therefore had no human parents. Jesus has a Father (God) and a mother (Mary) and a genealogy (see Mt. 1, Lk. 3 and cp. Jn. 7:27). 'Melchizedek' therefore cannot refer to Him personally. Besides, Melchizedek was "made *like* unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3); he was not Jesus himself, but had certain similarities with Him which are being used by the writer for teaching purposes. "After the similitude of Melchizedek there arises another priest", Jesus (Heb. 7:15), who was ordained a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5,6). The language of Hebrews about Melchizedek just cannot be taken literally. If Melchizedek literally had no father or mother, then the only person he could have been was God Himself; He is the only person with no beginning (1 Tim. 6:16; Ps. 90:2). But this is vetoed by Heb. 7:4: "Consider how great *this man* was", and also by the fact that he was seen by men (which God cannot be) and offered sacrifices to God. If he is called a man, then he must have had literal parents. His being "without father, without mother, without descent" must therefore refer to the fact that his pedigree and parents are not recorded. Queen Esther's parents are not recorded, and so her background is described in a similar way. Mordecai "brought up... Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother... whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:7). The author of Hebrews was clearly writing as a Jew to Jews, and as such he uses the Rabbinic way of reasoning and writing at times. There was a Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not" (See James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 276 note 59)- and it seems that this is the principle of exposition being used to arrive at the statement that Melchizedek was "without father". Seeing no father is mentioned in the Genesis text, therefore he was "without father"- but this doesn't mean he actually didn't have a father. It's not recorded, and therefore, according to that Rabbinic principle, he effectively didn't have one.

The book of Genesis usually goes to great lengths to introduce the family backgrounds of all the characters which it presents to us. But Melchizedek appears on the scene unannounced, with no record of his parents, and vanishes from the account with equal abruptness. Yet there can be no doubt that he was worthy of very great respect; even great Abraham paid tithes to him, and was blessed by him, clearly showing Melchizedek's superiority over Abraham (Heb. 7:2,7). The writer is not just doing mental gymnastics with Scripture. There was a very real problem in the first century which the Melchizedek argument could solve. The Jews were reasoning: 'You Christians tell us that this Jesus can now be our high priest, offering our prayers and works to God. But a priest has to have a known genealogy, proving he is from the tribe of Levi. And anyway, you yourselves admit Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Sorry, to us Abraham is our supreme leader and example (Jn. 8:33,39),

and we won't respect this Jesus'. To which the reply is: 'But remember Melchizedek. The Genesis record is framed to show that such a great priest did not have any genealogy; and Messiah is to be both a king and a priest, whose priesthood is after the pattern of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6 cp. Ps. 110:4). Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek, so you should switch your emphasis from Abraham to Jesus, and stop trying to make the question of genealogies so important (see 1 Tim. 1:4). If you meditate on how much Melchizedek is a type of Jesus (i.e. the details of his life pointed forward to him), then you would have a greater understanding of the work of Christ'.

5:11 *Of him we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing*- "Much to say and hard to explain" is language appropriate to the transcript of a verbal speech; see on 13:22. As the Hebrew writer spoke and wrote to brethren who were not as spiritually mature as they ought to be for their time in Christ, he saw the similarity between himself and the Lord Jesus talking to the crowds, those crowds of very human people who at that time comprised God's ecclesia (Mt. 13:15 = Heb. 5:11). The Hebrews failed to break into this upward spiral because they were "dull of hearing" the word (Heb. 5:11). The Greek word for "dull" implies 'lazy', and yet comes from the same root as the Greek for 'bastard' ('*nothros*' cp. '*nothos*'). Thus because they were not being properly born again by the word of the Gospel they were unable, in subsequent spiritual life, to receive the real power of the word. The fact they had "become" dull of hearing suggests a spiritual collapse amongst them. Their return to Judaism would have meant plenty of attention to the letter of God's word; but this made them dull of hearing to the things of the Lord Jesus. The word for "dull" is only used again in 6:12 where they are exhorted not to be lazy or slow to follow the examples of the faithful. It is a mental, spiritual laziness which seems in view; the idea was that they had not been quick to respond to the things of the Spirit, and their return to legalism was actually lazy man's spirituality rather than a zeal for God. The spiritual life moves at such a pace that it is not for the lazy.

5:12 *For when by reason of the time, you ought to be teachers*- Paul assumes that every believer over time moves towards a position of being a teacher. Teaching is therefore not just for some; we should be holding forth the knowledge we have for others.

You have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God; and have become as those in need of milk and not solid food- The basic principles were those about Jesus, the word and oracles of God made flesh. For it was this which they had turned away from by returning to Judaism. The things of the Lord Jesus, therefore, are the elementary principles of the Gospel; the focus is upon Him rather than upon teachings about the Kingdom of God on earth, which both Christianity and Judaism at the time were broadly agreed upon.

The phrase "elemntary principles of the oracles of God" is better rendered in the RVmg. "the beginning of the oracles…". The truth we learn and teach before baptism is but a springboard so much further. The writer seems to perceive the tendency to forever be digging up the foundations to make sure they are still there; for he says: "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on…" (Heb. 6:1 RV). Sadly, as he goes on to say, he does have to speak to those particular readers of those basics again, but in a healthy spiritual life this shouldn't be the case. They should have used those basic doctrines to lead them further in following the

example of He who was also "made perfect", who reached 'perfection'. As He was "made perfect" (5:9), so we should strive to go on unto a like 'perfection' (5:14; 6:1). Paul doesn't balk at the height of this calling, unattained as it has been by us all. But it is the lofty height towards which the power of the Gospel can propel us. See on Heb. 6:1.

Paul likewise lamented the immaturity of the Corinthians in similar terms: “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food” (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14) surely alludes to Jn. 16:12, although it doesn’t verbally quote it: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”.

5:13 *For everyone that partakes of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe*- It's evident to me, from the very way the Bible is written, that an understanding of the deeper parts depends upon a correct understanding of the basic doctrines. The milk of the word leads on to the meat; Heb. 5:13,14 implies you can only understand the meat if for some time you have been properly feeding on the milk. This means that those who don't understand the basic doctrines of the true Gospel can't really understand the meat of the word. But "the word of righteousness" speaks specifically of the Gospel of imputed righteousness through faith in Christ, by grace and not legal obedience. The Hebrews had not personally experienced that, they had perhaps never fully believed it, and so they needed to be fed with that "milk" of the basic Gospel until they accepted it.

5:14 *But solid food is for the mature, those who by experience of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil*- The "solid food" in view initially is an exposition of Melchizedek. And yet Paul does give this, in chapter 7. But he is prefacing that here by saying that he knew it was beyond most of them. The "experience of use" doesn't mean they were experienced Bible students; for Bible study alone will not lead to maturity. The experience is as explained on :13; that of feeling and knowing imputed righteousness without legal obedience.

If we stay as babes, taking only milk, we will be unable to discern good and evil. The idea is that as a baby will put anything in its mouth, so does the immature convert. Those who don’t mature on from the milk of the word run the risk of poisoning their spirituality. In the Hebrew context, it meant accepting Judaist false teaching. The drive to maturity isn’t optional; if we lack it, our spiritual health will suffer. And by contrast, the more we grow, the more we will be able to discern what is harmful and what is nutritious. As noted on :13, it is the experience of imputed righteousness by grace which actually increases, rather than decreases, our sensitivity to good and evil. The allusion is to Adam in Eden attracted by the knowledge of good and evil offered through taking the forbidden fruit; and Paul is presenting that fruit as Judaism, which through endless legal codes still didn't give the sense of good and evil as God intended.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to completion*- The "us" would refer to Paul and his team. He wants to press on beyond teaching or re-teaching ["doctrine" = teaching] of the "first lessons" of Christ (GNB). They had heard those "first lessons" from Peter and the apostles when the Gospel was first preached to the Hebrews in Jerusalem. Paul felt that "completion" or "perfection" was to be pushed on towards after the first teachings had been believed. 1

Cor. 13 and Eph. 4 likewise envisage a point of "perfection" or completion. It seems Paul expected the Lord's return in the first century, and saw it is as coming when the fruit was ripe to harvest, i.e. when the believers had spiritually matured into the image of Christ.

We must not see the learning of the basic doctrines and baptism as an end rather than a beginning. It is a tragedy if a man dies knowing and appreciating little more than he did at his baptism. Sunday School Christianity isn't the stuff of the Kingdom of God. We must go on unto perfection. "Let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto full growth" (Heb. 6:1 RV). It almost implies that the Hebrews were so busy *talking* about the first principles that they had omitted to use them as the springboard to *growth*. See on Heb. 5:12.

Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith toward God- "Dead works" could refer to the idea that works of legalistic obedience could bring salvation, without the life of the Spirit. Their "repentance" would have been a re-thinking about such justification by works. Likewise "faith toward God" does not imply that previously the Hebrews were atheists, but rather that the first principle of Christ was of faith in God's justification through His Son, rather than by works.

6:2 *The teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment*- These "first lessons of Christ" which they had forgotten were perhaps taught to the Hebrew Christians during Peter's sermon, the account of which in Acts 2 is certainly abbreviated (it can be spoken out loud in just a few minutes). Or it could be that the regular gatherings of the newly baptized believers in the temple afterwards included this kind of instruction. That judgment will be "eternal", that there is an eternity we may miss, was a first lesson in the faith in Christ. The serious consequence of faith and unbelief were to be accepted and seen clearly.

6:3 *And if God permits, this will we do*- Not in the rest of the letter, but through a visit to Jerusalem to teach them these things again. Paul's last recorded visit to Jerusalem led to his rejection by the Hebrew Christians, betrayal by those he came to give aid to, and his imprisonment and subsequent exile in Rome. So God's will or permission for this was apparently not granted.

6:4 *For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit*- Enlightenment is something done to another; we do not make ourselves see, for we are helpless as spiritually blind persons. The light comes through grace, through having our mental eyes opened by God's initiative upon our hearts. We likewise are "made" to partake in the Spirit, the gift from God to us, the power of change and transformation unto salvation which is placed in the heart of each believer. They were all "partakers" of the heavenly calling (3:1), "the heavenly gift", but would only be "partakers in Christ" if they remained firm in their faith in salvation (3:14). The Corinthians likewise received the Spirit, but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1).

It seems that this passage continues alluding to Israel's experience in the wilderness- a commonly alluded to situation. The 'enlightening' would refer to the pillar of fire which enlightened [LXX] or gave light to Israel on that journey (Ex. 13:21; Neh. 9:12,19; Ps. 105:39). The "heavenly gift" which was "tasted" is clearly the manna which was "rained down from heaven" as a 'gift' (Ex. 16:4; Neh. 9:15; Ps. 105:40; 78:24). These Old Testament references always seem to place the pillar of fire and the manna together. They were partakers of the Holy Spirit in that the Spirit was given to the 70 elders in order to guide them through the desert (Num. 11).

The idea of "gift" would have played deeply upon the patron-client culture of the Greco-Roman world. There was no social security system or state health service. If you fell on hard times, you went cap in hand to your neighbour, family or employer. And within their culture, it was expected that you have charity to those in need. But you were forever then in social debt to your saviour. Society viewed in very harsh terms any ingratitude, just taking the assistance at the time and then not showing respect. That respect was to be shown by publically 'talking up' your saviour / benefactor, and loyalty to them in every way. This was at times expressed in superlative, over the top expressions of praise. There is something of this in the superlative expressions of Lordship and magnitude which are applied to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. The way Israel, and the Hebrew Christians, had rejected God's gifts and even crucified His Son [afresh] was therefore to be seen as something deeply disgusting and awful. This is why we are confronted with the symbols of the Lord's death for us, regularly- in order to remind us of our deep and eternal obligation of loyalty to Him.

6:5 *Who tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come*- As in John 6, the manna, the heavenly gift of :4, is seen as representing the word of God's goodness, His assurance of salvation. The allusions to the historical Israel are again clear, as we saw on :4. In this case, to Josh. 21:45; 23:15, where entry into Canaan was "all the good words which the Lord spoke to the children of Israel". They did not however totally possess Canaan at that point; the idea was rather that all God's good words to them had come true potentially. And so it was true for the new Israel. Israel at the Exodus witnessed miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit in order to back up the word of God spoke by Moses and Aaron. So often we encounter this: "Moses announced to Aaron *all the words* of the Lord... and *all the signs*. .. . Moses and Aaron went and Aaron *spoke all these words* .. . and Moses *performed the signs* before the people" (Ex. 4:28-30). Signs / miracles likewise back up the word spoken to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:18-20), and the subsequent reminiscences of these events likewise connect the miracles / signs to the word of God which was spoken (Neh. 9:10-17; Ps. 78:10-11, 32; 105:27-28; 106:7-12, 21-25). Likewise in the first century, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit backed up the spoken word of God. And the Hebrew Christians, many of them baptized around the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, had witnessed this. But again, miracles didn't inculcate real faith. Just as at Kadesh-Barnea the people decided to return to Egypt, so the Hebrew Christians were returning to Judaism. Which was effectively Egypt, with Jerusalem, the city where the Lord was crucified, being termed the city spiritually called Sodom and Egypt (Rev. 11:8). Just as the Hebrew Christians 'threw away your confidence' (Heb. 10:35).

The tasting of the Spirit (:4) is related to but not totally identical with tasting the goodness of God's word. These were the things promised in the word of God's goodness, and they had tasted them as real; and thus had had a foretaste of the Kingdom age. For the current experience of the Spirit is an earnest, a foretaste given "in our hearts", of our future salvation in the Kingdom (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). It is by the Spirit now in us that we shall be immortalized in the age to come (Rom. 8:11).

6:6- see on Mk. 15:15; 1 Jn. 2:28.

But then fell away- I suggested on :5 that the connection is with how at Kadesh-Barnea the people decided to return to Egypt; and so the Hebrew Christians were returning to Judaism, giving up on the Kingdom journey- at least in their hearts. The Hebrew Christians were tempted to "rebel... sin... disobey... disbelieve" (Heb. 3:16-18), which are the very words used of the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea. It was there

that God gave up with that generation: "When Yahweh sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying Go up and possess the land which I have given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God, and you didn't believe Him, nor listen to His voice. You have been rebellious against Yahweh" (Dt. 9:23,24).

The 'falling [away]' is the same word for how the bodies of the rejected Israelites 'fell' in the wilderness ("whose carcases *fell* in the wilderness", Heb. 3:17). The Hebrew Christians were not to "*fall* after the same pattern of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11). The same argument and the same word is used by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:8,12: In the wilderness rebellion, 23,000 Israelites "*fell* in one day" and Christians are to beware lest they likewise "*fall*". So the 'falling away' here refers to death by Divine judgment. Otherwise there would arise the endless fear that our temporal failure, of 5 minutes or 5 years, was a 'falling away' from which there can be no repentance. It is only death which is the point of no further repentance. In the next verses, we will read that it is the land which bears thorns which is to be burnt in the rejection of the last day. Rejection only comes when the fruit is finally seen- whether it is thorns or fruit. The Lord taught that unless we repent, we will perish; or "die in our sins". This of itself implies that whilst there is life, there is the possibility of repentance. It cannot be that in mortal life, a man can cross a line to a point whereby there is no repentance. Once we understand the continual allusions to Israel's experience in the wilderness, then we will see that 'falling away' refers to falling down dead in condemnation; because like Israel, we have stated we do not wish to enter the promised land, and have set our hearts upon returning to Egypt. We note that the argument here is not that some of the Hebrews had at this point fallen away, indeed the rest of this chapter is quite positive about the audience. He writes in :4 of "those..." who fell away, i.e. the dead Israelites in the desert- not any still living Hebrew Christian. Because the falling away is ultimately in death.

It is impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame- It is not impossible for anyone to repent. But a person cannot be spiritually renewed to repentance whilst they are crucifying the Lord afresh. Paul is addressing the Hebrews who have fallen away and is urging their repentance. So he clearly means that they cannot be renewed again whilst they are re-crucifying the Lord. He uses a related word in saying that how the Hebrews 'fell' in the wilderness is a warning to the Hebrews of his day (3:17; 4:11). It could be that by "then fell away" Paul is speaking from the perspective of judgment day; those who fall condemned in that day cannot be renewed again to repentance. We noted on Acts 3:26 that the gift of the Spirit involved not only forgiveness but repentance itself; they were led to repentance, renewed to it. Repentance us a gift from God, granted by Him (Acts 11:18) and also not granted by Him to some (Is. 6:9,10 "lest they should turn again / repent", as with 1 Sam. 2:25 and the hardening of Pharaoah's heart not to repent). But whilst the giving of the Spirit is not just at baptism and can continue throughout mortal life, it cannot operate on those who were once enlightened but refuse to stop crucifying the Son of God and shaming Him. They had been once renewed- the new life of the Spirit had been given them, they had become a new creation, the gift of the Spirit after baptism had been for them "the washing of regeneration" by the Spirit; but that regeneration / renewing could not again happen whilst they were shaming the crucified Christ. The idea is that the Holy Spirit would not be given again to those who refused it. For the believer, "the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). The "new man is renewed" (Col. 3:10). This new, inward man is renewed by the work of the Spirit; we are "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man... to truly know and understand the love of

Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:16,19). But that renewing by the Spirit cannot occur if a person sets their heart or spirit upon Egypt and gives up on the path to God's Kingdom. This withdrawal of the Spirit is what happened to Saul, he was given another heart, made another man- but the Spirit was taken from him, because he set his heart in the path of jealousy and egoism. We must understand "It is impossible..." as more referring to the limitation of man; for nothing is impossible with God. We think of Mk. 10:27 ("With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God"). Westcott observes: "The use of the active voice limits the strict application of the words to human agency". It is impossible for man to allow himself to be renewed whilst he is crucifying Christ afresh. And that I take to refer to how the Hebrew Christians were returning to Judaism, which had crucified God's Son. This was the real import of caving in to peer pressure and returning to your culture of origin [Judaism]. For by trusting in the ritual sacrifices, they were making the Lord's death to be in vain, and if they were to repent, they would as it were need to have Him crucified again. Or we can read "Seeing they crucify..." as effectively meaning 'Whilst they...'. Repentance, even for crucifying God's Son, was always possible. As the Hebrew Christians themselves knew; for it was they who had been convicted of this sin and had cried out "What shall we do?". Putting the Lord to an open shame implies there was some public dimension to their denial of the Lord. In the spirit of Saul, the Jews were compelling Christian Jews to blaspheme, and to call Jesus "accursed" (1 Cor. 12:3). This often involved mocking and blaspheming His cross.

The falling away, or falling dead, of the Israelites was in refusing to believe they would enter Canaan, and instead deciding to return to Egypt. To turn away from the path to the Kingdom is to crucify Christ afresh, it is to declare Him dead in vain. It is to do despite to the spirit of saving grace. Their decision to return to Egypt was irreversible, even though, like the rejected at judgment day, they sought to reverse it. The Divine comment is that in their hearts, they returned to Egypt. I take that to mean that despite their momentary desire to enter Canaan, they decided in their hearts that they wanted Egypt and not Canaan. Although they did not manage to physically return there, in their hearts they did- and this is how God counted them. Likewise at the day of judgment, there will be no second chances. But "we make the answer now" as to whether we want to keep on the journey to Canaan, or whether in our hearts we are Egypt people. And would prefer nothing better than sitting by the fleshpots of Egypt rather than fighting for the eternal milk and honey of Canaan. As Heb. 3 stresses, they disbelieved in their hearts. The single reason for their failure to enter the Kingdom was their unbelief in their hearts. And it is the same with us.

In the Lord's death we see the heart that bleeds, bared before our eyes in the cross. It is written of Him in His time of dying that He "poured out his soul unto death" (Is. 53:12). The Hebrew translated "poured out" means to make naked- it is rendered as "make thyself naked" in Lam. 4:21 (see too Lev. 20:18,19; Is. 3:17). The Lord' sensitivity was what led Him to His death- He made His soul naked, bare and sensitive, until the stress almost killed Him quite apart from the physical torture. To be sensitive to others makes us open and at risk ourselves. A heart that bleeds really bleeds and hurts within itself. And this was the essence of the cross. It seems to me that the Lord was crucified naked- hence those who turn away put Him to "an open [Gk. 'naked'] shame". In being sensitive to others, we make ourselves naked. The heart that bleeds is itself in great risk of hurt and pain. The Lord Jesus is not passive in Heaven; He has sensitivity and pain, He can be shamed and crucified afresh by

those who turn away to legalism and Judaism. This of itself opens a window onto what it may mean to have Divine nature.

It was this same category who in 10:29 trod underfoot the Lord's blood and treated it as *un*holy. These one time Christians had become so influenced by Judaism that they considered Him *un*holy and despised His sacrifice, supporting the same Jewish authorities and mentalities which had crucified Him. They re-crucified Him by coming to agree that what the Sanhedrin had done was correct. It was as if by such an attitude, they too were guilty of His crucifixion. This falling away was all a matter of the heart; for no man or human organization can pluck us from the Lord's hand; we shall "never perish" because of that, but only from our own internal lack of faith (Jn. 10:28)

6:7 *For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God*- The land which has drunk in the rain gives forth “herbs meet for them by whom it is tended” (Heb. 6:7 RV). The parallel is intended with "those who have tasted the good word of God" (Heb. 6:5). If the land represents those who respond to the Gospel, as in the sower parable, who are those who tend it? Surely the preachers and pastoral carers. They benefit, they are encouraged, by those whom they have cared for and converted. I've seen this so very often- one goes to exhort, and comes back home exhorted. But this is all part of the intended upward spiral in functional ecclesial life. But the cultivation still depends upon the rain of blessing from God, which has been defined in 6:4,5 as the gift of the Spirit in our hearts. The Spirit is given not just once at baptism, but "often". For our fruitfulness is God's intention; He gives us the Spirit in order to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. The husbandman produces fruit which is appropriate to his labours, and so our eternal future and being will be a reflection of our labours now (Heb. 6:7). Not that salvation depends upon our works: it is the free, gracious gift of God. But the nature of our eternity will be a reflection of our present efforts and the efforts of others for us. The ground brings forth fruit appropriate to those who have worked on it. Does this not suggest that we each bring forth a unique and personally appropriate form of spiritual fruit?

The language of :7,8 very much recalls the promises for obedience and curses for disobedience offered in Dt. 28:1-6; 29:23. The "earth" is therefore an allusion to the land, of Israel. The idea is that the Hebrew Christians stood where Israel did- faced with blessings or curses.

6:8 *But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is rejected and in danger of being cursed, whose end is to be burned*- The parable of the wheat and weeds teaches that at the time of Christ's coming, there will be weeds actively growing in the ecclesia. Those are the "thorns and briers" of Heb. 6:8, the 'thorns' who crucify Christ again (2 Sam. 23:6,7; Heb. 6:6-8). Yet we will, in some sense, rub shoulders with this category if we are in the latter day ecclesia (Mt. 13:27-30). In the last days, the true Christian community simply won't be (isn't?) the spiritually safe place, where error is impossible, which we may have felt it to be in the past. The man of sin, the wicked one, will sit in the very *temple of God*, the ecclesia. The "end" of the rejected is to be later "burnt", as if rejection occurs in the mind of God now, but will articulate the punishment later, at the judgment. There is a play on ideas here, in that "thorns and thistles" were part of the curse; but if we bear them instead of spiritual fruit, then we shall be cursed. If we act as sinners, as the cursed, rather than seeing our potential to rise above- then we shall remain cursed. "In danger of being cursed" is literally 'close to being cursed' [AV "nigh unto cursing"], and probably refers to the soon coming day

of judgment in AD70. And in a wider sense, to our need to live life in the belief that judgment day is coming soon.

6:9 *But beloved, though we speak in this manner, we are confident of better things for you; things that accompany salvation*- This is the kind of positivism Paul employs to the Corinthians. He convicts them of serious failure and tendencies towards condemnation, and then states that he has every confidence in them and rejoices over them (2 Cor. 2:3; 7:16). "Better" is a common word in Hebrews, used of how the new covenant in the Lord Jesus is "better" than the Mosaic system (1:4; 7:7,19,22; 8:6; 9;23; 10:34; 12:24). Paul wishes to be persuaded that they are going to be saved; he uses the same term "better things" of our final salvation in 11:40. We too cannot condemn our brethren, so we are to assume that all baptized believers shall be eternally saved.

6:10 *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work*- They were tempted to think that God did not notice the great love which the Hebrew Christians had shown to their fellow believers in selling their possessions and giving to the poor. Perhaps now in later life they were regretting their past generosity. But Paul encourages them that God would not forget what they did; to think that would be to suggest He is unrighteous.

And the love which you have shown toward His Name, in that you serve the saints and still do- Serving other believers is love toward the Lord's name in that these who needed help were baptized into His Name. Our attitude towards those in Christ is our attitude to Him. "Serve the saints" is a Greek phrase used only elsewhere in Rom. 15:25, again specifically concerning serving the poor believers in Jerusalem. The generosity of the Hebrew Christians towards their poor had been significant and perhaps the greatest ever display of Christian financial generosity.

6:11 *And we desire that each one of you may show the same zeal to have the full assurance of hope until the end*- The great devotion and generosity of the Hebrew believers (see on :10) was zeal indeed; but it was not works of generosity to the poor which would save. They needed to show the same zeal as they had in giving their wealth to the poor in maintaining their assurance of salvation, their "hope" in the sense of utter assurance. The joy they had once had in that assurance was waning, because their faith in Jesus as their saviour was fading and being replaced by dependence upon their own works. Their great works of generosity had earlier been motivated by faith and joy in an assured salvation, but now their works were motivated by a fear they were not saved and thinking that works could bring them salvation.

6:12 *Do not be lazy, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises*-The laziness in view is not regarding works, for they are commended for continuing to care practically for "the saints" (:10). See on 5:11. Paul's concern was that they would continue to totally believe that the promise of eternity in the Kingdom would be fulfilled to them. To maintain a real faith and confident assurance in future salvation, that if the Lord returns now or I die now, I shall be saved... this requires huge mental effort. For it requires our all. If I am sure of my salvation, this takes all my passion, thinking and living. It would be fair to say that this is demanding, so much so that the human tendency to laziness kicks in; we want a quieter, less mentally and practically demanding life, and so laziness can lead to a lack of faith in our future salvation. We must take for live templates those others who believed the promises of salvation and patiently endured in that faith.

6:13 *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself*- We are to be followers of Abraham's example (:12) because in essence, the very same promises have been made to us. The good news of eternal salvation in the Kingdom was preached to Abraham as much as to us (Gal. 3:8). We ought to believe that we will be saved because God made the promise of salvation "by Himself". the whole of God is as it were staked on our being saved. To doubt it is to doubt God and all God stands for.

6:14 *Saying: Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you*- The emphasis is upon "Surely". The blessing is that of eternal salvation, and that a multitude of men and women would become in Christ and be saved in Him, thus bringing about the multiplication of Abraham's seed. The program, the plan and purpose, was "surely" going to work out; and we should be "sure" of this great salvation for ourselves.

6:15 *And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise*- See on :12. This patient endurance was not just a waiting, a sitting it out. Abraham's life was active, and motivated by his belief that the promises of future salvation and inheritance really would come true for him. Abraham received the promise in a limited sense in this life, just as the Holy Spirit is our foretaste of the future inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). Abraham is our example in that he received in his lifetime the promise, to an extent. We have been saved, we should be able to rejoice at this "today" that we will eternally live if the Lord comes for us today. In this sense Abraham is our example of obtaining the promise in this life. Indeed all the faithful "obtained promises" (11:33 s.w.). Abraham's patient endurance is that of :12, he kept on and on believing that the salvation promises would come true; and they did.

6:16 *For men swear by something greater, and in every dispute of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation*- The fact God has promised our salvation on oath should end any dispute within our own minds, or theologically with others such as Judaists, that we really can be saved by faith through grace. Romans 3 however presents the "dispute" as a legal challenge by doubting man against God, putting Him in the dock, judging Him as to whether He really can bring us to the Kingdom. And out of this showdown, every such doubting man is declared a liar. The greatest possible assurance has been given; oaths have to be made upon some higher source entity, and that entity is God. The confirmation should therefore be seen as "final", all our wonderings and hopping between certainty and uncertainty should be no more; the assurance is total and final. This oath is "an end of all strife" (AV), what cannot be contradicted (s.w. 7:7 "without contradiction"). There can be no argument against the proposition that we are saved in Christ right now. The confirmation is in the Lord's death (Rom. 15:8) and the gift of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:21,22; Heb. 13:9 s.w.). But His word of promise is itself confirmed. The arguments every way are for our total assurance that His promise of salvation shall come true for me, today.

6:17 *Therefore God, determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His purpose, confirmed with an oath*- The word of promise was enough, seeing it came from God; but God confirmed it with an oath, because He was "determined" to show us the certainty of the promise. Despite having promised us eternal inheritance, as promised to Abraham, God is eager for us to accept it. He has not just made promises and left us to do our part by believing them. He comes to meet us, using every logical, intellectual and spiritual instrument to do so, and crowning

them all with the death of His Son to confirm the word of promise to Abraham which comprised the new covenant. God discerned that we fear His promise might change; the oath showed it was immutable. Perhaps our wide experience of failed promises and agreements is the psychological root of our difficulty in accepting the most simple truth- that we really shall be saved if we have said 'Yes' to God's purpose of salvation for us. The Galatians like the Hebrews had been "removed" from the Christian Gospel to another (Gal. 1:6); and "immutable" here translates the negative of this word, the 'not-removable' nature of God's promise. The priesthood was "changed" (7:12), but the new covenant promises of God to Abraham of our salvation will not be "changed" as they are not-changeable, "immutable".

6:18 *So that by two immutable things*- The promise of God and the oath confirming it.

In which it is impossible for God to lie- To doubt our salvation is to effectively accuse God of being a liar. But that is impossible. And yet in this sense, as Romans 3 puts it, man has put God in the dock. And yet He shall be justified, and every man shall be declared a liar who has doubted His salvation.

We may have a strong encouragement- God not only promised our salvation but confirmed the promise with an oath. Paul says the same in different terms in Rom. 5:8: "God commends His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly".

Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us- The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ (Heb. 6:18). Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation.

6:19 *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and passing into the presence beyond the veil*- The certainty that we shall be saved is what give us spiritual and personal stability, as an anchor. But the "anchor" in view is not simply that of a moored boat. This anchor enables us to pass beyond the veil into the most holy place, the very presence of God. The allusion is to how the high priest entered the most holy each year to make atonement for Israel with a rope attached to him in case he were to die there and need to be pulled back out of the most holy, so that no man needed to enter the most holy to retrieve the body. The height of the challenge for first century Hebrews is hard to appreciate; we are called not simply to salvation but to the very status of the high priest on the day of atonement. For we are in Christ. We are to go into God's very presence, in Christ, to do the work of atonement for others. This is the spirit in which we should pray for others. And we need no human anchor- for our sure knowledge of future salvation is our anchor.

6:20 *Into which as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*- As noted on :19, it is us who are called to enter the holiest place and God's presence. The Lord Jesus has entered there, but He has done so as a forerunner, whose steps we are to follow. Priestly work is therefore to be

our eternal occupation- seeking salvation and blessing for others. He is like the boy who brings the ship's line to shore ("forerunner"), and then guides the ship to dock. But that dock for us is the most holy place, the presence of God personally, when God Himself shall dwell amongst us in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Here in Hebrews alone in the New Testament is the Lord's simple, human name "Jesus" used so baldly- not 'Jesus Christ', 'the Lord Jesus', just plain 'Jesus' (Heb. 2:9; 3:1; 4:14; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2,24; 13:12). And yet it's Hebrews that emphasizes how He can be called 'God', and is the full and express image of God Himself. I observe that in each of the ten places where Hebrews uses the name 'Jesus', it is as it were used as a climax of adoration and respect. For example: "… whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20). "But you are come unto… unto… to… to… to… to… and to Jesus the mediator" (Heb. 12:22-24). The bald title 'Jesus', one of the most common male names in first century Palestine, as common as Dave or Steve or John in the UK today, speaking as it did of the Lord's utter humanity, is therefore used as a climax of honour for Him. The honour due to Him is exactly due to the fact of His humanity. The juxtaposition of the Lord's humanity and His exaltation is what is so unique about Him. And it's what is so hard for people to accept, because it demands so much faith in a man, that He could be really so God-like. The juxtaposition of ideas is seen in Hebrews so powerfully.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

7:1 *For this Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him*- As noted on 5:14, Paul doesn't consider the Hebrews mature enough for this exposition. But he still gives it. The material in chapter 6 is therefore almost in parenthesis, which is very typical of Paul. There is no hint that Abraham and Melchizedek were personally acquainted before this meeting, although they both were servants of the true God. We might wonder why God didn't connect them earlier. In His wisdom He doesn't always force believers to regularly fellowship with each other, indeed He made Abraham travel all around Canaan rather than telling him to settle near Melchizedek and form some kind of ecclesia or community of believers. And clearly the implication is that Abraham maintained a legitimate relationship with God without needing to use a human priest, even one as good and exalted as Melchizedek. For more on Melchizedek, see on Heb. 5:10.

Paul was writing to Jewish converts. They were under the influence of various Jewish fables about Melchizedek which were current. The Qumran documents include that now known as 11QMelchizedek, which claimed that the Archangel leader of the Angels was Melchizedek, and he would bring salvation to Israel when under Gentile oppression. Hebrews began with the strong argument that salvation is in God's Son, the Lord Jesus, who is not an Angel. And so now the argument is repeated; the Lord Jesus is not Melchizedek [Trinitarians, eager for support of a personal pre-existence of Jesus, totally fail to grasp Paul's point here]. Melchizedek was not an Angel, but a real historical figure ["consider how great *this man* was..."]. He looked forward to the Lord Jesus, who is greater than Melchizedek, just as He is greater than Angels.

The blessing with bread and wine (Gen. 14) clearly looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus. Receiving those elements is therefore a sign of His blessing. He does something for us at the breaking of bread; something happens. He blesses us, and the bread and wine are given to us by Him as the symbol and representation of that blessing. And the argument will develop that this blessing means ultimate salvation

and perfection, whereas all the old covenant priests could offer at mosts was forgiveness for specific sins. The king of Sodom, whom Abraham had saved, likewise came out to meet Abraham. But Melchizedek King of Jerusalem had not been saved by Abraham; it was the kings of Sodom who had been. So Melchizedek, representing the Lord Jesus, blesses Abraham (and his seed "in" him) by grace; for Abraham had done nothing for Melchizedek.

7:2 *To whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all. He was first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also, King of Jerusalem, which is, King of peace-* "King of righteousness" connects with Paul's appeal for the Hebrews to accept the word or Gospel of imputed righteousness in Christ; see on Heb. 5:13, remembering that here in chapter 7 Paul is picking up from Heb. 5:13 after the parenthesis of chapter 6. The connection between righteousness and peace is a feature of Messiah- in Him, they kiss each other (Ps. 85:10), and are the mainstay of the Messianic Kingdom on earth (Ps. 72:3; Is. 32:17; Rom. 14:17). Righteousness is emphasized before peace- "then also... king of peace". "The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Is. 32:17). But in Paul's theology, it is the righteousness of King Jesus which is imputed to us and thereby creates peace with God. This is the much laboured message of Romans 1-8. So we can understand his enthusiastic perception that Melchizedek, a type of Messiah, was king of righteousness "and then also... king of peace".

As discussed on :1, Paul's immediate context was in deconstructing Jewish myths about Melchizedek being some Angel who would save Israel from the Gentiles. "King of righteousness" is the phrase used in the Qumran documents about the supposed "chief good Angel" who would save Israel. Paul again alludes to this wrong conception; his point is that Melchizedek was not an Angel ["consider how great *this man* was..."], but pointed ahead to the Lord Jesus, Israel's true saviour. And He is not an Angel, but is now greater than Angels, and will bring Israel a far greater salvation than any Angel could.

7:3 *He was without recorded father or mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but presented as being like the Son of God, abiding a priest continually-* Without doubt God frames the Biblical record in order to highlight certain facts. Thus there is a marked lack of information concerning the father and mother of Melchizedek in Genesis. God is providing us with an interpretation of how He worded the account in Genesis, making the point that Melchizedek typified Christ. But although we are not to read Hebrews 7:3 at face value, there is no explicit indication to this effect. The objection that the New Testament does not warn us against reading the 'casting out of demons' language literally is therefore not valid. Hebrews 7:3 is one of many examples of where it is imperative to understand the way in which God is using language if we are to correctly understand His word, but there is no explicit warning about this in Hebrews 7:3!

Jesus has a Father (God) and a mother (Mary) and a genealogy (see Mt. 1, Lk. 3 and cp. Jn. 7:27). 'Melchizedek' therefore cannot refer to Him personally. Besides, Melchizedek was "made *like* unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3); he was not Jesus himself, but had certain similarities with Him which are being used by the writer for teaching purposes. "After the similitude of Melchizedek there arises another priest", Jesus (Heb. 7:15), who was ordained a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5,6). The language of Hebrews about Melchizedek just cannot be taken literally. If Melchizedek literally had no father or mother, then the only person he could have been was God Himself; He is the only person with no beginning (1 Tim. 6:16; Ps.

90:2). But this is vetoed by Heb. 7:4: “Consider how great *this man* was”, and also by the fact that he was seen by men (which God cannot be) and offered sacrifices to God. If he is called a man, then he must have had literal parents. His being “without father, without mother, without descent” must therefore refer to the fact that his pedigree and parents are not recorded. Queen Esther’s parents are not recorded, and so her background is described in a similar way. Mordecai “brought up... Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother... whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter” (Esther 2:7). The author of Hebrews was clearly writing as a Jew to Jews, and as such he uses the Rabbinic way of reasoning and writing at times. There was a Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not" (See James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 276 note 59)- and it seems that this is the principle of exposition being used to arrive at the statement that Melchizedek was "without father". Seeing no father is mentioned in the Genesis text, therefore he was "without father"- but this doesn't mean he actually didn't have a father. It's not recorded, and therefore, according to that Rabbinic principle, he effectively didn't have one. There is however also evidence that "without father, without mother" was a term used of men who were orphans or illegitimate. That it is used for such men shows that it cannot at all be taken as any evidence for the pre-existence or Divinity of the Lord Jesus. Whatever we make of the language here, it refers to Melchizedek, the one time king-priest of Jerusalem, described as a "man" (:4).

The book of Genesis usually goes to great lengths to introduce the family backgrounds of all the characters which it presents to us. But Melchizedek appears on the scene unannounced, with no record of his parents, and vanishes from the account with equal abruptness. Yet there can be no doubt that he was worthy of very great respect; even great Abraham paid tithes to him, and was blessed by him, clearly showing Melchizedek’s superiority over Abraham (Heb. 7:2,7). The writer is not just doing mental gymnastics with Scripture. There was a very real problem in the first century which the Melchizedek argument could solve. The Jews were reasoning: ‘You Christians tell us that this Jesus can now be our high priest, offering our prayers and works to God. But a priest has to have a known genealogy, proving he is from the tribe of Levi. And anyway, you yourselves admit Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Sorry, to us Abraham is our supreme leader and example (Jn. 8:33,39), and we won’t respect this Jesus’. To which the reply is: ‘But remember Melchizedek. The Genesis record is framed to show that such a great priest did not have any genealogy; and Messiah is to be both a king and a priest, whose priesthood is after the pattern of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6 cp. Ps. 110:4). Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek, so you should switch your emphasis from Abraham to Jesus, and stop trying to make the question of genealogies so important (see 1 Tim. 1:4). If you meditate on how much Melchizedek is a type of Jesus (i.e. the details of his life pointed forward to him), then you would have a greater understanding of the work of Christ’.

7:4- see on Heb. 1:5.

Now consider how great this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils- Melchizedek was a man, not a pre-existent God. The argument is that tithes are given to someone greater. Hence Jacob offers to give tithes to his father's God if He will preserve him (Gen. 28:22).

7:5 *And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office*- Paul doesn't call them Aaronites because he wants to make the point that the tribal head, Levi, was not the ancestor of Melchizedek; and as one of the patriarchs, he as it were paid tithes in Abraham to Melchizedek.

Have the commandment according to the law to take tithes from the people, that is, of their brothers; even though they are also descendants of Abraham- Levi's sons could take tithes of their brothers, but this did not make them 'greater' than their brothers. They were 'brothers' on the same level as those who tithed to them. But payment of tithes to an unrelated person was a more impressive evidence of the greatness of that person over the tithe payers.

7:6 *Melchizedek was not descended from Levi by genealogy*- There is no evidence that he was even from within the Abraham family; he was effectively a Gentile, the king-priest of Jerusalem. But the fact he was not a Levite is emphasized because this was a reason some were giving for not accepting the priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

But he took tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had received the promises- The blessing was given from Melchizedek to Abraham in response to tithes. Yet Abraham is the one who was to be a blessing in the land, according to "the promises" received. But actually, the blesser had himself first to be blessed. This definitely places Melchizedek on the level of manifesting God to Abraham. The idea was that this blessing by Melchizedek was that of peace and righteousness [ideas tied up in the meaning of the name Melchizedek], and this was the primary fulfilment to Abraham of the promised blessing. Peace and the gift of righteousness are the clearly related to peace with God through sin having been dealt with, and righteousness imputed. Peter in Acts 3:25,26 makes the same interpretation of the Abrahamic blessing as being forgiveness of sin.

7:7 *But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better*- To suggest anyone was "better" than Abraham was radical for Hebrews, who considered Abraham the father of their race. And to rub the point in by saying that he was "less" was to suggest that the entire metanarrative of descent from Abraham being so important was being overwritten- and had in fact been overwritten by any sensitive to the brief details given about Melchizedek. That the ministry of the Lord Jesus was "better" than that of the Mosaic law is stressed in Hebrews (1:4; 7:19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 12:24).

7:8 *And here mortal men receive tithes; but there one received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives*- The argument here might appear somewhat forced, but it was all legitimate within the style of Rabbinic midrash. Melchizedek "lives" in that there is no record of his death; we noted on :3 the Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not". And Paul goes on to reason that the priesthood of Melchizedek continues still, in that Messiah was to have this priesthood eternally. "That he lives" can also be understood as meaning that Melchizedek had a lifelong priesthood, that was not replaced by others because he had reached a certain age. McKnight observes that the Greek verb *zē* here is not in the present, but the imperfect of the indicative, and he translates "that he lives" as " lived, a priest all his life, in contradistinction from those who ceased to be priests at a certain age". "But there" can bear the idea 'but in this case'.

7:9 *And, so to say*- Another usage of language which suggests we are reading a transcript of a spoken address; see on 13:22.

When Abraham paid the tithe, Levi, whose descendants receive the tithe, also paid a tithe- Abraham is seen as representing his descendant Levi. The Levitical

priests did indeed pay a tithe of their tithes- to God. But Paul argues here that Levi, in Abraham, paid a tithe to Melchizedek, thus making him a manifestation of God.

7:10 *For Levi was yet in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met Abraham*- This kind of argument may appear forced, but it was quite legitimate within the milieu of Jewish midrash.

7:11 *Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?*- The argument is that the whole mention of Messiah having a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek would have been unnecessary if the Levitical priesthood and legal system could bring "perfection". Paul forces through the logic of his position by reasoning that the "need" for the Melchizedek priesthood meant that this new priest must actually not be "after the order of Aaron" and therefore must not be a descendant of Aaron. I have previously noted that this kind of apparently forced argumentation would have been acceptable to those used to this kind of reasoning in the rabbinical interpretations of the Old Testament. But it is all the same logically forced, although from our Christian perspective it all makes good sense. I suggested on expounding Paul's obsession with the Jerusalem Poor Fund in 2 Corinthians that he had an obsessive streak within him, whereby he marshalled all possible evidence to support his positions and at points his logic and reasoning bears the hallmark of the obsessive. It could well be that we have a case of that here.

7:12 *For the priesthood being changed requires also a change of the law*- This verse is a stubborn problem for those who consider that the Mosaic law has not been changed nor abrogated. The reasoning here is logically sound, but it depends upon the assumption that the Melchizedek priest has in fact come; and only in that case could it be reasoned that the priesthood had been changed from the Aaronic to that of Melchizedek, this requiring a change of the law. The argument only had [and has] force for those who accept Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. It is therefore highly relevant to the Hebrew Christian audience but would lack logical power with Hebrew non-Christians.

The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be “an everlasting statute unto you” (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to

terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

7:13 *For he of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar*- The "He" refers to the Melchizedek priest who was to be Messiah. "Has ever" makes the point that a new priesthood is now in view. The Lord Jesus serves at *the* altar; this is the altar at which the Levitical priests have no right to eat / fellowship, but we Christians do (13:10), suggesting that we in Christ are likewise there, serving at and eating at the heavenly altar which features so strongly in Revelation, as part of the Heavenly sanctuary which the tabernacle was a dim reflection of. The Lord Jesus is actively 'serving' there; He is not passive in Heaven, just waiting to return to earth.

7:14 *For it is evident that our Lord originated from the tribe of Judah. Regarding this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood*- The Lord being descended from Judah was "evident" or obvious- presumably from the genealogies which connected Mary to the tribe of Judah. But again as noted on :11, Paul's enthusiasm seems to be carrying him away, for it was far from obvious that Jesus of Nazareth was from Judah. However he may have meant instead that Messiah had to come from Judah; this much was indeed "evident" from the Old Testament and undisputed.

7:15 *And what we say is even more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there arises another priest*- The abundantly obvious argument was that the Melchizedek priest had to be eternal (see :16,17); and the only candidate was Jesus, whom Christians believed had been resurrected and given eternal life. He was the only person who had then been immortalized. But this argument again was logically powerful only to a Hebrew Christian, and not to a Hebrew non-Christian. The 'arising' of this 'other priest' may be a hint at His resurrection to immortality.

7:16 *Who has been appointed, not on the basis of a law about physical descent, but according to the power of an endless life*- The Levitical priests became priests by reason of their age and descent, whereas the Melchizedek Messiah priest had to be "appointed". The basis of the Lord's appointment was His immortality- because the priest had to have an eternal ministry, so it was necessary that he was immortal. And the only immortalized human was Jesus of Nazareth. His endless life has power in that His eternity is spent interceding for us; He has obtained for us eternal salvation, but there is an ongoing element to this. We will live eternally because He is as it were the basis for that eternity. And in that sense, His priesthood for us is eternal. We will spend eternity always aware in gratitude that we are only 'here' because of Him. Our gratitude expressed at the breaking of bread meeting is therefore something which will eternally continue. So in that gratitude, we are experiencing part of the Kingdom life, living the life eternal now.

7:17 *For it is witnessed: You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*- "For ever" is being interpretted as meaning that the priest would be immortal, making the resurrected, immortalized Jesus the only possible candidate. The 'witnessing' by God in Ps. 110:4 is understood as the priest being "appointed" (:16).

7:18 *On the other hand, there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness*- This new priesthood required a new law; a changed priesthood meant a changed law (:12). And this required an "annulling" of that law, and that was because it was weak and unprofitable. Such language appears to deprecate the law, although Paul elsewhere says that the law was

"holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12); it was weak and not profitable because it was unable to bring salvation or perfection to those under it. The strong language used here about the law of Moses must be given its full weight by those who argue that it should still be kept today.

7:19 *(For the law made nothing perfect)*- Likewise :11 has argued that the Levitical priesthood had to be changed because it could not bring "perfection". The law convicted men of sin and offered some mechanism of patching up the broken relationship caused by it. It offered forgiveness, as part of an endless cycle of human failure and Divine forgiveness; but eternity and perfection are different ideas to that of forgiveness. And it is these things which are enabled by the new priest. The Mosaic priesthood and associated sacrifices did not enable moral perfection. But by being in Christ, we can be counted as Him, the only perfect human. Faith in Christ could therefore make perfect in that the Lord Jesus was 'made perfect' by His sufferings, particularly on the cross (5:7-9).

And a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God- By being counted as in Christ, having His perfection as ours due to our status in Him, we have the sure hope of future salvation. The *elpis* or hope in view is a solid expectation regarding the future, not a mere hoping for the best. And it is by having this hope that we find strength against materialism and "draw near to God". The Hebrew readership would have understood this as meaning 'drawing near in priestly service' (cp. Ex. 19:22). The Hope we have compels us to God's service. All that is true of the Lord Jesus becomes true of those in Him; His priesthood becomes ours. And it is after the order of Melchizedek, which is why non-Levites can be part of it. We may well enquire why the translators have settled for "hope" rather than "certainty" as a translation of *elpis*. Probably it was for the same reason that we too baulk at the idea of our future being totally assured and certain; we'd prefer to have these great things as a mere hope rather than a certainty. Because to be certain of my eternal future requires my heart and soul in this life. And many would quaver before signing that away to the things of Jesus and His Kingdom.

7:20 *And the Melchizedek priesthood was not without the taking of an oath*- The oath taken was by God (Ps. 110:4), vowing by Himself to honour the eternally powerful priesthood of Messiah. Such Divine underwriting was not given to the Levitical priesthood.

7:21 *The Levitical priests were made priests without an oath, but he with an oath: The Lord swore and will not change His mind; you are a priest for ever*- The eternal nature of the Lord's Melchizedek priesthood is at the basis of the certainty of our hope for future salvation (:19). God Almighty guarantees that the Lord Jesus will be our eternal priest. Our standing before Him is therefore eternal; we have such a priest who is not simply a mediator between God and men, a conduit allowing us to offer to Him and approach Him, but a priest who on His own agenda eternally secures our salvation.

7:22 *By this also has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant*- The sure hope of :19 is underpinned by the way the Lord is the surety or guarantor of the better covenant. The argument here extends that of Heb. 6:13-15, where it is the promises to Abraham which were the subject of a covenant oath on God's very own life. They were and are the essence of the new covenant. They are a simple unilateral promise that Abraham's seed will inherit the earth for ever, with all that implies about salvation through the resurrection of the body.

The Greek for "surety" occurs only here in the NT and LXX. The idea is of a guarantor who promises his self sacrifice in the case that the party to the covenant is

unfaithful. It literally means 'the pledge of a limb'. The "surety" could offer his own limbs, or himself into bondage as a slave, if the person being guaranteed somehow failed. The Lord's death confirmed God's promises as being for real. But did God's side of the covenant need such a surety? Perhaps we are better to think of the Lord's being a surety as being a guarantee for our faithfulness to the covenant. But we have not been faithful to it; and so He died, gave His all, His limbs, and became the preeminent servant of Yahweh on the cross. This was to the end that the new covenant between God and us might still stand, despite our infraction of it. The argument is very laboured- that the Lord's priesthood obtains our perfection and salvation- not simply our forgiveness. The Mosaic law and priesthood indeed delivered on what it claimed to offer- forgiveness for specific, confessed failure. But we need more than that if we are to live eternally. And that need is met in Christ. And moreover, there is all this laboured assurance that it is real and credible. His priesthood was begun with an oath made by God on His own eternal life, never to be changed- that the Lord was an eternal priest. And the new covenant, the simple promises to Abraham of eternal inheritance of the earth, were thereby confirmed and guaranteed. Why was there any need for a Divine covenant to in this way be "made sure"? Not for God's benefit, but for ours; we who tend to disbelieve the simple truth that we are being offered eternal salvation by grace. It is thereby made *to us* a "sure hope" (:19). Thus God "commended His love toward us"; not in one sense that it needed any commendation. For a Divine word ought to be enough. But to meet our tendency to disbelieve, it was confirmed through the death of Jesus. And we take the cup of the new covenant to remind us of this. He died "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" which are the basis of the new covenant (Rom.15:8). Thus Heb. 6:18 reasons that we have two solid promises of salvation; the promise itself, and the oath that the promise is really true.

7:23 *And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing*- The eternal priesthood required for the Messianic Melchizedek priest could not be attained by mortal priests. Whereas their priesthood was ended by their death, the Lord's priesthood began with His death. Constantly, the contrast is between the Levitical priests and the Lord's priesthood. The differences and not the similarities is the core of the argument. Therefore when we read that they offered for their own sins and for the people's, the context is surely implying that the Lord didn't offer for His own sins- for He had none. If that had been better understood, and it is quite clear really when the idea of *contrast* rather than similarity is grasped- then much false reasoning about the Lord dying to somehow atone for the sin of His own nature would then have been stillborn.

7:24 *But he, because he abides for ever, has his priesthood unchangeable*- The eternal priesthood of the Melchizedek priest meant that His priesthood can never be changed. He has obtained eternal redemption for us, and that can never be liable to any renegotiation. Our hope for eternity is therefore sure (:19) because the One who obtained it is immortal, and His work for us is in this sense eternal.

7:25- see on Heb. 2:3.

Therefore he is able to save for ever those that draw near to God through him, seeing he lives forever to make intercession for them- The Lord's intercession for us is eternal. We are in Him, and His drawing near to God in priestly service is therefore ours (see on :19 for 'drawing near' as priestly language). It is our desire to serve others and thereby serve God which is what propels us to draw near to God; and in this desire we shall be eternally empowered. See on :16.

The eternal nature of the Lord's priesthood is emphasized in the argument; He is consecrated for ever (:28), and His priesthood will last eternally rather than for a limited period of time, as was the case with the mortal priests. What does this mean? The Lord Jesus eternally intercedes for us, even after our death. The risen and exalted Lord is spoken of as being shamed, being crucified afresh, as agonizing in prayer for us now just as He did on the cross (Rom. 8:24 cp. Heb. 5:7-9). On the cross, He made intercession for us (Is. 53:11,12); but now He ever lives to make such intercession (Heb. 7:25). There He bore our sins; and yet now He still bears our sins (Is. 53:4-6,11). The fact that the Lord "ever lives to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25) is an allusion back to Is. 53:12, which prophecies that on the cross, Christ would make intercession for the transgressors. His prayer for us then, that we would all be forgiven (and see the prophecies of this in Psalms 22,69 etc.) was therefore His intercession for our salvation. His whole death was His prayer / intercession for us. But it was of His own freewill; He was not relaying our words then. And His intercession for us on the cross is the pattern of His intercession for us now. This ought to be a humbling thought. We will live eternally because He is the basis for that eternity. And in that sense, His priesthood for us is eternal. We will spend eternity always aware in gratitude that we are only 'here' because of Him. Our gratitude expressed at the breaking of bread meeting is therefore something which will eternally continue. So in that gratitude, we are experiencing part of the Kingdom life, living the life eternal now.

He made one mediatory offering for all time (Heb. 5:7; 7:27); therefore He has nothing to offer now. The High Priest going into the Holiest is also a type of Christ entering Heaven. He is in a sense permanently in the Holiest, He bears our names *always* before Yahweh; He ever lives, all the time, to make intercession for us, always. This of course opens up the interesting question as to in what sense the Lord will eternally intercede for us, once we are immortalized. Perhaps the 'eternal' nature of His intercession is relative to the temporary work of the Levitical priests who died, and refers to eternity only in a relative sense; see on :12. But the Greek for "intercession" does not of itself require the idea of reconcilliation or mediation. Through the ministry of the Comforter, we do not need that even now (Jn. 14:16; 16:26,27). The idea can simply be that He will confer with the Father about us eternally; and that is how the word is used in Acts 25:24 and Rom. 11:2. This is a wonderful thought; that the Lord Jesus shall be talking eternally to the Father about you and me.

7:26 *For such a High Priest was fitting for us- holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*- He was and is “harmless” in His priestly mediation; the same word is translated “simple” in Rom. 16:8. He was an intellectual beyond compare, morally and dialectically He defeated the most cunning cross-questioning of His day; and yet He was a working man surrounded by masses of daily problems. But He was and is “simple” in the sense of single-mindedly committed to His priestly work. We are on earth and God is in Heaven, and therefore our words should be few (Ecc. 5:2). Not few in the sense that we don’t pray for very long, but few in terms of their simplicity and directness. The Lord warned us against the complicated prayer forms of the Pharisees; and asked us to *mean* our words of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ rather than use more sophisticated assurances. The heart is deceitful and so wicked we cannot plumb its depths (Jer. 17:9); and yet the pure in heart are blessed. This must surely mean that the “pure” in heart are those who despite the intrinsic self-deception of the human

heart, are nonetheless “pure” or single hearted in their prayer and motives and desire to serve God.

The Lord Jesus was in His life "separate from sinners". The Greek word very definitely means 'to actively depart from'- it's used about a partner walking out of a marriage. Yet the Lord is always pictured as mixing with sinners, to the extent that they felt they could come to Him easily, and actually liked to do this. So how was He "separate" from them in the way the Hebrew writer understood? Here again we see one of the profoundest paradoxes in this supremest of personalities. He was with sinners, then and now; His solidarity with us, the roughest and the most obvious and the subtlest of us, is what attracts us to Him. And yet He is somehow totally separate from us; and it is this in itself which brings us to Him.

It needs to be noted that the Lord Jesus had human nature, and yet was holy, harmless and separate from sinners, and attained 'perfection'. Human nature is not, therefore, an inevitable source of sin and separation from God. The Father is not made at us for being human; it's no sin to be alive.

The Jewish priesthood was defiled and not at all holy (Neh. 13:29, and often in Malachi); and the prophets record how often the priests did "harm" the people. There is a constant contrast with the Lord Jesus; who was unlike them and instead holy, undefiled and harmless. He therefore didn't have any sins to offer for, unlike them. They had moral "weakness" (:28), but the Lord was unlike those priests. The way they had to offer for their sins is therefore a contrast, and not a similarity, with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus- which is consistently presented as being the unblemished offering for *our* sins and therefore not at all for Himself.

And has been exalted higher than the heavens- The allusion is to the common Jewish idea of there being various "heavens". Paul doesn't specifically criticize the idea, but just states that whatever we understand about this, the Lord Jesus has been exalted higher. The Gospels take a similar approach to the wrong ideas about demon possession; the power of the Father and Son is infinitely greater than that of 'demons', however we wish to understand the term.

7:27 *Who needs not to offer up sacrifices daily, like those high priests, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself*- "This he did once" is a contrast with how the old High Priest offered ["this"] daily [Jesus did it only "once"]. The reference to "first for his own sins, then for the people's" is as it were in parenthesis, a throw away comment, to indicate again the inferiority of the old High Priests who themselves were sinners and therefore needed to offer for their own sins as well as those of God's people. My own suspicion that Paul was the author of Hebrews is based upon the style of writing we have there which we see in Paul elsewhere- so often, a comment is made in passing like this example of commenting that the old Priests had to offer for their own sins too. This kind of style is typical of Paul, Ephesians and Colossians are full of this kind of thing- making an argument, but throwing in a comment in the midst of it, a kind of aside, which often phases the reader.

It is not the day of atonement which is in view here, because the contrast is with the "daily" offerings of the priests. A sincere priest would have offered daily sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. The Lord Jesus didn't need to do this; the parallels with the Levitical priesthood are by way of both contrast and similarity. They stood; He sits. They offered animals, He offered "Himself". But as He offered for "the people" so too did the mortal priests; but He did so once, whereas they did so daily. They offered for their own wins too; He did not. If the Lord in any sense had

needed to offer for His own "sins", He would have had to do so daily. But He offered only one offering, for us. That Christ died for *our* sins according to the scriptures is the clear emphasis of the entire Biblical revelation. "*This* He did" refers to His offering for the people, for us; and not for His own 'sins'. This point is underlined in the next verse, which notes that the priests were morally weak, whereas the Son of God is perfect and shall be forever, unable to sin.

7:28 *For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever*- See on :27. Sin brings death, so the eternal priest appointed by the word of God's oath in Ps. 110:4 had to be not only eternal but also sinless. There could therefore be no other candidate for this priest than the Lord Jesus. The contrast between the moral weakness of the priests and the perfection of God's Son is further reason to understand "*this* He did" in :27 as referring solely to His sacrifice for "the people". The Lord's 'perfecting' was in the supreme moral perfection He achieved on the cross (see on 5:8,9). That acme of utter perfection, attained within a body covered in blood and spittle, dying in agony on a tree trunk, tormented by flies and barking dogs on a hill outside Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April, 2000 or so years ago... has as it were been set in stone eternally. The perfection attained is "forever". Our far weaker spiritual growth will likewise be eternally set in stone.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 8

8:1 *Now in the things of which we are talking, the chief point is this*- This is language appropriate to a transcript of a talk or sermon; see on 13:22. Yet despite this, the letter to the Hebrews has a very clear structure; and this is actually the central point of the letter in terms of structure.

We have such a high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens- The way the Lord *sits* rather than *stands* is emphasized, and is another connection with Stephen who saw the Lord standing, passionate in His defence (see on 1:1). The personal existence of God is taught here clearly enough; Jesus is at His right hand, and He has location, rather than being an abstraction or puff of 'spirit'.

8:2 *A servant of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man*- The Lord Jesus is actively working in Heaven for us. The allusion is to priestly 'service', which was always focused upon bringing others to God and enabling their service. The "true" tabernacle doesn't suggest the Mosaic tabernacle was untrue; but it was but a figure of the ultimate, 'true' Heavenly reality. We note that in His life, the Lord was a servant. A servant of all, the suffering servant. But who we are now is who we shall essentially be. He will again come forth and serve us at the Messianic banquet. And in this life, He is now also a servant in the true tabernacle, which effectively refers to the church. He is indeed the same yesterday, today and for ever. He is active now- serving us. The human priests were serving a copy of the true tabernacle; but the Lord Jesus serves in the true tabernacle (:5).

There is great emphasis in Ex. 26 that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord God- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross. Yet the Greek for "pitched" is literally 'pegged'. This continues the idea of our having the certain

hope of salvation as an anchor of the soul. There is a grounding and stability for the person who has that sure hope.

8:3 *For every high priest being appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, it is therefore necessary that this high priest also have these to offer*- The train of thought about offering gifts and sacrifices is somewhat interrupted until 9:9, creating a parenthesis which is typical of Paul's style. The argument is that He did offer, but one offering- of Himself, and not of endless gifts and animals (9:27,28; 10:12). He was not so much offering the gifts of others, but offering Himself. And yet we can also read this as meaning that He also has something to offer, because that is what being a priest is about. Seeing His offering was once and for all, what He has to offer would therefore be our prayers. "Now has he obtained a more excellent service". But He is a 'servant'; that is repeatedly emphasized. He is active and not passive.

8:4 *Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law*- Clearly this was written whilst the Jerusalem temple was still functioning, before AD70. Because His mediation was a one-off act, the Lord would not be a priest if He were now on earth. He is given the *title* of priest, as He is given the title "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), even though He is not now a man. And the Lord was from Judah, not Levi. Paul is stressing the two different kinds of priesthood, and by noting that there were still Aaronic priests operating, he is implying that their service is worthless compared to that of the Messianic Melchizedek priest.

8:5 *Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned when he is about to make the tabernacle. For He said: See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain*- The "pattern" is therefore taken by Paul to imply that the tabernacle system was a copy or reflection of the heavenly tabernacle (9:23,24), with the priests reflecting the work of the Angels; hence *elohim* is used of both priests and Angels. Judaism even called the tabernacle 'the heavenlies', but Paul's point is that it was only a "copy and shadow" of them, and the Lord Jesus is dealing with the ultimate realities which were only dimly reflected in the tabernacle system. The priests 'served' the copy of these things; but the Lord serves us.

8:6 *But now has he obtained a more excellent service, as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises*- The old covenant was mediated by Moses (Gal. 3:19); the Lord Jesus mediates the new covenant to us. That covenant was based upon the promises made to Abraham, but they were only mediated to us in Christ. Those promises envisaged eternal inheritance of the earth for Abraham and his singular seed, Jesus (Gal. 3:16). By baptism into Him we become part of the seed, and heirs according to those promises (Gal. 3:27-29). The new covenant is therefore based upon the promises to Abraham. Those better promises already existed, before the time of the law; but they were only mediated to us when we could become in Christ, part of the seed. And that required the Lord's death as a representative for all men. Now that He has mediated that covenant to us, He continues to serve those within that covenant.

The implication is that the Lord's 'mediation' of the New Covenant is ongoing. In this sense "there *is* one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5 s.w.). We come to "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 12:24). "He *is* the mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 9:15). The New Covenant is therefore an ongoing experience; something is mediated in an ongoing sense. And that something is the Spirit. It is not simply about the future fulfilment of the land promises and eternal inheritance of the earth. It is about "blessing" which Acts 3:25,26 interprets as

the blessing of being turned away from sin, which in turn refers to the gift of the Spirit. The following quotation from Jer. 31 develops this; the new covenant is about God's operation upon human hearts through His Spirit. For to be offered eternity is only part of the picture; for man to live for ever, he must be transformed first. And this is all also implicit in the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant.

8:7 *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second*- "Faultless" doesn't mean it was faulty of itself; the failure was that it could not bring perfection / salvation to men. I noted on :6 that the New Covenant is about the blessing of the Spirit transforming human hearts. The old covenant was not "faultless". But by implication, the new covenant is. Both covenants were inspired by God, and the law of Moses was "holy, just and good". So it is not as if there was a "fault" in the old covenant. But it is through the ministry of the Spirit that human hearts can be "established unblameable [s.w. "faultless"] in holiness" (1 Thess. 3:13 cp. Eph. 3:16). The old covenant could not do this. But the new covenant does.

Who was seeking a place for a second covenant? The reference may be to God, seeking salvation for us (see on :8); or to believers under the first covenant, who sought salvation and moral perfection but not finding it under the first covenant, searched for another. God didn't seek for a second covenant but for a place for it, a way in which it could operate for all men. And that place was in the work of His Son, the seed of Abraham who was the perfect Messianic priest, in whom all men could find a place and have the promises to Abraham's seed, the new covenant, mediated to them. It was God who sought for a man to empower this, and found Him only in Christ (Jer. 5:1 etc.).

8:8 *For finding fault with them, He said*- The ensuing quotation is from God's words in Jeremiah 31. So it would be God who was the one seeking a place for the second covenant, and who found fault with the old covenant- in that it could not bring about the human salvation He sought. But it could equally be that the "them" with whom God "found fault" were the Judah of Jeremiah's day, which would better account for the plural "them". The answer to the "fault" of the law being unable to bring salvation for sinful man was in the new covenant.

Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- The mention of both the houses of Israel and Judah would imply that unity between God's people is achieved on the basis of them all being within the new covenant. The cup of the new covenant / testament is therefore the symbol of unity between the redeemed; to refuse it to those who are within the house of God's people is serious indeed, an undoing of God's intention of unity upon the basis of the covenant. The new covenant system of salvation was designed for sinners; those with whom God had "found fault". We note that this is the longest Old Testament quotation to be found in the NT, and Jeremiah 31 is again quoted in Heb. 10 and elsewhere. These words about the New Covenant are therefore to be given their due weight as utterly central to the Christian message. The idea is not that God would think up a new covenant. That already existed in the promises to Abraham. But the exiles of Jeremiah's time were intended to repent, and recognize they could not be justified by God through the old covenant. And so they were to accept the new covenant, which was there all along, but they had refused to accept its huge implications. And the same can be true for us who likewise knew those promises all along, but refused to accept their implications.

8:9 *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, so I paid no attention to them*- The old covenant between God and Israel was a two way agreement. God took the initiative in it, He took Israel by the hand. But they refused to remain within the covenant, so it was unable to save them. In order to save God's people, there therefore needed to be another covenant which could save them by grace. The promises to Abraham were just such a one-sided agreement, where God swore to Abraham, passing between the cut pieces of the covenant victim; whilst Abraham was not required to make any response. He just had to believe in God's love. Once the old covenant was broken by Israel refusing to remain within it, it was broken; and God therefore could not look toward them, seeing they had broken the connection between God and themselves. The idea of not continuing in the covenant uses the same word as in Gal. 3:10: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does *not continue* to do all things that are written in the book of the law". Israel did not continue in obedience, so they did not continue in the covenant.

8:10 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and in their heart also will I write them, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people*- This new covenant was not "new". It was 'new for them', but it is the promises to Abraham- which had already promised "I will be their God". A new covenant was needed because Israel had not kept the old covenant, they had broken their covenant relationship (see on :9); God had "found fault" with them (:8). The covenant proposed here was to be written by God in human hearts rather than on tables of stone, to which obedience was demanded. God would "be to them a God" in that this was part of the promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:7,8) which are the "better promises" forming the new covenant (see on :6). This new covenant which was to be made with Israel has now been made with us in this life (cp. :13). The promises which comprised the new covenant were those made to Abraham; but they referred only to Abraham and his one singular seed (Gal. 3:16). Once the seed had come, we are able to be baptized into Christ so that all that is true for Him becomes true for us (Gal. 3:27-29). As the full and totally inclusive representative of all humans, the Lord Jesus thereby opened the way for the promises to Abraham to actually become the new covenant in practice for all who become in Him. The promise to Abraham and his Messianic seed [just two people] that "I will be their God" thereby becomes true for an entire people; "they [who are in Christ] shall be to Me a people". Entry into the new covenant therefore involves God writing upon our hearts, which is done through the work of His Spirit operating directly upon the hearts of all those baptized into the seed (2 Cor. 3:3 "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh"). The allusion to the stones of the old covenant is to show that the new covenant is indeed a covenant, but written on hearts and not tablets of stone.

Jer. 31:33 says " I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it". It is through the work of the Spirit upon the "inner man" (Eph. 3:16) that this is achieved. The same heart-swop operation is described in Ez. 36:25,26. Jer. 31:33 said that God would place His laws in Israel's heart; in Ez. 36 we read that He will place His Spirit in their hearts. It is the Spirit which makes us obedient to the word. Those within the new covenant today receive this same gift of the Spirit; not today in

terms of miraculous gifts, but the operation of God on the human heart which brings about the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant to be "their God" (Gen. 17:-8-10).

8:11 *None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying: Know the Lord. For all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them*- Under the new covenant, we are in Christ. We relate to the Father as He does, being in Him. 'Knowledge' in Hebrew thought often effectively means 'relationship'. The relationship possible under the new covenant is not therefore dependent upon the teaching of men, but is a direct relationship with the Father. This kind of knowledge / relationship with God is on the basis that sin has really been dealt with and forgiven (:12).

If we know God in an experiential sense (and not just knowing theological theory about Him), we know that our sins are forgiven. We preach to others "Know the Lord!", exactly because "I will be merciful to their iniquities" (Heb. 8:11,12). It is our knowledge of God's mercy to us which empowers us to confidently seek to share with others our knowledge, our relationship, our experience with God. Forgiveness inspires the preacher; and yet the offer of forgiveness is what inspires the listener to respond.

8:12 *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will not remember against them*- As noted on :11, this forgiveness is the basis upon which those under the new covenant know / have relationship with the Lord. The sins of men will not be remembered under the new covenant; whereas there was a remembrance of sins made each year by the old covenant (10:3). So God's way of dealing with His sinful people with whom He "found fault" (:8) was to instill obedience to His principles into their hearts, and to not remember their sins. This is all the work of the Spirit. The "blessing" promised to Abraham, in the "better promises" which comprise the new covenant (:6), was of not only forgiveness but also in turning away human hearts from sin (Acts 3:25,26). This work of the Spirit is the only way to bring about human salvation, seeing that giving them laws and demanding obedience thereto just didn't work out in practice.

The idea is that there will be no lack of knowledge of God's ways because the sins of God's people have been forgiven. That experience and showcasing of Divine forgiveness will be the witness which is seen by all men. The knowledge of God will no longer have to be taught in theoretical terms because the experience of forgiveness is to know God. Being under the new covenant means that we will know Yahweh, on account of our sins being forgiven. We will be certain of their forgiveness, not just hoping for the best. So often the prophets use the idea of "knowing God" as an idiom for living a life totally dominated by that knowledge. The new covenant which we have entered is all about 'knowing' God. The knowledge of God elicits repentance, real repentance; and reveals an equally real forgiveness. It is possible for those in Christ to in practice not know God at all. Thus Paul exhorted the Corinthian church: "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. 15:34).

8:13- see on Ps. 102:26.

In that He said: A new covenant, He has made the first redundant. Now what is becoming redundant and growing old is ready to vanish away- The very concept of a new covenant means that an old covenant has been "made redundant". There is now no purpose in attempting to keep the Mosaic law, because it achieves nothing. The old covenant was "ready to vanish away" in that the temple was soon to be destroyed; but

there is also perhaps a reference here to how by grace, God allowed there to be a changeover period- even though the old covenant was ended on the cross. We see in this how sensitive and accommodating God is to human conservatism; whereas we tend to be terribly impatient with the slownesss of others to change, finding their conservatism an irritation. He recognized the deep conservatism within human nature, and allowed this changeover period during which the old covenant 'became redundant'; even though it was replaced by the new covenant when the Lord's blood was shed to confirm that new covenant and bring it into operation. As soon as the new covenant was in operation, the previous covenant became 'old'. That happened in a moment, and yet Paul generously says that it is becoming or growing old, as if a process is in view. Likewise in 1:11, the same word used here for "becoming redundant" is applied to how the 'heavens' of the Jewish system were 'becoming old'. And yet the Lord had clearly warned of how the old and new wine cannot be mixed or confused and they are mutually exclusive. The allowance of a changeover period was by grace alone, and it could be argued that the Hebrew had abused it and were turning back to the "old" rather than progressively forsaking it as intended.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 9

9:1 *Now even the first covenant had regulations for Divine service and an earthly sanctuary*- The implication is that the second or new covenant also has a sanctuary and a structure for service. But that is all ongoing in Heaven, thus declaring the attempt at "Divine service" through the temple system to be redundant. The same word is used of how each believer is to do "service" to God in the new order, by presenting their own bodies as sacrifices, acting as both priest and offering (Rom. 12:1). The priests did God's "service" in the first tabernacle, i.e. the holy place (:6); we in Christ do His service in the most holy place, associated with heaven itself.

9:2 *For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first section, wherein was the candlestick, the table and the bread of the Presence, which is called the Holy Place*- The presentation of the Most Holy as being sectioned off by the Holy place is to emphasize how the tabernacle system did not give entrance into God's presence, but rather created barriers. It was the priests who served in the Holy Place who effectively stood between God and man, rather than enabling ordinary worshippers to come into the Most Holy place. However, it could be argued that the candlestick speaks of the church (as in Revelation), and the table and bread refer to the breaking of bread; as if after the laver [cp. baptism and the regeneration of the Spirit], we must pass through the experience of church life before we enter the direct fellowship with God in the Most Holy. This raises serious questions over the attitude that we can be 'out of church Christians', walking with the Lord in splendid isolation because of various crotchets of interpretation or past hurts. Perhaps the term "bread of the presence" is used to suggest a connection between the holy place (church life now) and the presence of God in the Most Holy place.

9:3 *And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies*- The Holy and Most Holy places are presented as two distinct tabernacles or tents. The old and new covenants are presented in :1 as the first and second covenants [although the promises to Abraham forming the new covenant were in fact given before the Mosaic legislation, although that new covenant was only ratified and brought into operation for men through the Lord's death]. The flow of thought is presumably that the new or second covenant is to be associated with the second tabernacle, the Most Holy place, in which believers in Christ are now located. We are therefore described often in Paul's thought as "the heavenlies", sitting in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:6). The rending of the veil into the Most Holy at the Lord's death made the same point- the way into the Holiest was now opened.

9:4 *This had the golden altar of incense*- This could be translated "censer" [as AV]. The censer was only in the most holy place on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12), so perhaps that is the situation Paul is presenting here (see on :5). The incense altar was in the holy place, not the holy of holies (Ex. 31); and so "censer" is likely the correct translation option, although that was only in the most holy on the Day of Atonement. The argument will develop that we are now with the Lord Jesus in the Most Holy, for we are "in Christ"; and so Paul takes a picture, as it were, of the situation as it was on the Day of Atonement, the only time when the high priest entered the Most Holy.

And the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant- It has been complained that the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod were not within the ark, but "before the testimony" (Ex. 16:34; Num. 17:10). I suggest that "the testimony" referred to the tables of the covenant, which were within the ark (Ex. 25:16). However, Israel were not obedient to this, for in Solomon's temple "there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone" (1 Kings 8:9). The actual temple system never matched up to what it was supposed to be anyway, and Paul appears to be making this point. That manna symbolized the Lord Jesus, as did the budding rod, with its message of resurrection of the Messianic "rod". But Judaism was without the awareness of these things.

9:5 *And above it were cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat*- The reference may be to the shining forth of the *shekinah* glory from between those cherubim on the Day of Atonement, which is the situation being described here; see on :4.

Of which things we cannot now speak in detail- This sounds similar to the comment on 5:11 that Paul could not speak as he could have done about some things because of the immaturity of the audience. But the Greek could also imply that he was running out of

time and so had to skip talking about the cherubim- which would be appropriate to a spoken address (see on 13:22).

9:6 *Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests went in continually into the first tabernacle, performing the services*- The 'continual' entry is in contrast with the way the Lord Jesus entered once- and not into the Holy but the Most Holy place, and remains there. The Holy Place is called the "first" tabernacle, associating it with the first or old covenant (:1; see on :3).

9:7- see on Jn. 12:24.

But into the second only the high priest went, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people- As noted on :6 and so often in Hebrews, Paul is comparing and also contrasting the Lord's priesthood with that of the Levitical priests. Indeed, most of the points of contact are in terms of dissimilarity rather than identity. And the difference here is that the High Priests were sinners and needed to atone for their own sins as well as the peoples; whereas the clear emphasis of Scripture is that "Christ died for *our* sins", and His work was and continues to be for our forgiveness and salvation rather than His own. Likewise the Lord did not enter once / year, but once for all- and remained there. So the points of contact with the Levitical High Priests are in the dissimilarity rather than similarities. See on 7:27,28.

9:8 *The Holy Spirit indicating that the way into the Holy Place was not yet made manifest whilst the first tabernacle remained*- As noted on :3, the Holy place is associated with the "first" covenant and the Most Holy with the new or second covenant (:1). The Holy Place is therefore presented here as a barrier to entry into the Most Holy; and the priesthood are therefore framed as standing between God and man rather than as a conduit whereby men could come to God's presence. That first tabernacle no longer "remained", according to Paul's logic; the Mosaic system was over. The tearing of the veil at the Lord's death showed in visual terms what is being explained here- the way into the Holiest was made open to all.

9:9 *(Which is symbolic for the present age)*- The idea may be that the present age, that of the Christian dispensation, was symbolized or pointed forward to by the arrangements of the tabernacle. It was all a *parabole* ("symbolic"), a parable to be interpreted. But now that age had come, they are of no practical value apart from as symbols of the reality we are now in.

According to this system, both gifts and sacrifices were offered which could not make the worshiper perfect as relates to the conscience- This is parallel with the thought of :8, that the tabernacle system was actually a barrier between God and man, stopping men coming into the Most Holy, the presence of God. No worshipper could come into the Most Holy, the presence of God, because all within him would cry out that he was

imperfect; his conscience wouldn't allow him to seek to enter, even if it were legally possible. The "system" in Christ enables our complete forgiveness and cleansing; we are counted as "in Christ", as righteous as He, thereby cleansing the conscience and allowing our entry into the very presence of God. The Lord's teaching about the Comforter speaks of similar things; through the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our hearts, we can come directly to God without mediation (Jn. 14:16; 16:26), to the extent that the Lord's physical absence is not felt and we live as in His very personal presence.

9:10 *Being merely foods, drinks and various washings, earthly ordinances imposed until a time of reformation*- The inadequacy of the rituals in allowing man to come into the Most Holy place of itself implies that there had to be a "time of reformation". The word for "reformation" is found again in 12:13: "Make straight ['reformed'] paths for your feet", lest any stumble. The idea is of making a path straight and direct (LXX Jer. 7:3,5). The way of Judaism caused men to stumble; there was no direct path into the Most Holy. No amount of ritual could cleanse the conscience; a radical reformation was required, a straightening out of the path between God and man.

9:11 *But Christ having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation*- The "good things to come" may be from the perspective of the old covenant; the tabernacle system was parabolic of the good things to come (:9). And they had now come, Paul is saying; the Greek can be rendered "the good things realized", or "come to pass". It was as if the good news was too good to believe; the Hebrews preferred to shrink back from the good things because the goodness of them was too demanding. And that is the attraction of legalism; it allows us to feel still connected to God, but the reality of the good news, of salvation by pure grace, has passed us by. As the High Priest passed into the Most Holy, the Lord Jesus has passed into Heaven itself (4:14). This greater tabernacle was pitched by God and not man (8:2), not of "this creation", made with the material things of this world.

9:12 *Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption*- The Lord not only entered once and then left, as the priests did; He entered and remained, "once for all". And the Most Holy is Heaven itself. As noted earlier, the scene here is the Day of Atonement, when goats were offered for the sins of the people and a bull calf for the sins of the High Priest (Lev. 16:6,15). The plural is because these animals were offered each year. The redemption achieved by the Lord was "eternal", not temporary. Paul appears to be quoting here from the midrash of Jonathan ben Uzziel on Gen. 49:18; ben Uzziel would have been contemporary with Paul: "Jacob said, when he saw Gideon the son of Joash, and Samson the son of Manoah, who should be redeemers; not for the redemption of Gideon am I waiting, nor for the redemption of Samson am I looking, for their redemption is a temporal redemption; but for thy redemption am I waiting and

looking, O Lord, because thy redemption is "an everlasting redemption"". The redemption in view is clearly of others rather than of Himself; for the Lord was the redeemer of God's Israel (Lk. 1:68; 2:38). He gave His life as a redemption for many (Mt. 20:28); He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from our sins (Tit. 2:14). That redemption worked out in redeeming us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). The AV defines the eternal redemption as "for us"; and the Cambridge Bible comments: "The “for us” is rightly supplied; but the middle voice of the verb shows that Christ in His love to us also regarded the redemption as dear to Himself". So the inference that the Lord 'obtained for Himself' our eternal redemption doesn't mean that He obtained redemption for Himself plus for us; rather does the Greek mean that He obtained our redemption for Himself, He wanted it to be His. The allusion may be to the language of a man 'redeeming' a wife for himself, just as God redeemed His people for Himself. But this does not mean that He redeemed Himself.

The implication of Lev. 16:14,15 is that the High Priest went beyond the veil twice during this ritual- once to atone for his own sins, and once for the sins of the people. But Heb. 9:12 labours that the Lord did this only once, and thus entered Heaven itself- for *us*, for our sins. Because the point of contrast is that He had no personal sins to atone for. So the idea that the Lord offered for Himself and then for us is actually the opposite of what Heb. 9:12 is teaching. The "type" was by way of contrast and not similarity. Those who have failed to appreciate this have gone further after this wrong turning, and ended up constructing theories of 'atonement for human nature' which are foreign to the scriptures.

9:13 *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, could sanctify to the cleansing of the flesh*- The ashes of the heifer were sprinkled in the water of the laver to create water used for cleansing (Num. 19:1-10). The laver speaks of the baptism into Christ which leads to the regeneration of the Spirit (Tit. 3:5). The Lord's blood makes our baptism into Him have meaning far beyond the cleansing rituals of the tabernacle system. Our very conscience can be cleansed (:14). "The cleansing of the flesh" refers to some surface level 'cleansing' which did not touch the conscience; the contrast is between the flesh and the heart or conscience. They experienced forgiveness on a technical level, but remained with a bad conscience, knowing they were likely to sin again, and with no means of feeling that sin had not only been removed but that they would surely be saved and washed in their inward parts. The individuals such as David who came to such a realization in Old Testament times did so through their faith in God's grace rather than through the legal processes of the law of Moses. The sanctification was not a sham, however ("how much more...", :14). But there was internal cleansing of the spirit, even though forgiveness was granted on one level. The defilement that was cleansed or sanctified was ritual defilement; but the defilement of the spirit and conscience was not addressed by the sacrificial system. But the Lord's priesthood enables that too to be addressed, through the ministry of the

Spirit in human hearts. Those who deny the work of the Spirit are in effect in the position of those who were technically forgiven and cleansed from legalistic defilements by the Mosaic sacrifices.

9:14 *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God-*

"Without blemish" seems to be saying that the Lord had no sin to personally atone for, unlike the human priests who were blemished.

As noted on :13, ritual defilement and legalistic infringements could be cleansed by the Mosaic sacrifices, but the sacrificial system did not address the spirit or conscience. The work of the Lord is on the conscience, on the spirit through His Spirit. His sacrifice is therefore described here as having been one of the Spirit; His Spirit or mind was and is eternal, in that the mind He achieved by the end of His mortal life has been eternally preserved (see on 5:7-9), and is given to His people eternally. The Mosaic sacrifices had to be repeated, and related to the flesh ("the cleansing of the flesh", :13). The Lord's sacrifice pertained to the Spirit, and was eternal rather than of only temporary consequence. He did not offer an animal, but Himself; as the animal was to be "without blemish" in the flesh (Lev. 1:10), the Lord was "without blemish" morally, in His Spirit. The animal had no choice in being offered; the Lord "offered Himself" as an act of conscious volition. He was *spiritually* without blemish whereas the animal sacrifices were only unblemished in the *flesh*. His cleansing of our spirit / conscience was *dia* or on account of His spirit. And His spirit is eternal; for He is now immortalized, His personality, mind, spirit, character lives on eternally, both in Himself and ultimately in us to whom He gives His Spirit. He is a priest who operates now according to the power / spirit of an endless life (7:16).

The Lord offered Himself on the cross "through the eternal spirit" in that it was the Spirit of God, understanding from His word what God really wanted, what He is really like and thereby demands of us, which led the Lord Jesus to the cross. And why the odd phrase "the eternal spirit"? Surely to show that this same Spirit operates today, and if we follow it, will lead us likewise to the same death of the cross. These things are challenging to the very core of our being, the very fabric of our self-understanding. We who cower in the dentist's chair, who fear and avoid pain, who would sooner die than have a surgery without anesthetic... are called to die with Jesus, the death of the cross. God was manifested in the flesh of Christ, but now Christ is living "in the Spirit", thus justifying God's righteousness (1 Tim. 3:16). He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by (on account of) the Spirit", the Spirit-man within Him (1 Pet. 3:18). Thus Christ's sacrifice was acceptable by reason of his "eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14); his perfect spiritual character was what enabled his physical blood and death to win our salvation. His resurrection was due to his "spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). We can only relate to Him

now as a spiritual being. We can not now know Him after the flesh. Now his mortal flesh has been destroyed, He is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 R.V.); He is called "the Spirit" in Revelation because the spiritual character He developed in his mortal life is now what He is.

Cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?- The "dead works" are those which can be turned away from by baptism into Christ and forgiven (6:1). The contrast is with how the sprinkling of blood and water cleansed the flesh, getting technical forgiveness for legal infringements, but could not cleanse the conscience or spirit of the offerer. 1 Pet. 1:2 states that the sprinkling of the blood of Christ is to be associated with our sanctification by the Spirit, referring to the internal cleansing of the heart by the gift and operation of the Spirit there. As explained in Romans 1-8, we are "in Christ", counted as Him, with His righteousness imputed to us; and therefore we can be confident that if He returns today or we die, we shall surely be saved. The bad conscience regarding our previous "dead works" is totally removed; and on this basis we can do priestly service in the Most Holy place. We are not to simply rejoice in our own redemption, but to realize that our cleansing is so that we may serve. The mention of "the living God" would suggest again the function of the Spirit; He is alive and interactive with us, and we are to therefore serve the God who is Spirit in spirit (Jn. 4:24).

The Greek word translated “conscience”, *sun-eidesis*, means literally a co-perception. It implies that there are two types of perception within the believer- human perception, and spiritual self perception. The conscience that is cleansed in Christ, that is at peace, will be a conscience that keeps those two perceptions, of the real self and of the persona, in harmony. What we know and perceive humanly, is in harmony with we spiritually perceive. Our conscience, our co-perception, our real self, makes sense of the human perceptions and interprets them in a spiritual way. So, a young man sees an attractive girl. His human perception signals certain things to his brain- to lust, covet, etc. But his co-perception, his conscience, his real self, handles all that, and sees the girl’s beauty for just simply what it is- beauty. Job before his ‘conversion’ paralleled his eye and his ear: “My eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it” (Job 13:1). He was so sure that what he heard was what he saw; he was sure that his perceptions were operating correctly. But later, he comes to see a difference between his eye and his ear. He says that he had only heard of God by the ear; but only now, he says, “my eye sees You” (Job 42:5). He had heard words, but, he realized, he’d not properly ‘seen’ or perceived. Finally, he had a properly functioning ‘conscience’, a co-perception. What he saw, was what he really heard.

Our conscience is not going to jump out of us and stand and judge us at the day of judgment. There is one thing that will judge us, the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48), not how far we have lived according to our conscience. It’s therefore unreliable (1 Cor. 4:4). And yet there is Bible teaching concerning the need to live in accordance with our

'conscience', and the joy which is possible for the believer who has a clear conscience (e.g. Acts 24:16; Rom. 14:18-22; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:21). This must mean, in the context, the conscience which God's word has developed in us- it cannot refer to 'conscience' in the sense of our natural, inbuilt sense of right and wrong; because according to the Bible, this is hopelessly flawed. The fact the "conscience" is "cleansed" by Christ's sacrifice (Heb. 9:14; 10:22) proves that the Biblical 'conscience' is not the natural sense of right and wrong within our nature; for our nature can never be 'purged' or 'cleansed', the believer will always have those promptings within him to do wrong. The cleansed, purged conscience refers to the new man that is created within the believer at baptism. This new 'conscience' is not just a sense of guilt which is invoked on account of not living an obedient life; it is also a conscience which positively compels us *to do* something, not just threatens us with a pang of guilt if we commit a sin.

We have a conscience which in God's eyes is cleansed of sin, knowing that our sin has been overcome once and for all, and that we have access to this through baptism. Our hearts were purified by that faith (Acts 15:9); we were cleansed from the conscience of sins (Heb. 9:14); all things became pure to us (Tit. 1:15; Rom. 14:20). This is a good conscience, Biblically defined. When Paul said he had a pure conscience before God, they smote him for blasphemy (Acts 23:1,2); there is an association between a clear conscience and perfection (Heb. 9:9; 10:14). A clear conscience therefore means an awareness that in God's eyes, we have no sin. Thus Paul's conscience could tell him that he was living a life which was a response to his experience of God's grace / forgiveness (2 Cor. 1:12). The conscience works not only negatively; it insists that we *do* certain things. It may even be that the goads against which Paul was kicking before his conversion were not the pricks of bad conscience, but rather the *positive* directions from God that he *ought* to be giving his life to the service of His Son. Whilst we may still have twinges of guilt, and sins to confess, from God's viewpoint the slate is clean, and has been since our baptism. It is impossible to believe this without some kind of response. We are purged in our conscience so that we might serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

However I suspect that the idea is that we have attained such a forgiveness that we now have no more conscience of sins. This would explain why David and Paul could speak and write of how they were relatively innocent and of a good conscience, when they had both sinned grievously at earlier points in their lives. Forgiveness is one thing; and God granted forgiveness in the Old Testament. The Mosaic rituals repeatedly stated that the sinner was indeed forgiven. And we must give this its due weight. But receipt of forgiveness is one thing; salvation and psychological cleansing from guilt are other things. And it is these things which were achieved for us in the Lord's death. The day of Atonement, which is in view throughout this chapter, signalled that there was some other kind of forgiveness and cleansing available, far beyond the regular forgiveness of specific sins. And that looked ahead to the Lord's work which we now experience.

9:15 *And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant; that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance*- The Lord's ability to cleanse even the conscience of believers through His total eradication of sin is what makes Him the mediator of the new covenant, even though that new covenant was comprised of the promises made to Abraham and his seed [the Lord Jesus] of eternal inheritance of the earth. By association with the representative sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we can become "in Him", we become the seed, and thereby the promises to Abraham and Jesus are made to us. His sacrifice thereby enabled us to receive the promise of eternal inheritance- the promise made to Abraham. His death was also the basis for the salvation of those who sought forgiveness under the old covenant; for the blood of animals of itself could not take away sin. It was only effective insofar as it pointed forward to the Lord's future sacrifice.

It must be remembered that the High Priest of the Old Covenant did not offer up the prayers of the people. Yahweh's ears were ever open to the cry of the individual Israelite, without an intercessor. Moses mediated the Old Covenant in the sense that he obtained it and relayed it to Israel; his mediation was a one-off act. This is the basis of the NT passages concerning the mediation of the New Covenant through Christ; He did this through His death and resurrection (Gal. 3:19,20; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Christ was the mediator of the new covenant so that the sins committed under the old covenant could be forgiven; thus His mediation is not in the relaying of our words to God, but in the sealing of the new covenant through His own blood. The mediation between God and man by the Lord is paralleled with His giving Himself as a ransom on the cross (1 Tim. 2:5,6). This is the sense in which He is the mediator of the new covenant; He mediated it *once*, not in an ongoing sense.

9:16 *For where a will is of power, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it*- Paul is playing on the meaning of the word translated "testament" or "covenant"; it also means a will, a set of promises which become actual after the death of the one who made the promises. I have commented elsewhere that whilst Paul's reasoning is true enough as it stands for us as Christians, viewing it retrospectively from our position, there are times when it would appear that he is rather forcing a point. For the obvious objection would be that it was God who made the new covenant, not Jesus; His death is not to be seen as the death of God, leaving us without Him to receive what He has left behind for us. But this kind of apparently forced logic would have been acceptable within the paradigm of Rabbinic midrash. The point becomes more logical however when we consider the argument that the old covenant or "will" was ordained with the shedding of blood, as if it would only come into true effect when someone died. And as explained in :15, the forgiveness offered under the old covenant was only finally effective when the Lord died. For the blood of animals of itself could not take away sin.

The death of the covenant victim was to act as a warning for what would happen to those who broke the covenant. Thus "The men who transgressed my covenant... I will make like the calf which they cut in two" (Jer. 34:18 RSV). In the account of a Babylonian covenant it was written: "This head is not just the head of the goat... it is the head of Mati'ilu... If Mati'ilu breaks the oath, then as the head of this goat is cut off... so shall the head of Mati'ilu be cut off". Thus the dead animal was seen as a representative of the person who entered the covenant. The death of our Lord, therefore, serves as a reminder to us of the end for sin. We either put sin to death, or we must be put to death for it. Gal. 3:15; Heb. 9:16 and other passages liken the blood of Christ to a covenant; and yet the Greek word used means definitely the last will and testament of a dead man. His blood is therefore an imperative to us to do something; it is His will to us, which we must execute. Thus His death, His blood, which is also a symbol of His life, becomes the imperative to us for our lives and living in this world. Note how blood is a symbol of both life and also death (Gen. 37:26; Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both His death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it.

9:17 *For a will is of force where there has been death; it does not have power while he that made it lives*- The new covenant as given in Genesis 15 also required the shedding of animal blood to ratify it; but it only came into force in the death of the Lord Jesus, thereby enabling all men to become part of Abraham's seed and share in the promise of eternal inheritance made to him (:15). Now the Lord has died, the promises to Abraham of eternal inheritance, the new covenant, is "of force". Paul uses the same word about the solidity of this hope in Rom. 4:16: "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure [s.w. "of force"] to all the seed". If it were not of grace through faith, it would have to be on the basis of works. And our human weakness would leave us with no sure hope, knowing we would never be perfectly obedient or do enough in order to make the promise of salvation "of force" or "sure". The same idea is carried in the word *elpis*, "hope"; not a hope for the best at judgment day, but a solid, certain knowledge of the future. Paul connects the ideas in 3:6 and 6:19, saying that we are to hold fast the confidence of the hope "firm", "of force" (s.w.), unto the end. This solidity of hope, this confident sense that our salvation is sure, "of force", is lacking in many who name the name of Christ today. They still sense that they must attain the new covenant by some form of works. But if we are focused upon the meaning of the Lord's death, then we can feel the "force", the sureness, of the promise of future salvation and inheritance of the earth. The prophetic word which has been made "more sure" (s.w. "of force") is surely a reference to this same wonderful truth- that the prophetic word to Abraham of salvation for his seed has been made "more sure", "of force", by the Lord's death (2 Pet. 1:19). The idea is not that predictions of future events were proven true; but rather that the word of salvation has been made sure, and we ought to thereby make our calling and election "sure" (s.w.; 2 Pet. 1:10).

9:18 *Therefore even the first covenant has not been dedicated without blood*- Salvation and forgiveness was possible for those who lived under the old covenant on the basis that the covenant was of power in these ways on account of the Lord's blood, to which the blood of animals pointed forward.

9:19 *For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people*- This brings out the link between blood and law-giving; the people were sprinkled with blood as they heard the Law read to them. The new covenant in Christ's blood results in the laws of God being written on our hearts, in our consciences (Heb. 8:10). Then Heb. 10:14-16 goes on to say the placing of the laws on our hearts in this way is in fact a "witness" to how His blood sanctifies us. We can't be passive to His sacrifice; the conscience elicited by it, the writing on our hearts, is what propels us forward to live a sanctified life. The language of blood, water, scarlet and hyssop is full of reference to the circumstances surrounding the Lord's death on the cross. It was to this that the Mosaic dedication and cleansing rituals pointed forward, and it only had power on that basis.

9:20 *Saying: This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded for you*- At the breaking of bread, it's as if Christ is sprinkling us with His blood, it's as if we are Israel assembled together, re-entering the covenant each time we break bread. No wonder we are asked to assemble ourselves together (as far as possible) to remember Christ (Mt. 26:28 = Heb. 9:20). We have elsewhere made the point that Hebrews is full of appropriate material for a breaking of bread exhortation (see on Heb. 13:22), which we believe it to have originally been. The language of the inauguration of the covenant is clearly applied here to the breaking of bread, for the allusion is to Mt. 26:28: "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins". Does something happen when we break bread? The connection surely suggests that the covenant is again made with us, not simply celebrated. We again face the huge comfort of knowing that the new covenant, total blotting out of sin, removing all conscience of sin, has been made with us. We are no longer like Israel experiencing the pattern of failure and forgiveness; more than that, conscience of guilt for sin has been removed, and like David and Paul we can speak and feel as those whose sin has been dealt with.

Far back in Mosaic ritual, the voice of command was associated with the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat; the blood of the lamb was a command to respond (Ex. 25:22), and God's presence and voice came from over the blood sprinkled mercy seat. Hence instead of reading of the *laws* which were commanded, we read of "the blood of the covenant which God commanded"; the book of the law was sprinkled with that blood to show the connection between the blood and the book. To eat His flesh and

blood (in evident anticipation of His coming sacrifice and the memorial meeting) was to eat *Him* and His words (Jn. 6:53,54,63). His words were all epitomized in His offered flesh and blood. In His death and sacrifice (which "the blood of Jesus" represent), we see His very essence: He Himself. On the stake He poured out His soul unto death (Is. 53:12), and yet in His life He poured out His soul too (Ps. 42:4). The cross was an epitome of who He really had been for those 33 years. To know Christ is to know His cross (Is. 53:11). See on Heb. 12:25.

9:21 *Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood*- The vessels of the ministry which were used to achieve some level of sanctification were only of power by reason of the blood sprinkled upon them; and that blood of itself was just red liquid. It was only meaningful in that it pointed forward to the Lord's sacrifice. The point was that even if the Hebrews wished to continue participating in the temple rituals, they were to realize that they had only ever had any meaning on account of the blood of Christ.

9:22 *And according to the law, I may almost say*- This is again language appropriate to a verbal exhortation rather than a letter; see on 13:22. The "almost" is because there were allowances for the very poor to not offer blood sacrifices.

All things are cleansed with blood; and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission of sin- The cleansing and remission was not therefore through ritual of itself, but on the basis that the rituals were as it were smothered in the blood which pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus. This may seem a fine difference, but it is significant. People with all their dysfunctions and conscious and unconscious sense of sin come to perform various rituals, and then emerge from the rituals feeling better and somehow cleansed. But this is mere religion, the psychology of religious ritual. The cleansing and remission offered under the old covenant was for real, but it was only for real in that the blood looked forward to the future sacrifice of the Messiah.

9:23 *It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these things*- Because ritual of itself could not sanctify sin, the whole ritualistic framework had to be doused, as it were, in the blood which pointed forward to the Lord's sacrifice.

But the heavenly things themselves had better sacrifices than these- "Sacrifices" may be an example of Paul thinking in Hebrew whilst writing in Greek. We may have here an intensive plural, whereby the plural is used to refer to one great singular item- in this case, the one great sacrifice, that of the Lord on the cross. The tabernacle was a copy, a shadow, of something greater. It was a shadow of us. God dwells in the tabernacle of human hearts, rather than in any physical structure. That point was made within the Old

Testament, and in the New Testament we are repeatedly portrayed as the tabernacle / temple / dwelling place of God. The better sacrifice which cleansed us, even our conscience, was the Lord's. Thus there is a parallelism between verses 23 and 24:

v. 23	v. 24
The patterns of things in	The holy places made with hands
the Heavens	the tabernacle
The Heavenly things themselves	Heaven itself... us

9:24 *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are only copies of the true ones; but into Heaven itself*- See on :23; the things in Heaven are us who are cleansed in Christ. It is stressed in Heb. 9:24; 8:2 that this Heavenly temple was made by God not by human hands. The Kingdom of Christ [which is essentially His people, those over whom He has Kingly dominion] is symbolized as a stone cut without hands (Dan. 2:44). We are the ones in heavenly places now (Eph. 1:3) who are cleansed by the Lord's sacrifice. Likewise Abraham looked forward to the Kingdom in terms of a city "whose builder and maker is God"; and God, we are told, has prepared that city for Abraham and his seed (Heb. 11:10,16). The coming down of that city/temple from Heaven in Rev. 21:3 is the fulfilment of Abraham's hope. The city/temple from Heaven has foundations (Rev. 21:14), just as Abraham expected (Heb. 11:10). The Lord has entered into God's actual presence, Heaven; and we are with Him there, cleansed, confident and unashamed before the presence of His glory. And this shall come to a literal fulfilment when at the last day we are presented "faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 24).

Now to appear in the actual presence of God for us- The language of Romans 8 about His intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered is to be connected with Hebrews 5 speaking of the Lord groaning with strong crying and tears on the cross. The point being that the intensity of His prayer there, struggling for every breath, is the same essential intensity with which He mediates for us now. He died "*for us*", and yet right now He appears "before the face of God *for us*" (Heb. 9:24 RV). Thus there is a connection between His death and His ongoing mediation "for us". We must struggle with Him, framing and offering our words in the full realization of the agonizing effort He is willing to make to intercede. The Greek translated "appear" meaning to exhibit openly. We are openly exhibited to God by the Lord Jesus, he reveals our inner spirit, our essential desires, to the Father; for we are "in Him". His appearance in God's actual presence is our appearance there.

We note the connection of thought between this reference to the presence of God, and the statement that the breaking of bread is an experience of the "bread of the presence".

Romans is full of legal language, of interceding, pleading, finding a favourable verdict etc., and refers this to the judgment and also to the cross. But Romans 8 uses these very ideas in relation to prayer, for in coming before the throne of grace now on account of the Lord's sacrifice, we come in essence before judgment. Coming before the throne of God in prayer (Heb. 9:24; Ps. 17:1,2) is the language of the judgment seat. If we become before His throne and are accepted, it follows that this is a foretaste of the outcome of the judgment for us, were we to be judged at that time. Our boldness before the Father in prayer will be the same attitude we have to Him at the judgment throne (1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 all use the same Greek word).

9:25 *Nor must he offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place year by year with blood not his own*- The Lord entered once, into Heaven itself, with His own blood; and remained there, rather than nervously slipping in and out once / year as the High Priest did.

9:26 *Or else he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages has he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*- "The foundation of the world" surely refers to the beginning of the Mosaic system; the "end" of that world is the end of the Mosaic system at the Lord's death. He sacrificed not animals, but "Himself".

On the cross, the Lord Jesus was 'manifested', shown as He really and essentially is (Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:19,20; 1 Jn. 3:5,8; 1 Tim. 3:16). But the same word is also used about the final manifesting of the Lord Jesus at His return (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2). This explains the link between the cross and His return; who He was then will be who He will be when He comes in judgment. There He endured the spitting and hatred of men in order to save them. And the same gracious spirit will be extended to all His true people, whatever their inadequacies.

The Lord's sacrifice "put away sin"; the same word has been used in 7:18 about the "disannulling" of the law. The whole concept of sin has been disannulled in that the law has been disannulled. In this sense His death "made an end of sins" (Dan. 9:24- perhaps Paul has this passage in mind here). For those in Him, sin is no longer a barrier between God and man; we stand "in Him" before God's very face / presence, counted as the sinless Lord Jesus.

9:27 *And inasmuch as it is appointed to men once to die and after this comes judgment*- The contrast and parallel to this statement is in :28, speaking of the Lord Jesus appearing at His second coming to reveal salvation rather than judgment. Throughout this section, Paul has in view the Day of Atonement (see on :4). Judaism spoke of the

annual entry of the High Priest into the Holiest as his 'death', and his return to the people as his resurrection and judgment. Verse 28 will explain that the Lord Jesus actually died, to bear our sins Himself rather than them being figuratively placed upon a scapegoat to bear them, and the equivalent to His emergence from the Most Holy is His return from Heaven to earth with the good news of our salvation. The allusion to the High Priest would account for the otherwise odd usage of the word "appointed", which is appropriate for the High Priest and also for the Lord Jesus (s.w. 1:2; 3:2).

9:28 *So Christ also, having once been offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him*- As explained on :27, this is an allusion to the second coming of Christ with the good news of our salvation, which paralleled the emergence of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement from the Holiest, with the news of God's pardon. The High Priest emerged to a humbled, repentant Israel on the Day of Atonement, having confessed their sins and afflicted their souls through fasting, waiting for their High Priest to appear and pronounce upon them the blessing of forgiveness. The Spirit is using this as a type of us expecting the second coming of our Lord; the motivation for our enthusiasm should be our earnest need of ultimate forgiveness and reconciliation with God. David likewise speaks of waiting and watching for the Lord in the context of asking for forgiveness (Ps. 130:5,6). And we could possibly infer that the Lord's second coming is dependent upon Israel's humbling and repentance.

The contrast is with a worried Israel awaiting the appearance of the High Priest on the day of atonement. They hoped he had obtained atonement for them- but they didn't know. And there was always the fear he had failed in his mission and lay dead within the sanctuary. There is a Jewish tradition that a rope was tied to him in order to extricate his body were he to be slain there. The contrast is with us- not awaiting the Lord's appearance with the same sense of uncertainty. Our sins are dealt with. He has obtained our salvation. And we eagerly, therefore, await His appearing to give us that salvation in literal terms. We are not awaiting a yes / no decision, uncertain as to what it will be. We are to be certain that in Him is "yes".

The focus of the Lord at His return will not be to "deal with sin". He did this in His death. Any necessary judgments upon a sinful world will not be His prime interest; rather does He return in order to give us salvation. This was and is His focus, like His Father, taking no pleasure in punishing sin. But the AV is literally correct here: "Without sin unto salvation". The phrase "without sin" is exactly that used in 4:15 of how the Lord had all our temptations but was morally "without sin". The High Priest emerged from the Holiest on the Day of Atonement and pronounced the forgiveness. The Lord Jesus will emerge from Heaven and as it were just stand there, "without sin". His moral perfection achieved in mortal flesh is of itself the guarantee and statement of our own forgiveness and salvation.

If we understand something of the ‘mechanics’ of the atonement, and grasp something of the fact that they were outworked in a real, historical man, we will see that the final realization of the redemption achieved at the cross will be when Christ comes back. If we understand something of the atonement, we will earnestly look for the second coming, when the redemption achieved on the cross will be brought unto us (cp. 1 Pet. 1:13). An enthusiasm for the second coming, spurred by a realization that the bringing of salvation then is an outworking of the cross, will lead to a loose hold on the things of this life.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

10:1 *For the law having only a shadow of the good things to come, not the reality of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those that draw near*- The law was treated by Judaism as the reality; they couldn't get beyond the ritual, and see that it was something temporal, pointing forward to a greater and more personal spiritual reality. The Hebrews were attracted by the religion of it all, just as many Christians can apparently not see beyond the "mere religion" of their supposed spirituality. There was no perfection offered; there was only a temporary covering over of legal infringements which had to be renewed each Day of Atonement. The Lord's sacrifce can perfect believers in that by identity with Him, we are counted as perfect and without sin; perfect righteousness is imputed to us. 'Drawing near' uses the same word elsewhere used about coming near to God, drawing near right before His throne (4:16; 7:25; 10:22). To draw near to God's presence in the Holiest was declared intrinsically impossible by the Mosaic tabernacle.

10:2 *Else would they not have ceased to be offered?*- The recurrent nature of the sacrifices of itself indicated that they did not take away sin permanently, and therefore the worshippers were left with an abiding awareness or consciousness of their sins.

Because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins- Heb. 10:18,26 states that Christ only made one sacrifice for sin, implying that the sins of those in Christ were atoned for at one moment in time. He will not make another sin offering each time we sin, and therefore we should not sin wilfully, because that assumes that he will once again sacrifice for sin. Thus we will be crucifying Christ afresh (Heb. 6:6). The sacrifice of Christ can make us perfect in God's sight, so that "once purged" we should have "no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:1,2). This does not refer to "conscience" as the guilty streak within us. Our spiritual man ought to have no more guilt for our sins, which are now forgiven. But if we allow sin to be the governing principle in our lives, we can no longer be reckoned as sinless (Rom. 6:12; 1 Jn. 3:8).

10:3 *But in that sacrificial system there is a remembrance made of sins year by year*- All the sacrifices offered to obtain forgiveness were somehow deficient if once every year there needed to be the ritual of atonement performed on Yom Kippur. So it worked out that instead of the awareness (:2 "consciousness") of sin being removed, in fact it was heightened by bringing sin to remembrance.

10:4 *For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins*- Sin brings death for the sinner; the blood had to represent the death of the sinner. So it needed to be human blood, representative of human sinners; and not that of animals who are not under the law of God. God is not a pagan deity who is apparently placated by animal blood.

10:5 *Therefore when he came into the world, he said*- The quotation from Psalm 40 is of words first thought and spoken by David in reflecting that there was no sacrifice which could be offered to deal with his sin in effectively murdering Uriah and committing adultery. All he could offer God was a broken heart, and a desire to humbly serve Him in whatever days he might be given by grace. The Bathsheba Psalms all have further reference to the attitude of the Lord Jesus on the cross; the brokenness of David at that time, physically and psychologically, pointed forward to that of the Lord in His time of dying. The purpose of this is to teach us to what extent the Lord Jesus identified with hopelessly fallen man especially at the time of His dying; whilst Himself never having sinned. The reference to David is evidence

enough that the words of this passage do not demand an incarnation of some Divine Spirit into a body waiting on earth to receive it, as Trinitarians claim. The language of Psalm 40 originally applied to David's feelings after his sin with Bathsheba. It is interpreted as being appropriate to the Lord's feelings when He "came into the world".

"Came into" is the very word which has been used in this section about the Lord's coming into the Most Holy, representing Heaven itself (6:20; 9:12,24,25). The reference could be to the Lord's beginning of His priesthood in Heaven, rather than having any reference to His birth or death on earth. But "into the world" is the phrase so often used in John's Gospel for the Father sending His Son into the world at the start of His ministry at age 30 [not necessarily at His birth]. And the same phrase "came into the world" is used of how "I am come a light into the world" (Jn. 12:46) and how the Lord "came into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth" (Jn. 18:37). That witness began to be given at age 30, which was when the Lord "came into the [Jewish] world". "The world" in John's Gospel nearly always refers to the Jewish world, as it does in this context in 9:26; and the Lord came into that world when His ministry to them began at age 30. We would therefore interpret this as meaning that the Lord began His ministry with the understanding that God had never wanted the animal sacrifices of themselves, but rather required a representative human being to perfectly do God's will. And this He dedicated Himself to doing in the ministry which culminated in the final doing of God's will by dying on the cross. The death of the cross is so often spoken of as the Father's "will".

Sacrifice and offering You did not want, but a body did You prepare for me- God did want sacrifices, but not for the sins David had committed concerning Uriah and Bathsheba. The Greek word "body" is also translated "slave" (Rev. 18:13). The idea cannot be that a body was prepared on earth, and some Divine Spirit incarnated it and the body became known as 'Jesus of Nazareth'. As noted above, the primary reference of the Psalm 40 quotation is to David after his sin with Bathsheba reflecting that sacrifices were not appropriate, and all he could do was to offer himself as the humble servant of Yahweh for the rest of his days. In any case, reading this as meaning that the 'Spirit Jesus' came down from Heaven and lived inside a specially prepared body is reading too much in to the words. Jesus began as an egg within Mary, which divided and re-divided until it became a foetus, then a child and thence "the man Christ Jesus". Jesus 'was' the body; He didn't somehow enter into a body which was prepared somewhere on earth. I therefore suggest that we read "body" as "slave" or "servant". And this is in fact what the Hebrew text implies in Psalm 40; Paul is quoting here from the Septuagint, but the Hebrew reads: "My ears You have digged / bored" (Ps. 40:6). The allusion is to how a servant could choose to remain within his master's house as a permanent slave because he so loved his wife and family and his master; and in this case his ear was bored through and nailed to an upright piece of wood (Ex. 21:6). This clearly hinted at the crucifixion. The Lord Jesus was the slave who willingly decided to devote Himself permanently to the service of the Master's household, demonstrating it by His crucifixion; His ministry for us is therefore eternal, unlike that of the Levitical priests. Paul nearly always quotes the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text, but the sense here is essentially the same, although the readings differ. The idea is that God didn't want dead animals, but a totally dedicated servant / slave who would perfectly do His will and devote himself to the permanent service of His household. And that person was the Lord Jesus, typified by the repentant David. Phil. 2:7,8 along with the prophecies of the suffering servant makes it clear that the Lord was supremely a slave / servant in His death on the cross.

10:6 *In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure*- God did require them and was pleased they were given, but He had no desire for them in response to David's sin. David is everyman, worthy of death because of our wretched failure, with no animal sacrifice or ritual to save us. See on :5.

10:7 *Then said I: Behold, I come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do Your will, O God*- The will of God is specifically associated with the Lord's death on the cross (e.g. Mt. 26:39). The entire scroll of the Pentateuch [the "roll of the book" known to David at the time of Psalm 40] implied the death of a perfect human sacrifice who would complete God's will for human salvation in totality. And Paul is applying these thoughts of David to the Lord Jesus as He began His ministry [or perhaps specifically when He died, or when He began His priestly service on entering Heaven; see on :5].

10:8 *First he said: Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor did You have pleasure in them (all of which are offered according to the law)*- Paul perceives that firstly, there was the statement that God did not desire animal sacrifices of themselves in order to remove sin; and secondly, the Lord Jesus came to do God's will, in a way which animals simply could not do. This division into first and second is pressed into a similarity with the first and second covenants, as noted on 9:1. God's desire was that sacrifice should be offered under the Old Covenant, but this could not take away sin of itself. What He desired far more ['not A but B' can mean 'not *so much* A as B'] was the sacrifice of the One who did His will perfectly.

10:9 *Then he said: Behold, I come to do Your will. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second*- As noted on :8, the "first" statement is associated with the first covenant, the law of Moses. The doing of God's will by the perfect sacrifice establishes "the second", i.e. the new covenant; and by doing so, the first covenant is made old (8:13), or as stated here, 'taken away', or literally 'slain / killed'. This is how totally the old covenant had been taken away. The second or new covenant was "established" in that as explained above, it was based upon the promises to Abraham which already existed, but which were mediated or brought into operation by the Lord's sacrifice. Thereby, men and women could become "in" the seed of Abraham, and the promises which were originally to only Abraham and his singular seed thereby were made to all within the One Messianic seed. These promises, this second or new covenant, was 'established' by the Lord's death; and thereby the "first", Mosaic covenant was done away. To return to that was therefore to reject the Lord's work and to shy away from the wonder of salvation now made so sure and established.

"Establish" is literally 'to make to stand up'; the same Greek word is used in :11 about the standing up of the priests. It is used nowhere else in Hebrews. There is no semantic connection, just a usage of the same word a sentence later, although in different contexts. I would suggest this is the kind of thing which happens in verbal language usage, when we speak out loud. And it is more evidence that Hebrews is the transcript of an address (see on 13:22).

10:10 *By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*- The "will" of God refers to God's will that none should perish but all should be saved (Mt. 18:14; Jn. 3:16; 6:40). That will lead to the giving of His Son; and yet the Son had to freely fulfill that will of His own volition. The incredible will of God for human salvation was demonstrated publically by the offering of the Lord's body. This "once and for all" declared the will of God to save us, ending for all time any doubt or niggling suspicion that He is somehow indifferent to human

salvation and is simply leaving us to make our own decisions without any passion or will from His side. The Lord's death was therefore His "will" (Mt. 26:42). The doing of God's will by His Son is parallel with the finishing of His work (Jn. 4:34), coming to a climax in His last words from the cross: "It is finished". Yet we too are to play our part in the doing of that will- in reaching out to save others by the grace of the Lord Jesus (10:36; 13:21). "The offering of the body of Jesus" alludes to how the offering of animal bodies could not save of itself; but again it was the life and person of the Lord Jesus which saves, rather than simply His body, which was like any other human body.

10:11 *And every priest indeed stands day by day serving, and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins*- This contrast between the priests *standing* in service and the Lord *sitting* at God's right hand is emphasized. I suggested on 1:1 that Paul is writing to the Hebrews with constant allusion to the martyrdom of Stephen. He saw the Lord standing at God's right hand- when usually, the Lord sits. But He was [and can still be] caught up in the passion and urgency of our human situations. The way the sacrifices were repeated ["the same sacrifices"] demonstrates how they were not ultimately effective. I have noted throughout chapter 9 that Paul has the rituals of the Day of Atonement in view. The allusion here would be to how the scapegoat apparently 'took away sins'; but the sacrifices had to continue to be offered. So there was something wrong with the scapegoat ritual; it was only effective insofar as it pointed forward to the ultimate bearer of sins, which Isaiah 53 presents as being the suffering servant on the cross, the "body" or "servant / slave" prepared instead of the ritual sacrifices (:5).

10:12 *But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God*- See on :12 for the significance of the Lord sitting. The one sacrifice for sins for ever means that there is now no more consciousness of sin as a barrier between God and us (:2). This is a far more wonderful truth than simply meaning that the Lord offered one sacrifice for sins and therefore no more animals need to be killed. Note that it was when the sacrifice was offered that the Lord sat at the right hand of God. His sacrifice therefore included both His death and resurrection. See on :14.

10:13 *From that time forward expectantly waiting until his enemies be made the footstool for his feet*- In Acts 2:35 there is an appeal for the Hebrews who crucified the Lord to repent. They were His "enemies"; but once they became a footstool for His feet, then He would return. Therefore Peter appealed for their repentance, apparently understanding being 'a footstool for His feet' as meaning they would put themselves at His feet in obeisance. The Lord's footstool is the place where His worshippers come (Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Is. 66:1-3). The Father was willing to "make" His Son's enemies, those responsible for His death, into His worshippers. But they had to do their part, in repentance and acceptance of the activity of His Holy Spirit. Heb. 10:13 adds the detail that the Lord Jesus is eagerly looking for [AV "expecting"] His former enemies to become His footstool- and then He will return. This is why witness to Jewish people is so deeply significant in God's program. The Lord's victory over sin means that sinners, His "enemies", would be made the seat and basis of His praise.

10:14 *For by one offering he has perfected for ever those that are sanctified*- As noted on :12, the Lord's "one offering" included both His death and resurrection. He saw His resurrection as His being "perfected" (Lk. 13:32 s.w.). By becoming "in Christ", all that is true of Him becomes true of us. We are sanctified by being in Him, counted as having His sanctity / righteousness / holiness. And thereby we are perfected as He

was when He cried "It is finished" or perfected (Jn. 4:34). We are "perfected" only in prospect; just as the Lord achieved God's will on the cross but we must also do that will (see on :10). The Lord prayed that because He had perfected God's work, so we should be "made perfect in one" (the same words are used- Jn. 17:4,23). His death enabled those who become "in Him" to be counted as perfect as Him; but His death also empowered the gift of the Spirit to transform / mature / 'perfect' us in practice into who we are by status. This is the thought developed in the following verses, just as it is in Romans 8, which goes on from speaking about our sanctification by the cross to explaining the work of the Spirit in our hearts. And here too in Hebrews 10, those who are sanctified are also perfected. A process is in view, of maturing and developing us through the Spirit; parallel to the process of *making* us His former enemies to be the footstool of His feet (:13).

10:15 *And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us. For after saying*- The inspiration of this message by the Spirit is mentioned because the teaching is going to be about the operation of the Spirit in our hearts; see on :14. The covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah is testified "to us".

10:16 *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and on their minds I will write them*- As noted on :14, the Lord's sacrifice enables us to not only be forgiven, but to be perfected / matured, and to be "made" His footstool. This process of sanctification and maturing is achieved by the work of the Spirit in our hearts. The context of the Jeremiah quotation is God's acceptance of Israel's continued disobedience and plan to insert His laws into their hearts; to not only forgive them (:17), but to change them. It is the Spirit which sanctifies in the heart; the sanctification of the Spirit is something we must allow to be done to us rather than seeking to make ourselves clean by rituals (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). By resisting this sanctifying power, we are despising the gift or grace of the Spirit (10:29). No amount of ritual obedience can change our hearts; we must allow the Lord's Spirit to do this. "Sanctify" in Greek is a form of the word "Holy"; the Holy Spirit is in essence the Spirit or power which makes our spirit holy / sanctified. To understand this is fundamental to understanding the function of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

10:17 *Then is added: And their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more*- The forgiveness of sins is in addition to the work of the Spirit in human hearts, changing us to be like the Lord whose righteousness is counted to us. Hence Paul notes that this "is added", forgiveness is a separate promise to the sanctifying or transformation of human hearts. And this speaks exactly to our need as sinners; we need not only forgiveness but also the power to change so that we are not endlessly knocking on Heaven's door for the forgiveness of the same sins. Sins are "remembered no more" not in the sense that God 'forgets' them, for the Bible is full of historical accounts of human sin which has been forgiven. The sense is rather that He will not remember sin against us. Here is the final answer to all fears about ghosts from our past. Those sins will not be remembered against us.

Sin was completely overcome by the Lord's victory; "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever (in their conscience) them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14 cp. 9:9). "Their sins and iniquities [there seems no hint that this only refers to pre-baptismal sins] will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). If we sin wilfully after knowing this, there is no more sacrifice for sins- because that sacrifice was only ever made once (Heb. 10:26). At our baptism, our conscience was cleansed of all sin. We need to meditate upon that lifeless body of the Lord and what it meant. "A covenant is of

force over dead [victims or sacrifices]... it is never held to be of force while he who is the appointed [sacrifice] is alive" (Heb. 9:17 Bullinger). Over that body the personal covenant to each of us (Gen. 17:7) came into real, living operation.

The Lord Jesus made *one* sacrifice for all sins for all time, and therefore we don't need to offer any more sacrifices or use a human priesthood; we are already totally forgiven of all our sins. There is further evidence, apart from the reasoning of Hebrews, that all our sins, past and future, were forgiven at Calvary:
- On the cross, sin was ended, iniquity reconciled, everlasting righteousness brought in (Dan. 9:24). One sin offering was made for all time.
-We must forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake *has* forgiven us (Eph. 4:32); not waiting for our brother to repent before we forgive him, but forgiving in advance, in prospect, even as we were forgiven. This takes this issue out of the realms of theology into the painfully practical.
- Our sins were / are forgiven by the blood of Christ- not by our repentance or words of prayer. "God's forgiveness is not just a wiping clean of the slate [from hour to hour]... if it were, prayer would be immoral- a mere incantation to bring about a magical result: and we need to be continually wary of the pagan conception which would reduce it to such a level". These words are so true. Whenever a twinge of guilt arises, we rush off a quick prayer for forgiveness- and then, at the end of the day or the week, we are left with a doubt as to whether our spirituality is valid or not. If this is our experience, we are all too similar to Israel of old; offering the sin offering (cp. praying for forgiveness), feeling guilty, coming to the day of Atonement (cp. the breaking of bread), still feeling guilty, realizing that as the sin offering couldn't cleanse sin, neither could the sacrifice at that feast, offering more sin offerings... It can become the ritual of a bad conscience, stumbling on because there seems no other way to go. But our sins (yes, yours, that snap at your wife, that curse as you spilt your coffee) really were forgiven through the Lord's work on the cross; we really do have access to this through *really believing it*- and therefore expressing our faith in baptism. Our prayerful response to failure should be to confess it (1 Jn. 1:9), and also profess our faith in the redemption already achieved for us.

All our sins were forgiven when the Lord died for us; both past and future. By baptism we identify ourselves with this work, and we are thereby in a position where we have "no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:2,22), knowing that all is forgiven, and only if we fall from grace will this become untrue. Thus YLT speaks of "*the* conscience" in the NT, as if it is something specific which we have, rather than an occasional twinge of guilt. We have this Biblical conscience "toward God"; this is how He sees us (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:21). Thus we may have a guilty feeling about something, we may doubt our salvation, but our conscience in God's eyes is pure; we are still cleansed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we have a clear conscience, God will punish those who persecute us (1 Pet. 3:16 RSV). 1 Pet. 3:21 teaches that baptism saves us not because in itself it means that we are free from the deeds of the flesh ("putting away the filth of the flesh" uses words which elsewhere carry this connotation), but because it gives us a good conscience in God's eyes- according to the Biblical definition of conscience.

10:18 *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin required*- As noted on :17, forgiveness of all sin was achieved in one offering. No further sin offerings are required. The logic of this not only meant that the Hebrews should not be offering sin offerings in the temple any more; but interpretations of Ezekiel's

temple prophecies which require future sin offerings in the Kingdom age must be suspect in the light of the reasoning here. We note however that whilst in Jerusalem with the Hebrew Christians, Paul did apparently offer animal sacrifices (Acts 21:24); and he suffered hugely for doing so. We could read this as Paul seeking to be all things to all men; or perhaps in his zeal to by all means be reconciled with the Hebrew Christians, he departed from his own principles when he ought not to have done so.

10:19 *Therefore brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus*- The High Priest nervously entered the Holiest for a few moments on the Day of Atonement; but we can enter "boldly", a term often used to characterize the early Christians. The only way any man can be so "bold" is through believing in the Lord's total forgiveness and further, that we are counted righteous by status. It was the High Priest alone who entered the Holiest, representing the Lord Jesus. And we are in Him. All that is true of Him becomes true for us.

In the light of ten chapters of detailed exposition of the meaning of the blood of Christ, *therefore let us...*, Paul triumphantly drives home (Heb. 10:19-25). And he speaks of how we must transform our lives:

- Let us enter boldly "into the holiest by the blood of Jesus". This is only possible through a deep knowledge of sin forgiven. Our prayer life should be a positive and upbuilding experience: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience". Reflection on the atonement, believing it all, will result in a positive and unashamed faith.
- "Let us hold fast... without wavering". If the belief of the cross is imprinted upon our minds, reflected upon not for a few fleeting minutes on Sundays but often throughout each day, we won't waver. The natural tendency to blow hot and cold in our spiritual endeavours will be vanquished beneath an unceasing wonder at what was achieved. It is only sustained reflection upon the cross which can, in an almost mystical way, impart an unceasing verve of inspiration.
- "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching". Again the doctrine of the atonement and that of the second coming are linked. As we realize more and more clearly that very soon the final outworking of the cross will be achieved in the actual physical granting of redemption to us, so we will be inspired to more and more earnestly seek the welfare of our brethren. If we believe in the atonement, we will naturally seek to break bread. Whether it means summoning the courage to meet with those we naturally would rather not meet with, bringing the wine to the meeting, we will be motivated to rise up and serve in these ways by the eternal and personal truth of the cross.

The smell of the incense passed through the veil, and into the Most Holy Place, where the presence of God Himself was symbolized as being over the blood-stained cover of the ark. The simple wonder of it all is that the words of our prayers really can penetrate to Heaven itself; and even further, we are as it were "there" in the Holiest, in Christ. In Christ, the veil itself has been done away, and we can with boldness enter into that Most Holy Place and personally have direct fellowship with God (Heb. 9:7-13; 10:19). Our heart can touch the heart of God. It's a priceless wonder to know and experience this.

Under the Law, the provision for Nazariteship encouraged the average Israelite to enter into the spirit of the High Priest by imposing some of the regulations governing his behaviour upon them. *All* Israel were bidden make fringes of blue, in conscious imitation of the High Priest to whose spirit they all were intended to attain (Num.

15:38). But we are bidden now to "come boldly unto the throne of grace (cp. the mercy seat in the Most Holy)... boldness to enter into the holiest" (Heb. 4:16; 10:19): to do what only the High Priest could do under the Old Covenant. This must have been a huge challenge for the Jewish believers to rise up to. The context of Heb. 10 encourages us to enter the Holiest and "consider one another". The High Priest entered the Holiest in order to make atonement for Israel, not just to bask in the fact he was allowed in there. And so with us. The marvellous fellowship with the Father which we are permitted in Christ, the entry into the Holiest, is not just for the sake of it; it is so we can do something for others. I am not suggesting, of course, that in any way we replace the one and only High Priest, the Lord Jesus. But because we are *in Him* we therefore in some ways share His honours and His work. The idea of eating the bread of the sacrifices would likewise have appeared strange in a first century context: it was as if the whole brotherhood (and sisterhood) were being invited to see themselves as priests. But in His last message, the Lord went further: He promised that those who overcome will eat of the hidden manna, concealed in the Most Holy: as if to say that we will ultimately rise up to and exceed the glory of the High Priests who saw that bread once a year. See on Jn. 10:9.

10:20 *By the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*- The Lord Jesus inaugurated the “new and living way” for us *dia*, on account of, “his flesh” (Heb. 10:20). It was exactly because of “the flesh” of the Lord’s humanity that He opened up a new way of life for us. Because He was so credibly and genuinely human, and yet perfect, the way of His life becomes compellingly the way we are to take, and enables every man to become "in Him". Once we grasp this, we can better understand the anathema which John calls down upon those who deny that Jesus was “in the flesh” (2 Jn. 7-9). We are cleansed by an ever 'freshly slain' sacrifice (Heb. 10:20 Gk.). The cross is ongoing; the Lord's blood is "new", fresh, not coagulated, unlike the blood sprinkled each Yom Kippur which was dead and dried.

On one level, the atonement can be logically explained. On another, it cannot be. The veil, an eloquent symbol of the flesh of Jesus, was made of mixed fibres, something which was otherwise forbidden under the Law. This perhaps reflected how the Lord’s nature and the atonement God wrought through Him was and is in some ways contradictory, to human eyes.

Through His death, the veil was torn open, so that we might enter into the Holiest “by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us... through the veil, that is to say [the sacrificing of] his flesh" (Heb. 10:19-22 Gk.). This assumes that the followers of Jesus are already in the position of the High Priest standing in the Holy Place, but through what He opened through the cross, each of us must now go through into the Most Holy. And what was the purpose of the High Priest’s entry? To obtain forgiveness *for others, to mediate for them*, just as the Lord Jesus did on the cross and continues to do for us. His cross compels us to not merely passively contemplate our own salvation, but to go deeper into the very presence of God in our ministry *for others*. Yet the High Priest had to cleanse himself meticulously; access had been limited to the Most Holy as a result of inadequate preparation by some in the past (Lev. 16:1,2). The Lord’s death opened up the veil, for us to pass through with the utmost effort made by us in personal sanctification, in order to further God’s glory in the salvation of others. We cannot simply refuse to enter, turn away from the torn veil.

To do so is to turn away from what the cross has achieved, and to place ourselves outside its scope. We must go forward, go onwards into the presence of God to replicate in essence the Saviour's work, with the awed and humble spirit of the High Priest entering the Holiest on the day of atonement. He would surely have carefully analysed his motives, as to *why* he was passing through that veil, and whether he was sufficiently personally sanctified for the work he was doing. He would have been comforted by knowing that his motives were solely for the glorification of his God in the redemption for his people which he was seeking to obtain.

10:21 *And having a great priest over the house of God*- This is an allusion to priesthood as it was at the time of Melchizedek and not of Moses, where a family ["house"] had a priest-head. Although as explained above, we are "in Him" and stand with Him as High Priest in the Holiest, in Heaven itself, in another sense we are His family members and He is our great priest over us.

10:22 *Let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water*-

There is a clear NT theme: that the believer always has a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16); this clear conscience is a gift from the time of baptism (Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21; Heb. 9:14 cp. 6:1; Rom. 6:17), when "our bodies [were] washed with pure water". It was not external things which are sprinkled, as they were under the law, but the innermost recesses of the human heart. Our bad conscience about sin is totally removed; because of our fullness of faith in the Lord's work for us. If a believer loses that good conscience, he has fallen from grace. The Hebrews were losing that good conscience and beginning to worry about their sins to the point of wanting to return to ritual and sacrifices as a way to deal with their bad conscience. Those who leave the faith have a conscience which is wounded (1 Cor. 8:12), defiled (1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15), seared (1 Tim. 4:2). It's hard to find a consistent Biblical definition of conscience. "Conscience" in the Biblical sense often refers to how God sees our conscience, rather than how we feel it. Therefore only rarely does the Spirit speak as if "conscience" is something which is good one moment, and bad the next; it is something which we have on a permanent basis. Thus to say "I watched TV last night with a good conscience, but I had a bad conscience that I didn't give out any tracts today" isn't really using "conscience" in its Biblical sense. Paul repeatedly emphasizes that he has *always* had a good conscience (presumably, from the time of his baptism, when he stopped kicking against the goads, Acts 9:5).

The good conscience is Biblically defined in Hebrews 9, 10. Here the writer is basing his argument on how those under the Old Covenant still had a guilty conscience after their sacrifices, because the blood of animals could not take away sin; the yearly Day of Atonement required them to confess their sins once again. Their conscience was not made perfect (Heb. 9:9). In his overpowering way, the writer drives his logic home: not only is our conscience cleansed by the one sacrifice of Christ, but we are in a more exalted position than the OT worshippers; we are in the very position of the High Priest who on that Day of Atonement entered the Most Holy; *we* can enter the Holiest with *boldness* (cp. the nervousness of the Priest) because our consciences are cleansed with Christ's blood. And because of this, "let us draw near" (Heb. 10:22), the language the LXX uses about the priestly serving of God; now *we* can do the priestly work, because our consciences are cleansed. We are not like the OT believers, who had a bad conscience because of their sins and needed to offer an annual sacrifice for them, as a result of their conscience. We, by contrast, have no more conscience of

sins. According to this Biblical definition of conscience, the conscience is cleansed, and we partake of that cleansing by baptism. At and in that sacrament, we make a pledge to keep that good conscience (1 Pet. 3:21 NIV); perhaps we need to point this out more to baptism candidates. We are once and for all forgiven. Our emphasis must be on confession of failure, not feeling guilty and rushing off a quick prayer, as if this will get us forgiveness. We have been cleansed and covered, we are in the new covenant of grace. Only by breaking out of this can we lose the gracious position in which we stand: we have a conscience which is free of guilt, if we truly believe in the power of the cross and our relationship to it through baptism.

10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope so that it does not waver. For He who promised is faithful*- Given the allusion to water baptism in :22, the confession of hope may refer to some statement made then- to the effect that 'I really believe all my sins have been dealt with and that I shall definitely be saved if the Lord returns today or I die; I believe God is faithful to His promises of forgiving and saving me'. This was the Christian "hope" or *elpis*; not a hope for the best at judgment day, but a solid confident expectation of future salvation. And that public confession was to be continued, at a time when in Jerusalem the Hebrew Christians were being mocked and persecuted by the Judaists. We continue professing / confessing our hope "that it waver not" (Heb. 10:23 RV). It doesn't waver for us, exactly because we preach it. There is a great personal benefit in publicly stating our faith to others.

10:24- see on Acts 15:39.

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works- We are with the Lord Jesus, ministering in the Most Holy. And that work was essentially about the welfare of others. Our work with others therefore isn't a cold-hearted witness, or a theological debate; it is a *seeking* of glory to the Father; we exhort one another, *considering* how we may provoke to love (Heb. 10:24). But let me ask: do you *consider* how you might encourage your brethren, or those in the world around you; what words to say, what to do or not to do…?

In the cross, we see self-humbling that we might be exalted. And we respond by likewise humbling ourselves, that others may be exalted. In practice this means guiding our words and example so that others are exalted, not speaking of our own achievements, *considering each other* as to how we may provoke them to righteousness (Heb. 10:24; earlier in 3:1 Paul speaks of *considering* the Lord Jesus, and this leads on to considering each other). As the Lord considers us and our unique situations and how to lead us to the best service, so we should consider each other.

10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the habit of some is; but rather encouraging one another, and so much the more, as you see the day drawing near*- The Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem initially 'assembled together' in the temple courts, but with growing opposition from the temple system it seems they stopped doing this and instead returned to the temple system. This explains the need to assemble because the day is drawing near, and in the AD70 context this referred to the destruction of the entire temple system. The individual believers were the new temple, and they should therefore assemble themselves, rather than within the physical temple.

The connection between the last day, both of AD70 and the second coming, and assembling together is brought out by the allusion to the Passover. Gathered around the slain lamb, the memorial of their salvation, in their various homes, the command was clear: "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (Ex.

12:22). This is surely an eloquent picture of the ecclesia of the last days, highlighting the urgent need to remain within the ecclesia, and to centre our fellowship around our Passover Lamb.

Not assembling ourselves together is of course not a good thing. If we love our brethren, we will seek to be physically with them. There can be no doubt that we must struggle with our natural selfishness, our desire to go it alone. But is this actually what Heb. 10:25 is talking about? A glance at the context shows that forsaking the assembly is paralleled with the wilful sin which shall exclude us from God's salvation, a treading under foot the Son of God and reviling the blood of the covenant- what had to be done by Christians who 'repented' of their conversion and returned to the synagogue, the sort of blasphemy that Saul was making Christian converts commit.

This is not really appropriate to someone who fervently believes in the Lord Jesus, but for whatever reason, doesn't 'make it out to meeting' on Sundays? The context seems to speak about a wilful rejection of the Lord Jesus. And this of course is the very background against which Hebrews was written. It was a letter to Hebrew Christians who were beginning to bow to Jewish pressure and renounce their faith in Christ, and return to Judaism. "The assembling of ourselves together" can actually be read as a noun- not a verb. Those who 'forsook' 'the assembly together of us' would then refer to those who totally rejected Christianity. The same word "forsaking" occurs in 2 Pet. 2:15, also in a Jewish context, about those who "forsake the right way". So I suggest that forsaking the assembly refers more to turning away from Christ and returning to apostasy, than to simply not turning up at church as often as we might. The writer laments that "some" were indeed forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:25). But that Greek word translated "some" recurs in Hebrews to describe those "some" who had forsaken the ecclesia and turned back to Judaism: "Take heed… lest there be in *some* [AV "any"] of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (and returning to Judaism- Heb. 3:12)… lest *some* [AV "any"] of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13)… for *some*, when they had heard, did provoke [referring to the earlier Hebrews in the wilderness who turned away from the hope of the Kingdom- Heb. 3:16]… *some* of you should seem to fail [like the condemned Hebrews in the wilderness- Heb. 4:1]… lest *some* fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11). In fact, right after the reference to the "some" who forsake the assembly, Heb. 10:28 speaks of "*some* [AV "he"- but the same Greek word in all these places for "some"] that despised Moses' law". Clearly, those Hebrews in the wilderness who turned away from the spirit of Christ in Moses and the hope of the Kingdom, are being held up as warnings to that same "some" in the first century Hebrew ecclesia who were turning back from the Hope of the Kingdom. I'm not in any way saying that we needn't bother about our ecclesial attendance. Far from it! But I also feel it's not right to insist that if someone doesn't attend an ecclesia, for whatever reason, they are therefore guilty of the wilful sin and certain fiery condemnation of which Hebrews 10 speaks for those who forsake the assembly. In fact, the passage has almost been abused like that- as if to say: 'If you don't turn up on Sunday, if you quit meeting with us, then, you've quit on God and His Son'. This simply isn't the case.

10:26 *For if we sin wilfully after what we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins*- The wilful sin in view is that of :25, forsaking the Christian assembly for that of the temple, seeking justification by sacrificial rituals and the Jewish, anti-Christian priesthood rather than by faith in the amazing priesthood of the Lord Jesus which has been explained in such compelling

terms so far in Hebrews. “The knowledge of the truth” here refers in the context to the knowledge of forgiveness and salvation; it’s parallel to the “knowledge of salvation” (Lk. 1:77). The “truth” is the ultimate, surpassing reality- that we are saved, by grace, and can look forward to that great salvation being revealed at the last day. There was only one effective sacrifice for sins made- by the Lord Jesus. As explained earlier in this section, that sacrifice does not need to be repeated, and the killing of animals for forgiveness was effectively trying to crucify or sacrifice the Lord Jesus again. The idea is not that there is no opportunity for repentance; that is always possible. Rather, the idea is that those who forsook the sacrifice of Jesus for the ritual sacrifices of Judaism were mistaken in thinking that those sacrifices could gain forgiveness. If they trusted in them, then they would not receive forgiveness.

10:27 *But a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries*- For those trusting in Christ, there was no longer a conscience of sins. They had all been dealt with in the Lord's sacrifice, and they could be bold in their approach to God. Those who now trusted in animals sacrifices could never have their conscience of sin cleansed, as the sacrifices had to be continually offered; and so they could only look ahead to future judgment with fear rather than boldness. And they could only expect the condemnation of fiery destruction for their sins; they would be counted amongst the Lord's enemies or adversaries because they had refused His program of making His enemies / adversaries His worshippers (see on :13). The temple system was the adversary or satan of the Lord Jesus, and would meet its appropriate end.

10:28 *A man that set at nothing Moses’ law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses*- By turning away from the Lord's sacrifice, they were despising God's ultimate "law", which is in His Son. There could be no compassion for those who stated they didn't want it because their ritual obedience was enough. The return to the temple system by the Hebrew Christians was public, and not on the word of two or three who had observed secret sins.

10:29- see on Mk. 15:15; Heb. 12:17.

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, shall be considered those who have trodden underfoot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant (with which they were sanctified) an unholy thing, and have insulted the Spirit of grace?- Treading underfoot God's son and blaspheming His blood was the kind of thing Paul had tried to make the Hebrew Christians do under pain of torture. These blasphemous statements were required of those who had left Judaism for Christianity and now sought to return to the temple system and the legal protection of Judaism within the Roman empire. To turn away from such great salvation and blaspheme it could not be treated with neutrality by God. There was going to be a terrible consequence for it. The Lord's work had not only attained forgiveness, but had shed forth the gift ("grace") of the Spirit to transform human hearts so that they did not continue in sin. To turn away from the Lord Jesus was to insult and obstruct that Spirit.

As "the cross" means more than the impalement which epitomized it, likewise "the blood of Christ" means far more than the red liquid. These concepts found their physical epitome in the crucifixion process, but there is so much more to these things than the physical. The blood of the covenant, the Son of God and the Spirit of grace are bracketed together in Heb. 10:29. The Lord *was* His blood. The pouring out of blood from His side, the trickles down His cheeks from the crown of thorns, quickly drying in the hot dust beneath... this was *Him*. We take the wine in memory of *Him*; not just His blood. And He *is* the Spirit of God's transforming gift or grace, which

aims to change us into how the Lord Jesus actually is. By Himself He purged our sins (Heb. 1:3); and yet this purging was through His blood (Heb. 9:14). He was His blood; His cross was the essence of all He was.

10:30 *For we know Him that said: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will reward. And again: The Lord shall judge His people*- Judgment and punishment for sin have been dealt with for all those who are in Christ, as Paul has argued in this section and also in Romans 1-8. Those who now turned away from all this would therefore have to face judgment.

David asks God to judge him *now* (Ps. 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 54:1). He wasn't *so* afraid of the future judgment; He knew that it will only be the pronouncement of how we have now lived. He had a good conscience, and so He asked God to show how He felt about him right now. "The Lord shall judge the people [at the last day; this is quoted in this connection in Heb. 10:30]: judge me [i.e. now], O Lord, according to my righteousness" (Ps. 7:8).

10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*- This may well refer to Angelic punishment at the last day, as the hands of God is Angelic language, and "the living God" may well carry the idea in Hebrew of 'God of the living ones', i.e. the Angel-cherubim. But God is a living God in that He is alive in our lives through His risen Son.

What is written about the toughness of God's condemnation may seem awful. But actually, the condemnation and judgment of God is far softer than that of man. It was men who created the concept of eternal torment, not God. It was men who created Auschwitz and similar perversions of 'judgment'. It is truly written in the context of God's final condemnation that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). But David said that he would prefer to fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of man (2 Sam. 24:14). To fall into the hands of God is thus a figure for judgment / condemnation by Him. Fearful as it is, it is actually far milder than the judgment of men. This is how cruel our judgment of others can be; this is how awful is human condemnation of each other. It is worse that God's. No wonder that the Lord established "Judge not…" as a foundation principle for His true people.

10:32 *But call to remembrance the former days, when you were first enlightened. You endured a hard struggle, with sufferings*- The earliest Hebrew Christians, baptized in their thousands by Peter, were persecuted. But that was all in vain if they now returned to the temple system. The "sufferings" were a sharing in the crucifixion sufferings of Christ (s.w. 2:9,10). And His resurrection life by the Spirit had lived in the Hebrews who had participated in the sufferings. The awful persecutions they endured were orchestrated by Paul himself. He wrote of what he personally was aware of. Their return to Judaism was effectively a statement that Paul had been correct in persecuting them; and so Paul is personally involved in the argument in this sense.

10:33 *Partly in that you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly in that you became companions of those who were so treated*- Suffering is therefore not only in what we personally experience, but in our fellowshipping with the sufferings of others within the Lord's body. For in Him, if one member suffers, all the others do (1 Cor. 12:26). The early Christian converts were made a theatre, a "spectacle", openly revealed for their Christian faith; and what Paul did to them in this way he himself experienced (s.w. 1 Cor. 4:9). To come out in open solidarity for someone publicly mocked for their faith was in effect to suffer what they did. But to avoid that, the Hebrew Christians had become secret believers, hiding

their light under a bucket; and now they had taken the logical next step, which was to return to the darkness of Judaism.

10:34- see on Mt. 5:7; Heb. 4:15.

For you had both compassion on them that were in bonds, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your own property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an enduring one- It is tragic that believers who suffered so much could then revert to the very temple system which had so persecuted them. But this is a feature of our natures. We become like that which we hate the most and have suffered from the most, like Israel worshipping the idols of the nations whom they believed had defeated them. The giving of property to the poorer believers may therefore have partly been because property was being confiscated from Christians anyway. These verses in Hebrews 10 give us vital information about the persecution of the Hebrew Christians which the Acts record doesn't mention, just like the Acts record doesn't mention Paul's final privations in prison, of which we learn in 2 Tim. 4.

The manuscripts followed by the AV add: "Knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven...". They had once understood what Paul has earlier explained in this chapter; that believers "in Christ" are "in heaven", in the Holiest, their spiritual man ["in yourselves"] was in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). But they were turning away from that faith and understanding.

The early Christians “joyfully accepted the plundering of [their] property” by the state. There was a *joy* felt amongst them because of their loss. This is a totally counter-instinctive feeling- to be *joyful* because you lost or gave away ‘possessions’. The Philippians likewise gave out of a deep *joy* at giving away; the abundance of their joy resulted in their liberality (2 Cor. 8:2). And let’s not think that the early church were necessarily all dirt poor. The Christians of Heb. 10:34 had property which was plundered- and still they gave support to the poor saints in Palestine (Heb. 6:20).

The more we grasp that it really is God’s will that we will be there in God's future Kingdom, the more strength we will have to resist seeking for material things in this life. By being sure that we will be there, the Kingdom becomes our treasure, where our heart is, rather than any material treasure in this life (Lk. 9:34). The RV of Heb. 10:34,35 brings out well the same theme: "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your *possessions*, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better *possession*" (RVmg). Who we ourselves will be turned into is our better possession, "a better possession and an abiding one" (RV). And this compensates for the loss of material *possessions* in this life. Therefore the writer urges them to not cast away their confidence in the receipt of this reward at the Lord's return (:35). The more humbly confident we are in receiving the Kingdom, the less the loss of possessions now will mean to us. Hebrews also associates the hope of the Kingdom with the characteristic of patience in the small things of this life. Hence Job, when he lost his hope, could exclaim: "What is mine end, that I should be patient?" (Job 6:11 RV).

Who we ourselves will be turned into is our better possession, "a better possession and an abiding one" (RV). And this compensates for the loss of material *possessions* in this life. Therefore the writer urges them to not cast away their confidence in the receipt of this reward at the Lord's return (:35). The more humbly confident we are in receiving the Kingdom, the less the loss of possessions now will mean to us.

10:35 *Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has great reward*- This is the "boldness" which can only come from believing that our sin is totally dealt with

in Christ, and that we can boldly enter beyond the veil right now, into the Holiest of fellowship with God Himself (:22). This was being thrown away by those who returned to the temple system of sacrifices for sins. Later Paul uses these words about Moses, bidding us follow his example of bold faith in the future reward (11:26).

10:36 *For you have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise*- They were lacking the vital characteristic of patient endurance in faith that the great salvation would really be true for them. They had done the will of God, which was to believe in His Son and commit to Him in baptism (Jn. 7:17). 'Receiving the promise' is the language of Abraham receiving the promise of eternal inheritance at the Lord's return, which Paul has said is the promise of the new covenant (see on 9:15). But that will only come true for those who have patiently endured in faith as Abraham did.

10:37- see on Eph. 3:8.

For yet a very little while, and he that comes shall come and shall not delay further- This reflects Paul's belief that we should live as if the Lord's return is imminent. He also sensed that the fact the Lord had not yet come is because of a "delay". 2 Peter 3 speaks of this delay, mentioning that Paul had also written of it- presumably referring to this passage, thereby adding another argument for believing Paul was the author of Hebrews. The delay, acccording to Peter, was so that more could be saved, and also because of the lack of spiritual maturity amongst those who had believed. For when the spiritual harvest is ripe, then the sickle will be put to it in the Lord's return.

This verse is generally a quotation from Hab. 2:3 about the fulfilment of the prophecy about Babylon's destruction. Paul saw this as having the same fulfilment as the return of Christ to earth. The Lord's return would be the destruction of Babylon; so by "Babylon" Paul understood the Jewish system which was about to be destroyed. And Revelation speaks of it likewise. The Lord did not return in the first century, because various preconditions were not met. But His coming will also be the destruction of the latter day Babylon, to which believers of our age will be tempted to associate themselves in order to avoid persecution.

The "little while" is a quotation from the LXX of Is. 26:20, which suggests that there will be a "little while" of final tribulation for the believers from which they may be preserved, just prior to the Lord's coming. Potentially, that was how close the second coming could have been in the first century.

10:38 *But My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul will have no pleasure in him*- This is a quotation from a prophecy about the Lord Jesus personally, "My righteous one", who would overcome the wicked Babylonians, whom Paul in :37 has associated with the temple system. But as explained throughout chapter 10, all that is true of Him is true of us. We are in Him, in the Holiest. But as the Lord had the possibility of failure in His mortal life, so do we. The Father's soul had pleasure in Him because of His faithfulness unto death (Is. 53:10). But there was the possibility He could "shrink back", just as there is for all those in Him. All the assurances of salvation mentioned in the argument so far are true of believers at the current moment in time; but it's not a case of once saved, always saved. We have to abide in Christ, patiently endure in faith.

The 'shrinking back' was in recoiling from the wonder of salvation by grace through faith, and returning to trust in the temple system for salvation. The same word is used of Peter shrinking back from these wonders because of Judaist pressure (Gal. 2:12).

10:39- see on Mt. 27:5.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls- The shrinking back at the day of judgment is spoken of in 1 Jn. 2:28- the rejected will be ashamed from before Him at His coming, they will literally slink and shrink away in shame. But "we make the answer now", living out the essence of judgment day now. The Hebrews who were shrinking away from the wonder of real salvation in Christ would shrink away from Him in condemnation at the last day. It is faith in Christ and in God's saving grace which saves us, which 'preserves' us in the sense of preserving our present state of being saved in Christ. And Paul now goes on in chapter 11 to speak of how this kind of faith was held by the Old Testament heroes.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

11:1 *Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction about invisible things*- The context of this discourse about faith is to be found in chapter 10. The Hebrew Christians were abandoning faith in Jesus as Christ and returning to the visible, concrete things of the temple system for their salvation and justification before God. All the examples of faith now given are to be understood in that context. As noted on 1:1, this discourse is based upon Stephen's in Acts 7, which would have been a mainstay of Hebrew Christian faith.

Yet the definition of faith here is deeply relevant to our materialistic age which seeks for science to prop up faith, and demands that spiritual understanding be inline with observable phenomena as defined and understood by contemporary science. The definitions of faith given here preclude any appeal to science as 'proving' God's existence or the truth of His word. Science cannot prove faith nor underpin it, for faith is assurance in "invisible things". The "things hoped for" are those of chapter 10- the "hope" of the Christian is not a hope for the best at judgment day, but a solid conviction that our sin has been dealt with and we can confidently anticipate the promise of eternal inheritance at the last day. The complaint that science conflicts with faith is misplaced; for faith is not about observable things. The whole thrust of 'apologetics' is therefore seriously misplaced. No amount of archaeological evidence or historical support or the intricacies observed in the natural creation can provide faith. A generation of Christians raised on this kind of thing is now wilting in faith, confronted by scientific evidence which brings these things into question. Perhaps they never had the faith spoken of here in Heb. 11:1.

Faith is the assurance that the hope of salvation shall come true for us. Issues such as how God created the world are not in view here. "Assurance" is the word used of our "confidence" in salvation in 3:14. The argument may appear logically faulty, at first blush- faith itself is the confidence, whereas we would expect faith to have some kind of basis. Faith comes by hearing the Gospel; when confronted with the message of

salvation, there is a power within the message itself which compels faith. This is all the stuff of the Spirit, and the secular mind recoils at such statements. But the few thousand former atheists I baptized in the former USSR all came to faith not through scientific 'evidence' nor the argumentation of apologetics; but from being confronted with the Gospel of itself. Thus indeed, the basis for faith is faith- which appears a circular argument to the literalist and the materialist, but millions of transformed lives are a far greater witness. And the man who structures his life and thinking on the sole basis of rationalism, empiricism and literalism is not a happy chappy. Indeed, there is no such person. Faith is the "conviction" or "evidence". The evidence for faith is faith. Yes, it is therefore a leap in the dark. But so in fact is every position held, for nobody is a pure rationalist or literalist, believing only what is before their two eyes. The ultimate thing "not seen" is our salvation, which we hope for patiently (Rom. 8:24,25; Mt. 13:17; 2 Cor. 4:18). Noah saw by faith what could not be seen- his salvation from the flood (:7). Elsewhere in the New Testament, faith is predicated upon connection with the Lord Jesus; the Son is the only way to the Father, and it is through or on account of the Son that we believe on the Father (1 Pet. 1:21). Any claim to 'believe in God' which is not predicated upon faith in Jesus is therefore not real faith in God as Biblically defined. To believe is to trust; not simply to intellectually accept that there is likely to be some higher power. The 'belief' in God of non-Christian religions and philosophies is not therefore Biblical faith in God. Faith in Him comes from hearing His word, which is about Jesus.

11:2 *For on account of their faith, the elders had witness borne to them-*

The various translations all suggest that God has already judged those "elders" who have died in faith: “gained approval” (NASB), “received approval” (NRSV), “were commended” (NIV), “were attested” (NAB), “obtained good report” (KJV), and “obtained a testimony” (Rheims). The idea is that God's acceptance of a person is directly related to their faith / trust in His salvation of them. Believe it, and He will give it to you. We are invited to think that God has already judged them. So the purpose of the future judgment seat will be for our benefit, and not for Him to gather information and form a judgment.

These "elders" may not refer to those of whom we shall go on to read. I suggested on 1:1 that the Jerusalem church is being addressed here, and that the Hebrew letter is shot through with allusions to Stephen, their martyr. And nowhere is that clearer than in Hebrews 11, which is based upon Stephen's witness in Acts 7. The same word for "had witness borne" is translated "of good report", concerning the elders of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:3). "Elders" is the word repeatedly used about the "elders" of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4). The founding elders of the Hebrew congregation in Jerusalem were therefore publically commended for their open faith in

the Lord Jesus and resistance of the temple system; and the Hebrew audience were to follow their example rather than quitting Christianity and returning to Judaism.

11:3 *By faith we understand that the ages have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which appear*- This is no reference to the world being created *ex nihilo,* out of nothing. The *ages* (*aion*) were prepared according to God's word, the Gospel; but we only perceive history from that perspective "by faith". Revelation puts this truth in a different way by saying that the Lamb opened the seals of future history through His sacrifice. The structure of all history revolves around His work as explained in the Gospel, "the word of God". The things which are now seen are not the things of faith, which cannot be seen (:1). In the context of this chapter and its position within the letter, the things which are seen referred to the temple system (see on :1). Those things were not created out of the reality of Christ which had now appeared. Understood properly, this is actually a strong case against the personal pre-existence of the Lord Jesus. They were not made out of Him, He who appeared or was manifest in His life and death, but pointed forward to Him, as a shadow, rather than being the very reality from which He came and would have therefore been subservient to.

The previous context in Heb. 10 speaks of faith as trust in salvation, "to the saving of the soul". He who trusts in the work of the Son, has eternal life (Jn. 6:47). There is something of that faith in salvation in all those mentioned. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, i.e. the Gospel; there is something in the message which elicits faith in it, if we are humble to it. The "faith" exemplified in Heb. 11 is specifically faith / trust in salvation, that in the face of death, God will save, specifically by a future bodily resurrection. And faith means belief that God can create out of nothing. This is supremely the case with the resurrection of the body, but it also applies to all action by God in response to human faith. Abel though dead, had a faith that still speaks- his faith in the blood of the sacrifice gave him hope of resurrection. Enoch was saved from death by his faith; Noah by faith prepared the ark and so saved his household from death; Sarah's womb was dead and her husband "as good as dead" but by faith she gave birth to Isaac; they all died in faith without receiving the promises now, but believed they would receive them despite their death; Abraham received Isaac back by faith in resurrection from the dead; by faith Jacob as he was dying, blessed his sons believing that death was not the final end; Joseph as he was dying, gave orders for his bones; Moses was saved from death by faith, and through his faith he saved Israel from death in Israel, saved the firstborns, and saved Israel at the Red Sea; Rahab's faith saved her from death with the rest in Jericho; by faith some escaped death by the sword; by faith some women received their dead by resurrection; by faith in a future resurrection, some endured torture (looking to gain a better resurrection). This perhaps is why faith is introduced as trust that God can make things out of nothing. He can resurrect the dead. And all the examples of faith involved faith in just such a resurrection. The hope they all had, by faith, was in a future, tangible

reality upon this earth: a city (11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14); homeland (11:14); country (11:16); and kingdom (12:26-28).

11:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect to his gifts; and through it he, though being dead, still speaks*- As noted on :1, the examples of faith in this chapter relate to faith in the invisible rather than the visible, concrete things of tabernacle ritual; and to faith in the Lord's sacrifice. It was by faith in that future sacrifice that Abel offered a blood offering, because he believed the principle of 9:22, that without shedding of the Lord's blood there could be no remission of sins. God bore witness to this faith by sending fire from Heaven to consume his sacrifice, rather than the vegetable sacrifice of Cain. That witness was not a recognition of his *obedience* but of his righteousness. Given the strong message of imputed righteousness in chapter 10, we are left to assume that through faith in the Lord's future sacrifice to cover him, Abel was counted righteous just as Abraham was, and just as we are. In that sense he "still speaks" to us by way of example.

Heb. 11:4 speaks of God bearing witness, giving a verbal testimony, to Abel's sacrifice, and that through that witness Abel is as it were still speaking to us, in that to this day God is still speaking / testifying to that acceptable act of service performed by Abel. Abel, through the account of him in Scripture, "is yet spoken of" (Heb. 11:4 AVmg.) in the Biblical record. Isaiah was prophesying directly to the hypocrites of the first century, according to the Lord in Mk. 7:6 RV. God says that He 'watches over My word to perform it' (Jer. 1:12 RV). Thus God didn't just write the Bible as we write words, and forget it. He remains actively aware of all His words and consciously fulfils them. This is another window into the way in which the word of God can be described as a living word. There is an active quality to the words we read in our Bibles.

Who we are is in reality our judgment. After death, our works "follow us" to judgment (Rev. 14:13). According to Jewish thought, men's actions followed them as witnesses before the court of God, and this is the idea being picked up here. There is a great emphasis in Hebrews 11 on the way that each man has a "witness", "testimony" or "report" as a result of his life (Heb. 11:4,5,14,39). Because of this the dead are still spoken for, in that God keeps and knows that testimony, and it speaks for them (Heb. 11:4 AV mg.). They are 'alive', not personally in conscious form, but in the memory and testimony of God. We note that throughout the Genesis account, Abel never speaks. Cain does. But Abel speaks through his actions and faith in the blood of the lamb, meaning that his blood, his life record, speaks louder than any words he uttered in his life.

11:5 *By faith Enoch was snatched away so that he should not be killed; and he was not found, because God had taken him away. He had witness borne to him, that before his being snatched away he had been well pleasing to God*- Paul wrote this to Hebrew

Christians under persecution, believing that the second coming was at the doors, and soon they too would be snatched away to safety from persecution (1 Thess. 4:17). Paul was urging them to believe as Enoch did, and to be confident of final salvation as well as preservation in this life. He was "well pleasing" in that he believed (:6). Perhaps the example of Enoch is chosen because his ancester was Cain, who did *not* please God, in contrast to Abel who has just been mentioned (:4). The point would be that we can break out from our surrounding environment, we are not inevitably, genetically tied in to any spiritual situation, but there is available to us the radical power of new creation in the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17). There is no reason here to believe that Enoch was snatched away to Heaven or immortality, for the wages of sin is death; and Enoch was not perfect. The Lord Jesus was the first to rise from the dead and receive immortality (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

The "witness borne to him that he had been well pleasing unto God" is courtroom language. Could it not be that his representative / guardian Angel in the court of Heaven had made this testimony to God Almighty?

11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him. For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those that seek after Him*- Our faith in God is a seeking after Him. To believe / trust in Him is to seek Him. Whilst this may be a Hebraism for worship, it is all the same true that faith is not a finding of God, an arrival at a point where we have all our questions answered and all intellectual struggles resolved. That position, which is only theoretical, would not be one of faith but of simplistic dogmatism and literalism. Our faith is not simply in Him, but in the fact that we really shall receive the promised salvation or "reward".

There are a few NT references to the Yahweh Name. One of them is in Heb. 11:6: he who comes to God must first [most importantly] believe that *He is* [a reference to He who is who He is, and will be who He will be], and that therefore, as an intrinsic part of who He is, *He will be* a rewarder of His people. Surely the point is that it's not just knowing the Name theoretically, it is to believe it- that He who is, really *is* in our lives. Who God *is*, i.e. His Name, is an imperative to believe Him and be like Him. If we are His sons and daughters, who He is becomes quite naturally the law of our being. Thus we should love our enemies, because God makes *His* sun [cp. 'our' goodness] to rise on both His friends and enemies. As we reflect on the massive power that every moment works to move the sun and earth around each other, so every moment we have an imperative to love.

This is why belief in God cannot be merely an intellectual act occurring within certain brain cells. Belief means action in some way. Belief *and* the act of baptism are necessary for salvation; but some NT passages speak as if faith alone saves. This is reconciled by understanding that faith, true faith, includes works. James reasons that there is no distinction between true faith and works. They are part of the same nexus.

Thus when we read in the NT of belief in Christ, the normal construction with a dative case was dropped and instead a preposition is used with the verb- belief *into* Christ is the idea, with implied reference to baptism *into* Him and an active life *in Him* as a result of our belief. To be brethren in Christ is not to just believe Christ or God, but to believe *into* them in practice. R.T. Lovelock comments: "The NT writers felt the importance of this utter trust in God so strongly, that they originated a new construction in their language to emphasise the concept and force it upon the attention of their readers".

11:7 *By faith Noah, being warned concerning things not seen as yet*- The unseen things were of judgment to come for sin, and of salvation through the ark into a new world, typical of God's future Kingdom on earth. The same word for "warned" is used of how we are not to refuse the Lord's warning voice today (12:25).

Moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith- Noah's fear of judgment to come was because he too was a sinner, and he feared judgment. He was in the position of those Hebrews who had a fearful looking forward to judgment because they had refused the sanctifying, saving work of the Lord Jesus (10:27). But he did something about it- he built the ark and entered it, understanding something of how Peter understood it- that it represented the Lord Jesus.

Noah is one of several examples in Hebrews 11 of where the faith of a third party can save others; it was by his faith that he saved his family. And as with Abel, we see that the idea of imputed righteousness was around far before Abraham. Righteousness was imputed to him because he feared condemnation for his sins. He believed that the salvation system offered him would work, and did what was required to enter it and remain within it. And thus he was counted righteous. This was done for him without the offering of sacrifice or participation in any ritual; he accepted salvation in the ark and did what he could to build it. This was of course highly relevant to the Hebrew Christians seeking to return to sacrifices and ritual.

Noah's response was not to smugly reflect how that soon he would be vindicated for his separation from the world, i.e. for his own personal righteousness. Instead he took seriously God's warning that sinners were to soon be destroyed. Noah was, of course, a sinner as we all are. He therefore must have cried out to God in faith, asking for God to count him as if he were righteous, so that he would be saved from the coming judgments against sin. This is how he had righteousness imputed to him. He showed his faith that God really had justified him by doing something physical- his faith led to the 'works' of building the ark; as our faith likewise leads us to baptism into Christ.

Noah's very example was a condemnation of his world; the very existence of believing

Gentiles judges the Jews as condemned (Rom. 2:27); and the very existence of the repentant Ninevites condemned first century Israel (Mt. 12:41). The faithful preaching of the Corinthians would judge an unbeliever (1 Cor. 14:24). Noah's very act of righteousness in building the ark condemned / judged those who saw it and didn't respond (Heb. 11:7). The fact the Pharisees' children cast out demons condemned the Pharisees (Mt. 12:27). This is why the rejected will be shamed before the accepted; they will bow in shame at their feet (Rev. 3:9; 16:15). Perhaps it is in this sense that "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3)- rejected ecclesial elders, cp. the angels of the churches in Rev. 2,3? The point is, men's behaviour and conduct judges others because of the contrast it throws upon them. And this was supremely true of the Lord. No wonder in the naked shame and glory of the cross lay the supreme "judgment of this world".

11:8- see on Gen. 12:4.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed- This statement itself is an example of imputed righteousness. The Greek implies that *as soon as* God called Abram, he got up and left Ur. But a closer examination of the record indicates that this wasn't absolutely the case. It is stressed that both Abram and Sarai left Ur because "Terah *took* Abram his son... and Sarai his daughter in law" (Gen. 11:31). Abram had been called to leave Ur, separate from his family and go into Canaan. But instead he followed his father to Haran, and lived there (for some years, it seems) until his father died, and then he responded to his earlier call to journey towards Canaan. The Genesis record certainly reads as if Abram was dominated by his father and family, and this militated against an immediate response to the call he received to leave Ur and journey to Canaan. At best his father's decision enabled him to obey the command to leave Ur without having to break with his family. And yet, according to Heb. 11:8, Abram immediately responded, as an act of faith. But it was a moment of faith.

For some unrevealed reason, perhaps the invasion of the area by hostile tribes, the workings of providence made Terah take the decision to leave Ur. Because 'Canaan' would have been relatively unheard of (Abram "went out, not knowing whither he went", Heb. 11:8 AV) and uncivilized compared to Ur, it is possible to speculate that Abram had told Terah about the promise he had received. Terah then may have decided that such a promise ought to involve *him* as Abram's father, and decided to go with Abram. Terah must have had a very high level of motivation to leave cosmopolitan Ur for uncivilized Canaan. "Terah *took* Abram" certainly implies that some unrecorded circumstances took the decision out of Abram's hands; he had to leave his own country, because his father had ordered a mass emigration of the family. How hard it must have been for Abram to make sense of all this! He had been told to leave his family and country, and travel to a land God would show him. At that point in time, he was unaware that that

country would be Canaan. How God would lead him was unexplained. But he believed God, and "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). Therefore when his father announced that they were emigrating to Canaan, Abram would have realized that this was a Divine prod to obey the call from God to get up and leave. Unlike the rest of Terah's unrecorded family, who would have mocked such a crazy plan, Abram willingly submitted. But how was he to leave his kindred and father's house? For they were coming with him! Indeed, Terah "took Abram". Thus Abram had faith in God's promise, yet may have balked at the command to leave his country and family. Providentially arranged circumstances then resulted in his aging father taking him, implying some degree of compulsion, and leading him out of his native country. Whilst not fully understanding how he could leave his father's household whilst they looked set to be accompanying him on this journey to a strange land, he went ahead in faith. It is emphasized that *God* "brought out" (s.w. to lead, pluck or pull out) Abram from Ur (Neh. 9:7; Gen. 15:6,7). The calling came through Abram's hearing of the word of promise, and providentially arranged circumstances encouraging his faithful response to it.

And left for a place which he was to receive for an inheritance afterwards. And he left not knowing where he was going to- The promise of inheritance was of "eternal inheritance" (9:15), the same promise made in the new covenant to us. Detailed information or knowledge about the future Kingdom was not required; he didn't know where he was going to. And contrary to the apparently solid, permanent location of Judah in Palestine at the time, this was not the receipt of the promised inheritance. Abraham's faith or trust was in that he did not understand the details; he just said yes to God as far as he understood God.

11:9 *By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as yet not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise*- Abraham had been an urban dweller, both in Ur and Haran; not a bedouin. He became a wandering herdsman and tent dweller by faith in the promises to him. The chronology provided in Genesis actually allows for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to have all lived together at some point in the same encampment. "A sojourner" refers to the way Abraham recognized he was "a stranger and a sojourner" in the land (Gen. 22:4) and therefore needed to buy a burial plot there for his wife.

11:10 *For he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God*- The urban dweller who by faith lived as a nomad always hankered after a solid city- but not Ur. He overcame the desire to return to the city of his roots by focusing instead upon the future Kingdom of God, called her "the city". This was relevant for the Jerusalem Church who are being addressed here, tempted as they were to return to the stability of the temple city. The "architect" (Gk.) of the future city was God; recalling how

the ages of human history were "framed" by God (:3). The foundation of God's work is the doctrine of the Christ (6:1); He is also portrayed as the "foundation" in 1 Cor. 3:11 and Eph. 2:20. Abraham perceived that his future seed would be the foundation of his own eternal city. Again we see that it is faith in Christ which was the basis of the "faith" of Abraham and others mentioned here.

11:11 *By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had made the promise*- The seed of Abraham was only realized by faith, despite so many reasons to disbelieve. If faith were based upon rational evidence then she could never have come to such faith.

This personal nature of the promises resulted in a mutuality between God and the patriarchs, as it can between Him and all Abraham's seed. God's present judgment of us is actually related to how we 'judge' God to be. There's a mutuality between God and man in this business of present judgment. This theme is played on throughout Hebrews 11. Sarah "judged" God as faithful, and He 'judged' her as faithful (Heb. 11:11); she counted Him as trustworthy and He counted righteousness to her. As Abraham "was offering up Isaac" (RV), with the knife raised, he was "accounting" God to be capable of performing a resurrection, just as Moses quit the riches of Egypt, "accounting the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:17,19,26 RV). And yet God 'accounts' us to be faithful, imputing righteousness to us. Through these acts and attitudes of faith, "these... had witness borne to them through their faith" (Heb. 11:39 RV). It was as if their lives were lived in the courtroom, with their actions a constant presentation of evidence to the judge of all the earth. Our judgment of God to be faithful thus becomes His judgment of us to be faithful.

"Even Sarah herself" is clearly making a point, holding up a flashing light over this particular example. There is every reason to think, from the Genesis record, that Sarah not only lacked faith in the promises, but also had a bitter, unspiritual mind. The account alludes back to Eve's beguiling of Adam when it records how "Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" (Gen. 16:2) in acquiescing to her plan to give her a seed through Abram marrying his slave girl. The whole thing between Sarah and Abraham seems wrong on at least two counts: firstly it reflects a lack of faith in the promise; and secondly it flouts God's ideal standards of marriage. Sarai seems to have recognized the error when she bitterly comments to Abram: "My wrong be upon thee" (16:5). Her comment that "the Lord hath restrained me from bearing" (16:2) would suggest that she thought she hadn't been chosen to bear the promised seed. Yet because of her faith, says Heb. 11:11, she received strength to bear that seed. Hagar was so persecuted by Sarah that she "fled from her face" (16:6). God's attitude to Hagar seems to reflect a certain amount of sympathy for the harsh way in which Sarah had dealt with her. These

years of bitterness and lack of faith came to the surface when Sarah overheard the Angel assuring Abraham that Sarah really would have a son. She mockingly laughed at the promise, deep within herself (18:15). Yet according to Heb. 11:11, she rallied her faith and believed. But as soon as Isaac was born, her bitterness flew to the surface again when she was Ishmael mocking. In what can only be described as unrestrained anger, she ordered Hagar and Ishmael out into the scorching desert, to a certain death (humanly speaking). Again, one can sense the sympathy of God for Hagar at this time. And so wedged in between incidents which belied a deep bitterness, lack of faith and pride (after Isaac was born), the Spirit in Heb. 11:11 discerns her faith; on account of which, Heb. 11:12 implies ("therefore"), the whole purpose of God in Christ could go forward. See on Gal. 4:30.

Because of Sarah's faith, "therefore sprang there...so many as the stars of the sky in multitude" (:11,12). Those promises to Abraham had their fulfilment, but conditional on Abraham and Sarah's faith. Gen. 18:18-20 says that the fulfilment of the promises was conditional on Abraham teaching his children / seed the ways of God. Those promises / prophesies were "sure" in the sense that God's side of it was. Rom. 4:18 likewise comments that Abraham became "the father of many nations" precisely because he *believed* in this hope. Yet the promise / prophecy that he would be a father of many nations could sound as if it would have happened anyway, whatever. But it was actually conditional upon Abraham's faith. And he is our great example exactly because he had the possibility and option of *not* believing in the hope he had been offered. The promises to Abraham form the new covenant, of which Paul has had so much to say in Hebrews. And yet the realization of it depends upon faith, just as it had earlier depended upon the faith of Abraham and Sarah, no matter how fragile that faith was.

"Faith" in Hebrews 11 often refers to faith in Christ, the seed of Abraham. Perhaps we are to understand Sarah's faith that conception would occur as motivated by her faith that the promises of the great seed would have to come true through her as the legitimate wife of Abraham. So it was by her shadowy faith in Christ as the future seed that she sound the faith to believe that her old body could bear a child.

11:12 *Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude- innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore-* According to Heb. 11:12, God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled on account of his faith; God in some way allowed Himself to be potentially limited by Abraham's faith. Indeed, the promised world-wide blessing of all nations was promised only "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16,18). In this sense the covenants of salvation were partly due to another man [Abraham] being faithful [although above all our salvation was due to the Lord Jesus]. In this sense he is the "father" of the faithful.

Abraham was impotent, "as good as dead". The argument here is so similar to that in Rom. 4:19. Abraham believed his body could be empowered to do it, "without being weakened in faith", the same word translated “impotent” in Jn. 5:7. Abraham was physically impotent, perhaps even seriously ill and weak at the time the promise was given- but not impotent or weak in faith. The idea of the Greek is that Abraham didn’t weaken in faith as he observed / considered his body. "Considered" in Rom. 4:19 means that he didn't fix his mind upon the fact his body was dead (i.e. impotent) and unable to produce seed. He wasn't obsessed with his state, yet he lived a life of faith that ultimately God's Kingdom would come, he rejoiced at the contemplation of Christ his Lord; and he filled his life with practical service. He wasn't obsessed with the fact that in his marital position he personally couldn't have children when it seemed this was what God wanted him to do; and this was very pleasing to God. Nor did he consider the "deadness of Sarah’s womb". So often we allow the apparent weakness of others to become a barrier to our faith. ‘She’ll never change… she just isn’t capable of that’. But Abraham not only believed that *he* could do it, but that the apparent obstacle of another’s weakness was also surmountable by the word of promise.

11:13 *These all died in faith*- The point is that they continued believing until the end of their lives; they did not give up. And that was a necessary exhortation for the Hebrew Christians who were giving up their faith in Abraham's seed.

Not having received the promises, but having seen them, and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth- All the faithful went through the same process: persuaded - embraced - confessed to the world around them. Confessing was part of the natural response to belief of the promises. Hearing God's word in faith is associated with declaring it (Jer. 9:12). The confession of being a stranger was surely that made by Abraham publicly to the local inhabitants of Canaan that he was a stranger and sojourner amongst them (Gen. 22:4).

When we read that the faithful ‘saw’ the promises although they didn’t receive them, we are surely meant to understand that they ‘saw’ the *fulfilment of* the promises. This is the faith which sees that which cannot be seen in natural visible terms (:1). ‘The promises’ are so sure of fulfilment that the phrase is put by metonymy for ‘the fulfilment of the promises’. And because of their utter certainty, we are to be strangers and pilgrims, and unworldly (Heb. 11:13,14). There is therefore an obvious link between doctrine and practice. A doctrine believed leads to us coming out of this tangled world and unashamedly speaking of our secular lives as not being what we really identify with. Believing the promises to Abraham involves open confession to the world around us.

11:14 *For they that say such things make it obvious that they are seeking after a country of their own*- Abraham made the statement that he was a stranger and sojourner in Canaan whilst he was actually there in the land (Gen. 22:4). Contrary to how Judaism

reasoned, the literal presence of the Jews in Palestine was not the fulfilment of the promises, which spoke of "eternal inheritance". They were seeking a far greater fulfilment of the promises (:16).

11:15 *And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return*- Abraham was called to leave Ur and travel to Canaan, the land promised to him. If his heart had remained in his native land, as the heart of most immigrants and exiles does, God would have worked in his life to make it possible for him to return to it, and thereby reject God's covenant with him. The fact Abraham wasn't given this opportunity indicates his faith. It also shows that God gives us the opportunity to renounce our faith if that is what we want in our hearts (cp. Balaam).

11:16 *But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one*- As noted on :14, the physical presence of the patriarchs in Canaan was not seen by them as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises. They looked for an "eternal inheritance" (see on 9:15). Their desire was for "a heavenly [country]", not in the sense that they desired to go to Heaven- for they were never promised that. They looked for the Kingdom of Heaven to come on earth, symbolized in Revelation by the city of heavenly Jerusalem coming to earth at the Lord's return. The "better" nature of what they sought connects with how Hebrews uses this word of the "better" things of the new covenant in contrast to the inferior things of the old covenant. The old covenant offered Israel a national homeland, but no "eternal inheritance" (9:15). It was life eternal, eternal inheritance of the promised land, which was promised in the new covenant; it was that which was so far "better" than the promise of the old covenant. "But now they..." raises the question as to who is in view. The "they" of :15 were the patriarchs; but they were long dead and unconscious. The "they" merges with us the Christian believers, identified with Abraham's seed by baptism into that seed (Gal. 3:27-29).

Therefore God is not ashamed of them- to be called their God- Right now, God is ashamed or not ashamed of us, according to our separation from the spirit of this world; and yet His not being ashamed of us will also be apparent at the final judgment. We have our judgment now, from His point of view. "To be called" is literally 'to be surnamed'. His Name becomes part of ours, in spiritual terms; the things of His Name and purpose become inextricably bound up with us, just as 'Abram' was changed to 'Abraham' by inserting the middle letters of the Yahweh name into Abram's name- see on Is. 44:5.

For He has prepared for them a city- This is the Kingdom on earth prepared from the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:34). It is called a city because Paul wants the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians to whom he is speaking to realize that the "Jerusalem that now is"

was not the true city of hope; and neither was Rome. Heb. 11:13-16 contains some radical demands in a first century context- to see the *true* city, when Rome was *the* city to be identified with; to be a non-citizen of any earthly state... how hard would that have been for Roman citizens to read, hear, and say 'Amen' to! This was particularly an issue for the Hebrew Christians, who were attracted to return to Judaism because the Roman legislation permitted it to exist as a recognized religion.

11:17 *By faith Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son*- The tenses here are important. Abraham was counted as having offered up Isaac; hence he figuratively received him back from the dead (:19). The language of effective resurrection in :19 leads me away from thinking that the mere act of placing Isaac on the altar was spoken of as Abraham having "offered up Isaac". Abraham had done it in his mind. God counts our intentions as if we have done them; hence in the matter of generous giving, the desire to give is all important and counted all the same as "giving" (2 Cor. 8:12). We too are asked to give up our children; not to Molech, but to God. For our children are God's children whom we raise for Him and trust Him to use them as part of a wider purpose which we have to trust Him for.

"Was offering up" invites us to play Bible television with this verse. We are taken back to Abraham there on Moriah. He who was remembering how he had laughed with joy at the promise of the seed, rejoicing to see Christ's day (Jn. 8:56), and naming the little boy "Isaac", 'laughter', to reflect his joy... was now fighting back those memories as he was offering up Isaac his son in sacrifice. "His only begotten son" emphasizes how this was all pointing forward to God offering His only begotten. Seeing Abraham had many other children, Paul may be rather forcing a similarity here, perhaps reasoning that Isaac was Abraham's only son by his legitimate wife Sarah.

11:18 *Even he to whom it was said: In Isaac shall your seed be called*- As noted on :17, we are asked to imagine Abraham's thoughts as he was offering up Isaac. He would have struggled to understand how this son of promise could be the path to the promised seed, if he had to now offer him. The faith displayed was therefore trust, trust that although we do not rationally understand, we believe that God's purpose will somehow work out. Again, faith is portrayed as not at all based on rational evidence or reasoning (see on :1).

11:19 *Abraham accounted that God is able to raise up, even from the dead. From where he did, figuratively, receive him back*- Abraham was driven to the conclusion that God would resurrect Isaac, so that the promises would be fulfilled. Faith in the Abrahamic promises likewise requires faith in the resurrection of his Messianic seed; a faith which the Hebrews were finding hard to maintain. Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac was

counted as if he had done it; hence the arising of Isaac from the altar was effectively his resurrection. See on :17.

Abraham 'accounted' that God was able to raise Isaac; his faith involved an intellectual process. Israel were to hear / understand “the statutes and judgments... that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them” (Dt. 5:1). Understanding is related to obedience. See on Rom. 10:10.

11:20 *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come*- Yet the record of this in Gen. 27 doesn't paint Isaac in a very positive light. “Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). The AVmg. seems to bring out Isaac's superficiality: "Isaac loved Esau, because venison was in his mouth". This seems to connect with the way Esau threw away his birthright for the sake of food in his mouth. Esau was evidently of the flesh, whilst Jacob had at least some potential spirituality. Yet Isaac preferred Esau. He chose to live in Gerar (Gen. 26:6), right on the border of Egypt- as close as he could get to the world, without crossing the line. And he thought nothing of denying his marriage to Rebekah, just to save his own skin (Gen. 26:7). So it seems Isaac had some marriage problems; the record speaks of "Esau his son" and "Jacob (Rebekah's) son" (Gen. 27:5,6). The way Jacob gave Isaac wine "and he drank" just before giving the blessings is another hint at some unspirituality (Gen. 27:25). Isaac seems not to have accepted the Divine prophecy concerning his sons: “the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), seeing that it was his intention to give Esau the blessings of the firstborn, and thinking that he was speaking to Esau, he gave him the blessing of his younger brothers (i.e. Jacob) serving him (Gen. 27:29 cp. 15). Isaac didn't accept the sale of the birthright, and yet God did (Heb. 12:16,17). A*nd yet*, and this is my point, Isaac's blessing of the two boys is described as an act of faith; even though it was done with an element of disbelief in God's word of prophecy concerning the elder serving the younger, and perhaps under the influence of alcohol, and even though at the time Isaac thought he was blessing Esau when in fact it was Jacob. Yet according to Heb. 11:20, this blessing of Esau *and* Jacob (therefore Hebrews doesn't refer to the later blessing) was done with faith; *at that very point in time*, Isaac had faith. So God's piercing eye saw through Isaac's liking for the good life, through Isaac's unspiritual liking for Esau, through his marriage problem, through his lack of faith that the elder must serve the younger, and discerned that there was some faith in that man Isaac; and then holds this up as a stimulant for our faith, centuries later! Not only should we be exhorted to see the good side in our present brethren; but we can take comfort that this God is our God, and views our Christian hypocrisy in the same way as He viewed theirs.

Isaac blessed his sons by faith concerning things to come (Heb. 11:20). "Things to come" is literally "to come", and consistently this term is used in Hebrews about the things of the coming Kingdom of God. Abraham "would after", in the coming age, receive

the eternal inheritance of the land (s.w. Heb. 11:8); our "continuing city" is "to come" (Heb. 13:14); the fire of judgment "shall" (s.w.) devour the condemned at judgment day (Heb. 10:27); we have only a foretaste of the powers of the world "to come" (Heb. 6:5); the world "to come" (Heb. 2:5) is that of the Kingdom, when we "shall be" saved (Heb. 1:14). The other examples of faith in Hebrews 11 are of faith in the future Kingdom and in the things of the Lord Jesus. So we are to deduce from this that Isaac's blessing of his sons was done with a perspective of the Kingdom within him- even though so much of his blessing was misplaced, wrong and unspiritual. And so often we see this in the NT comment upon Old Testament incidents, such as Sarah's angry words to Hagar, and her mocking reference to Abraham "my lord being old also...".

11:21 *By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff*- The Hebrew for "bed" has the same consonants as "staff", and is translated "staff" in the Septuagint, which Paul generally follows over the Masoretic text. It may be that Jacob considered Joseph to be the special Messianic seed (which he was, in type), and this would explain why Heb. 11:21 adds the detail that at the end of his life, as he was dying on his bed, Jacob showed his faith (i.e. his faith in Christ, which is the theme of Heb. 11) by worshipping Joseph, propping himself up on the bed head with his last energy to do it (Gk.). He clearly saw in him a type of his future redeemer. He finally accepted the truth of Joseph's dream: that Jacob must bow down to his greater son- although he reached this humility, this bowing before the spirit of Christ, in his very last breath. It seems probable that meditation on Joseph's experience was what brought Jacob to Christ; he had managed to scheme and plot his way out of every other crisis, but the loss of Joseph brought him to his knees helpless.

11:22 *By faith Joseph, when his end was near, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones*- Joseph's faith was specifically in the promises to Abraham concerning the eternal inheritance of Canaan. By faith he looked to the day when Abraham's people would no longer be in Egypt but in Canaan, and he wanted his bones buried in the promised land to show his identity with that future Kingdom rather than all the wealth of secular life in Egypt. And our lives too should be full of countless such acts of identity with the things implied in the promises to Abraham.

11:23 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment*- "Faith" in Hebrews 11 generally refers to faith in the Abrahamic promises which comprise the new covenant, and in the promised, saviour seed of Abraham. It was this faith, rather than simply faith that God would save their darling baby boy, which led to Moses' parents hiding him. They perceived from babyhood that

he was a child "fair to God" (Heb.); maybe they thought he would be the promised seed, or would at least typify that promised seed. So again it was their faith in the Abraham promises which motivated them. Again we note the salvation of a person as a result of the faith of third parties, just as the Lord forgave the sins of a man because of the faith of his friends (Mk. 2:5). Their faith in the promises meant that they did not fear the commandment to kill Moses; and their faith was passed on to Moses, who in maturity likewise did not fear the wrath of Pharaoh.

11:24- see on Acts 7:35.

By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter- "When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. We too have points of maturity we must reach before the Lord gives us our next task.

So at age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ. He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing our redemption.

11:25 *Choosing instead to share ill treatment with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time*- "(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern.

Moses could have been the next Pharaoh; according to Josephus, he was the commander of the Egyptian army. But he walked away from the possibility of being the richest man on earth, he "refused" it, because he valued "the reproach of Christ" and

the recompense of the Kingdom to be *greater* riches. Yet what did he know about the sufferings of Christ? Presumably he had worked out from the promises of the seed in Eden and to the fathers that the future Saviour must be reproached and rejected; and he saw that his own life experience could have a close association with that of this unknown future Saviour who would surely come. And therefore, it seems, Moses counted the honour and wonder of this greater that the riches of Egypt. Both Paul and Moses rejected mammon for things which are abstract and intellectual (in the strict sense): the *excellency* of the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross, and the Kingdom this would enable. Living when we do, with perhaps a greater knowledge of the Lord's victory and excellency, our motivation ought to be even stronger.

11:26- see on 10:35; Phil. 3:8.

Considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. For he looked to the greater reward- Even within Hebrews, the description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: "Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt... let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection. For Moses, "the reproach of Christ" was his having "respect unto the recompense of the reward". He therefore must have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative. Yet those promises are the very things which Christians now say they are bored of hearing every few weeks on a Sunday evening. No wonder we lack Moses' desire to share Christ's reproach, and thereby reject the attractions of this world. The way Moses had "respect unto the recompense of the reward" is our example; for again, even within Hebrews, we are exhorted: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great *recompense of reward*" (Heb. 11:26; 10:35). The Greek for "respect" means to look away from all else; indicating how single-mindedly and intensely did Moses look ahead to the Kingdom; the knowledge of which was, in terms of number of words, scant indeed. All he had was the covenants of promise.

Moses fought with the temptation to just observe from a distance, but then he came out

into the open, declaring that he was a Hebrew, rejecting his kind Egyptian foster mother, openly declaring that he was not really her son, as both she and he had claimed for 40 years. He would have borne the shame of all this, "the reproach of Christ" (Heb. 11:26). But he was not ashamed to call Israel his brethren, as Christ is not ashamed of us (Heb. 2:11- one of many allusions to Moses in Hebrews). All this suggests that like Moses, our Lord came to a point where he "came down" from obscurity to begin his work of deliverance. The references to 'coming down' in John's Gospel allude to this.

It is possible that Moses appreciated that he was a type of Christ the future Messiah; he considered "the reproach of Christ" enough to motivate him to reject the attractions of Egypt (Heb. 11:26); he knew he was sharing the sufferings of the future, ultimate saviour, and the wonder of that alone was enough to motivate him to leave the attractions of this world- even the possibility of being the next Pharaoh, the most powerful man on earth. The similarities between Jesus and Moses are too many to sensibly tabulate. There is ample opportunity to enter deeply into the attitude of Moses towards Israel, and it is this which perhaps most valuably deepens our appreciation of the love of Christ for us, and of our own liability to failure after the pattern of Israel.

Moses was willing to give both his physical and *eternal* life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:29-32), that God's Name might be upheld. He so loved and respected God's character, His personality (all bound up in His Name) that he was willing to forego all personal blessings, even life itself, just because of the wonder of God. A less spiritually mature Moses had been motivated 40 years earlier by his respect of the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:26). But now his motive is the glory of God's Name. Personal possession of the Kingdom *is* held up as a motivator in our lives; but surely, like Moses, we ought to progress towards a desire to see the achievement of God's glory, rather than being obsessed with personally finding our place in the political Kingdom.

11:27 *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king*- But Moses *did* flee Egypt, because he feared the wrath of the King (Ex. 2:14,15). It seems that Moses had at best a mixture of motives, or motives that changed over time; yet God sees through his human fear, and discerns an element of calm faith within Moses as he left Egypt. This is a theme here in Hebrews 11; weak faith is counted as faith all the same. In similar vein, at the time of the burning bush, Moses seems to have forgotten God's covenant name, he didn't immediately take off his shoes in respect as he should have done, and it seems he feared to come close to God due to a bad conscience, and he resisted God's invitation for him to go forth and do His work (Ex. 3:5-7,10,11,18; 4:1,10-14). And yet at this very time, the New Testament says that Moses showed faith in the way he perceived God (Lk. 20:37). But it was a momentary faith, valid all the same. Moses fled from Egypt,

not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh; he went in faith (Heb. 11:27). But the Exodus record explains that actually he couldn't keep this level of faith, and fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15).

For he endured, because he saw Him who is invisible- Hupomone is generally translated "patience" or "endurance"; the idea is of the staying power that keeps a man going to the end. The meaning of *hupomone* grows as we experience more trials (Rom. 5:3; James 1:3). We find that the longer we endure in the Truth, the more we can echo the words of Peter, when the Lord asked him (surely with a lump in His throat) if he was going to turn back: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn. 6:68). There is no third road in the daily decisions we face. Over the months and years, *hupomone* becomes part of our essential character; keeping on keeping on is what life comes to be all about, no matter what short term blows and long term frustrations we face. The longer we endure, the stronger that force is, although we may not feel it. Moses is described as having it at the time he fled from Egypt, even though in the short term his faith failed him at the time and he fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15). Yet God counted him as having that basic ability to endure, even to endure through his own failure and weakness. *This* is what God looks at, rather than our day-to-day acts of sin and righteousness. See on Heb. 12:28.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for the reproach of Christ"; he was also motivated by the fact that "he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was *as if* he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. He had the faith that sees what the rational eye cannot see (:1). When the disciples asked to see God, the Lord said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it were* seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt. The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4). Therefore an appreciation of the Name of Yahweh is what will motivate us to forsake the attractions of this temporal world. This does not mean, of course, that simply pronouncing than Name in our prayers and readings is enough. We must develop an appreciation of God's righteousness, so that we read of His demonstration of grace, of mercy, of truth, of judgement for sin, and love it, revel in it, respect it. As Paul says, if we behold the glory of the Lord as Moses did, we will by that very fact be changed into the same image of that glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Yet such an appreciation needs constant feeding and development. It is tragic, absolutely tragic, that over the next 40 years Moses lost this height of appreciation, until at the burning bush he seems to have almost completely lost his appreciation of the Name. Whatever spiritual heights we may reach is no guarantee that we must inevitably stay there.

Several Old Testament anticipations of the crucifixion involve a time of great darkness when God Himself 'came down', in a way reminiscent of the theophany on Sinai. There God Himself in person in some form 'came down' to earth. Moses saw His back parts, but not His face; for no man can see the face of God and live. He saw the face of the Angel and spoke to him as a man speaks with his friend. Moses seeing the back parts of God could even mean that God Himself came down to earth. If He did this at the institution of the Old Covenant: how much more at the death of His very own Son? The reference in Heb. 11:27 to Moses as having endured seeing the invisible may lend support to this idea that Moses did in fact see the back parts of the God whose *face* cannot be seen by men. I submit that likewise He was there, almost physically, at the cross. The blood of the covenant was shed before Him, in His presence, just as countless sacrifices in the tabernacle had foreshadowed for centuries beforehand. See on Jn. 19:19.

11:28- see on 1 Cor. 10:10.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborns should not touch them- This is another example of how the faith of one party can save others. It would not be surprising if Israel were not all obedient to the command to daub their doorposts with blood; but they were saved by Moses' faith rather than their obedience.

Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea seems to be attributed to Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29; Acts 7:36,38). Yet in the actual record, Moses seems to have shared Israel's cry of fear, and was rebuked for this by God (Ex. 14:15,13,10). Yet in the midst of that rebuke, we learn from the New Testament, God perceived the faith latent within Moses, beneath that human fear and panic. we can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses'* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel's* salvation, they left Egypt *by* him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Israel were intensely disobedient to God from the time of their exodus from Egypt, even before their deliverance from the Red Sea (Dt. 9:24 = Ex. 20:5,6). Only because of Moses' faithful keeping of the Passover did the Angel which destroyed the firstborn (both Egyptian and Hebrew- see on 1 Cor. 10:10) not destroy the whole of Israel as God had initially planned. Moses faith was not simply that God would save His people in the moment of crisis; the faith spoken of in Hebrews 11 is faith in the promises to Abraham and in his promised seed. We can conclude that these things were what motivated Moses' faith.

11:29 *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as if on dry land, which the Egyptians in trying to do were swallowed up*- "By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith *they*

(Israel) passed through the Red Sea". Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt, from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith in the promises about the salvation of Abraham's seed that Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith in these promises they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus "he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: "Why do you cry unto me?"- even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side. Again we see how the examples of faith quoted in Hebrews 11 are often of faith displayed in weakness.

11:30 *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days*- Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus' faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God's grace? The faith of Joshua was in the Abrahamic promises that the seed would inherit the land- and therefore he believed that seemingly insurmountable obstacles such as Jericho's walls would fall.

11:31 *By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace*- Her faith was in the promises to Abraham and their implications; things she may have heard in garbled form from her clients. She welcomed the spies ["with peace"] because she wished to identify with the people of the promised seed, and she later married into them and became an ancestor of the promised seed Himself. She believed not simply that Yahweh was more powerful than the local gods; she believed that Canaan would be given to Abraham's seed, and she wished to identify with that seed.

Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way. Remember that she was also aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18).

There are times when circumstances do change the appropriacy of behaviour which in more normal life we should practice. Take lying as an example. To lie is wrong. We should be truthful. Of course. But think of Rahab. She lied- and her lie and acts of deception are quoted in the New Testament as acts of faith! Further, Rahab implied that the Israelite spies were her clients- "there came men unto me" (Josh. 2:4) appears to be a euphemism- and she gave the impression that of course, as they were merely passing clients, how did she know nor care who they were nor where they went? Her male interrogators would've found it hard to press her further for information after she said that. So she not only lied but she gave the impression that the messengers of the Kingdom of God were immoral- in order to protect both them and her. Of course the way she left a red cord hanging from her window, as if almost inviting people to imagine the spies had been let down over the wall from her home on the wall, was a tremendous act of faith and witness by her, but she presumably kept to her story that they were her anonymous clients. For she was still living in her home when the city was taken. Her witness was thus an indirect one to those who wished to perceive it, but it was made within the context of a major series of untruths. The Hebrew midwives lied to the Egyptians- and were blessed for it. And we could give other examples. If we probe further, and ask why such lies were acceptable and even required, we find that often those lies were connected with saving life. To do anything that would cause the loss of human life when it is in our power to save it is dangerously close to murder.

11:32 *And what more shall I say? For time will run out if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets*- "Time will run out" is another example of language appropriate to a sermon being given live; see on 13:22.

The Lord's idea of binding the strong man must surely look back to Samson. The language can't just be accidentally similar (cp. Jud. 16:21). This means that the Lord saw Samson as the very epitome of Satan, even though ultimately he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32). Thus the Spirit doesn't forget a man's weakness, even though ultimately he may be counted righteous. The mention of all the names given here makes us reflect that all of them had weakness, quite significantly so; but their faith, weak as it was at times, was deeply impressive to God. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was graciously counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). The exploits later mentioned have relevance to Samson in particular, who killed a lion, escaped fire and killed many Philistines by his faith- so the Spirit tells us. Yet these things were all done by him at times when he had at best a partial faith, or was living out moments of faith. He had a worldly Philistine girlfriend, a sure grief of mind to his Godly parents, and on his way to the wedding he met and killed a lion- through faith, Heb. 11 tells us (Jud. 14:1-7). The Philistines threatened to burn him with fire, unless his capricious paramour of a wife extracted from him the meaning of his riddle. He told her, due, it seems, to his human weakness and hopeless sexual weakness. He then killed 30 Philistines to provide the clothes he owed the Philistines on account of them answering

the riddle (Jud. 14:15-19). It is evident that Samson was weak in many ways at this time; the Proverbs make many allusions to him, the strong man ruined by the evil Gentile woman, the one who could take a city but not rule his spirit etc. And yet underneath all these weaknesses, serious as they were, there was a deep faith within Samson which Heb. 11 highlights.

11:33 *Those who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions*- This states that the likes of Abraham obtained promises by their faith. Yet the Old Testament record clearly enough states that the promises were just given to them by God, the calling of grace; they weren't requested by the patriarchs. Indeed, David was surprised at the promises God chose to make to him. Conclusion? God read their unspoken, unprayed for desires for Messiah and His Kingdom as requests for the promises- and responded. Their weak or hazy, vague faith was counted as faith. This was the case with the faith of Sarah and Abraham as noted earlier. See on :32.

11:34 *Quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens*- All these things have strange reference to Samson; see on :32. Perhaps he is the particular epitome of Old Testament faith which is chosen, because his faith was so weak. Paul is not appealing for perfection; he is teaching that God is eager to accept any faith in His promises as faith, and the Hebrews should not be influenced by the perfectionism of Judaism to think that weak faith was not acceptable. That encouragement is needed today by those who have been spiritually abused by the high bars and standards demanded of them by legalistic religion. Samson is listed amongst those who out of weakness were made strong. A character study of Samson must remember this about him. This could suggest that he was even weaker than a normal man; or it could be a reference to the way in which out of his final spiritual weakness and degradation he was so wonderfully strengthened (Jud. 16:28).

11:35 *Women received their dead by a resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*- The widow woman's son was resurrected because God heard Elijah's faithful prayer (1 Kings 17:22); and thus Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith- in this case, the faith of Elijah, a third party- women received their dead raised to life. The Centurion's servant was healed for the sake of *his* faith; Jairus' daughter was healed because of *his* faith (Mk. 5:36). Heb. 11 cites women receiving their dead back to life as an example of faith. Because of the faith and prayers of the women, a third party, their dead loved ones were at times resurrected. Lazarus being raised because of his faithful sisters Martha and Mary is the obvious example we know about, but the Hebrew writer may well have had

his mind on unrecorded Old Testament examples too. Our faith in prayer in some sense limits God's ability. But "faith" in Hebrews 11 is specifically faith in the promises to Abraham which form the basis of the new covenant. The women mentioned therefore believed that the promises implied future resurrection; and yet they believed that those promises could have some present realization too.

Some were tortured "not accepting redemption" because their eyes of faith were upon the future resurrection implied in the promises to Abraham. By implication they accepted the true redemption of the blood of Christ rather than the pseudo-redemption offered by this world and the claims of Judaism and the temple cult. Again, the redeeming work of Christ is what fortifies men against the fake Kingdom and redemption of the anti-Christ anti-Kingdom of this world. There will be degrees of reward in God's Kingdom- a "better resurrection" for those who endured torture. The comfort is that those who did not endure- and there would have been many- may also be saved. But those who did will have a "better resurrection". This gradation of service and reward, some trading their talents better than others, is impossible for the legalistic mindset to cope with. But ranges of possible response to God's love, and appropriate eternal consequence for the choices made, is all the stuff of living personal relationship with God.

11:36 *And others were tested by mockings and whippings, yes, also by bonds and imprisonment*- These words are all used about the sufferings of Paul and his team, many of them witnessed personally by the Hebrew Christians. And of course Paul had himself done these things to the Hebrew Christians. So these anonymous "others" would bring the cloud of witnesses painfully up to date; for there is a chronological progression throughout Hebrews 11 to this point.

11:37 *They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tested, they were killed with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*- The reference may be to various Jewish traditions about the fate of the prophets and some Jews during the time of the Maccabees. But the point of Hebrews 11 is that the faithful endured for the sake of their faith in the promises to Abraham, the same new covenant which was operative for the Hebrew Christians. So I personally doubt that the heroics of the Maccabees is paramount in reference here. I have noted throughout that it was often flecks of faith in moments of weakness which are being picked up here in the record. It was Jacob who wore animal skins- in deceit and weakness, but out of an enthusiasm for the promises to Abraham to be made to him. And thus he became destitute, afflicted and ill-treated by Laban. Perhaps John the Baptist is also in view; he is presented as a cameo of all the faithful (Heb. 11:37 = Mk. 1:6 and 1 Cor. 15:47 = Jn. 3:31).

11:38 *(Of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth*- The "world" in John's Gospel and at times in Hebrews often refers to the Jewish world. The Jewish world had turned away from God and His Son, and the fact the faithful listed so far were largely Jews meant that the Jewish world was not worthy of them. This was another warning to the Hebrews not to return to Judaism and the Jewish world. It was faithless Israel who wandered in deserts; but for some, they did so in faith in the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, that at the end of their desert wandering there would be a promised land. David's wandering in deserts and mountains under persecution was motivated by faith in the promise that somehow, God's Kingdom would be established in Israel and the ancient promises come true, as well as those given to him personally. The possibility of a reference to David is strengthened by the next phrase about living in caves and holes. For identical language is found in 1 Sam. 13:6 concerning Israel's pining away when under attack by the Philistines. Yet some did so in faith that the Abrahamic promises would be fulfilled, even though it seemed at the time that Philistine domination was never going to permit that. Likewise "The children of Israel made them the dens ('dry river channels') which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds" (Jud. 6:2). Some of the Israelites who fled to the dens and caves in Jud. 6:2 are described as heroes of faith because of their faith that somehow, enemy domination would and must end because of the implications of the promises to Abraham. And yet their domination by the Philistines was a result of their idolatry. They were idolatrous, and yet some had faith; and it was this faith which was perceived by God.

11:39 *And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, did not receive the fulfilment of the promise*- That witness, as noted on :11, was before God in the court room of Heaven. Judaism posited that the promises to Abraham and the new covenant had already been fulfilled because Israel were in their land and had the temple system. Paul is arguing that Christians are identified with the Old Testament faithful who did not consider that those things meant that the promises had been fulfilled. Seeing God keeps His promises, there had to come a far fuller fulfilment, of "eternal inheritance", implying eternal life.

11:40 *God having provided some better thing involving us, that without us they should not be made perfect*- All the believers are rewarded *together*, at the same time; the Greek for "without us" means 'at a space from'. Therefore there was no way that Judaism's claim that the promises had been fulfilled could be true. This verse may also teach that the number of 'the believers' is completed only by our development of faith- implying that the sooner this happens, the sooner the united perfection of the faithful can occur. God "provided" or planned this in advance; because the eye of faith can

perceive how the ages of human history were structured by Him (:3). He is the "architect" of the city of God's Kingdom to come (:10). Being "made perfect" is therefore presented as the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham; and it is this moral "perfection" by imputed righteousness which the new covenant offered, according to how Paul has reasoned so far in Hebrews. Yet the literal realization of that in physical terms shall come only when the Lord returns. Then we shall be "made perfect", and not by offering animals now. It is the Lord Jesus, the seed of Abraham, who was "made perfect" by His sufferings (2:10; 5:9; 7:28). By being in Him, we too shall share that perfection; whereas obedience to the law made nobody perfect (7:19; 9:9). By status and in prospect, we have already been "made perfect" (10:14), the spirits or characters of dead believers have already been "made perfect" in God's record book (12:23), but the physical outworking of that shall be when all believers in imputed righteousness are "made perfect" by nature at the second coming.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

12:1- see on Rom. 14:8,9.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us- We are to run the race encouraged by all those who have held on to their faith previously- for that is what encouraged them in their day. The Hebrews were returning to legalism, offering sacrifices for sin rather than trusting in the Lord's work. And by so doing they were actually cumbering themselves with sin, and with 'weights' which hindered their running the race.

The race could imply that before each of us an individualized racetrack is set, and we are to run that race having laid aside every distraction. Ask God to reveal to you His intentions and specific plans for you. Likewise when Paul wrote of shedding *the* sin which doth so easily beset us, he may have been suggesting that we each have our own specific weakness to overcome. This is certainly a comfort to us in our spiritual struggles. We aren't alone in them. They were given to us. We aren't alone with our nature. The purpose and plan of God for us is articulated even through the darkest nooks of our very essential being. Understanding this should make us the more patient with our brethren, whose evident areas of weakness are not ours. The race is "set before us", and the same word is used of how the Lord Jesus ran His race looking at the joy "set before" Him (:2). The connection is in that the race and the joy are the same, they merge into one, the road becomes the destination, for those who have the solid hope of salvation ahead of them.

12:2 *Looking to Jesus the author and completer of faith, who for the joy that was set before him*- The race is to be run (:1) with our eye on "Jesus" as the finish point. Our ultimate aim is to become like Him; "we shall be like Him". The joy set before the Lord was to sit at the right hand of God, where He mediates for us. In chapters 8-10 the argument has been that as the Lord entered the Holiest and there does service for us, so we have also entered. Our joy ahead is to be His joy, to be as Him, in working for others to the Father's glory. Our efforts to do so in this life are designed to help us acquire a taste for that eternal way of being.

"Author" could be translated "prince / leader", but the translation "author" is valid; and it connects with Him being also the completer of our faith. Grace means that God and not ourselves takes the initiative. As noted on 11:1, true faith in God is predicated upon the Lord Jesus; it is encounter with Him which authors faith in us. And He develops, matures and completes it, if we let Him. All appeals to scientific 'evidence' [falsely so called] for God and the Bible are pointless and misdirecting us; for it is the Lord Jesus who authors and develops faith in our hearts, through the work of the Spirit which

matures our faith. "Completer" is the same word just used in 11:40 of how we shall be "made perfect" at His return; but that point of faith reached at our death or His coming will have been developed by His direct action in our lives. Hebrews 11 speaks of how so many died in faith, the process of faith development continued unto the end of their days. In this we see the significance of old age; we may cease to have much significance in secular life, but the Lord's process of developing our faith continues unto the end. We must remember that the Lord's efforts to mature faith continue in the lives of all His people, including those whom we may consider too far gone in their falling away. Any efforts we make for them will have His blessing, and will be channels of His activity for them.

"Set before" can imply a vision, as if Christ saw something in front of Him as He hung on the cross. The spirit of Christ in Ps. 16:11 describes Christ looking forward to fullness of joy in God's Heavenly presence, because "at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". Christ is now at God's right hand interceding for us. Therefore we suggest that the joy set before Christ in vision as He hung on the cross was the joy of His future mediation for our sins as we repent of them and confess them in prayer.

“For the joy set before Him He endured the cross” may seem on first reading to mean that He did serve for a reward. Until we understand that the Greek word *anti* translated “for” really means ‘in place of’. With evident reference to the wilderness temptation to take the Kingdom joys without the cross, the writer is making the point that instead of the joy that the tempter of His own flesh set before Him, He endured the cross.

Endured the cross, despising the shame, and has been sat down at the right hand of the throne of God- The shame of the cross is a theme of the records. The reproach broke the Lord's heart (Ps. 69:20). It could even be that He suffered a heart rupture, a literal broken heart, some hours prior to His death- hence when His side was pierced, blood flowed out- and corpses don’t usually bleed. It has been commented that severe emotional trauma is enough to cause such a rupture. He wasn't hard and impervious to it all. He knew who He was, and where He was going. To be treated as He was, was such an insult to the God of all grace. And He keenly sensed this. Heb. 12:2,3 parallels the Lord's enduring of the cross with His enduring "such contradiction of sinners against Himself". These mockings were therefore part of "the cross". The "cross" process began before His impalement; in the same way as some verses which evidently concern the crucifixion are applied to the Lord's earlier life. His was *a life* of cross carrying. And we are asked to live the same life, not just the occasional 'cross' of crisis, but a life embodying the cross principles.

There's significant Old Testament emphasis upon the fact that those who are truly on the Lord's side shall not be put to shame. It was prophesied of the Lord Jesus that He set His face like a flint, "that I shall not be ashamed" (Is. 50:7). Perhaps His lack of destructive anger was because He didn't let Himself be shamed by men, instead taking

His self-worth and values from God's acceptance of Him. To avoid "anger" in the wrong sense, we need to avoid being wrongly shamed. And we can do this by ensuring we ourselves aren't led into shame, due to placing too great a value upon the opinions of men. Our shame should be before God for our sins against Him, and not before men. Hence the prophets often criticize Israel for not being ashamed of their sins before God (Jer. 6:15). Our shame before men leads to anger; our shame before God is resolved in repentance and belief in His gracious forgiveness. Thus Jeremiah recalls how his repentance involved being ashamed, and yet then being "instructed" (Jer. 31:19). It's through knowing this kind of shame before God that we come to a position where we are unashamed. Thus Joel begins his prophecy with a call to "be ashamed" before God for sin, and concludes with the comfort that in this case, "my people shall never [again] be ashamed" (Joel 1:1; 2:27). In this sense we can understand the comment that the Lord Jesus 'despised the shame' of the cross (Heb. 12:2). He 'thought against' it [Gk.], he refused to be shamed before men, even though naked and bedraggled and humanly defeated; for He believed that He was being 'lifted up' in glory from God's viewpoint. Paul could say that it mattered very little to him how men thought of him, for the Lord's judgment was all that mattered (1 Cor. 4:4); and the Lord Jesus gave somewhat the same impression, for He evidently "regarded not the person of men" (Mt. 22:16). If our value, validation, self-worth etc. are dependent upon men's opinions of us, then we're likely to be easily shamed; and this sets us up for all manner of anger feelings, and makes us the more easily woundable by those whose acceptance we crave. Quite simply- if God has accepted us, then don't let ourselves be shamed by men.

12:3 *Think on him that endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart*- "Think on Him" is the essence of true spirituality and Christianity; it is who we are when nobody is watching which is the litmus test of our faith. We need to repeatedly challenge ourselves with the question as to how much we are thinking on Him; whether we are truly Christ-centred or not. Thinking about issues vaguely connected to our religion is not always the same as this mental focus upon Him which is so utterly critical. The apostasy of the Hebrews was most essentially a mental issue; they were growing weary and fainting in their minds (AV) in that they were losing their personal focus upon the Lord Jesus.

12:4- see on Col. 2:1.

In your striving against sin you have yet to resist to the point of shedding your blood- Sin is personified here, as it often is. Once that basic truth is accepted, it should not be difficult to appreciate that sometimes that personification is called satan or the devil, the great enemy.

We must balance ourselves against Him who endured such contradiction, and the more freely confess that we “have not yet resisted unto blood (in our) striving against sin”. Only by a personal reconstruction and reliving of the cross, and a serious, sustained

attempt to live out something of its spirit in our lives, will we come to a recognition of the depth of our own failure, our need for His grace, and an appreciation of what really was done for us. And if we realize all this, we will respond- mightily. As the forgiveness suggested by the sin offering led on to the burnt offering (with its message of dedication), so our desperation leads to our dedication (Lev. 5:7).

The struggle against sin in the Lord which led to blood alludes to His sweat as blood drops. It is a call for us to recognize this, and to have the picture of our Lord in Gethsemane as a motivation "lest we be wearied, and faint in (our) minds". Paul is saying: 'You've never got anywhere near that intensity. So don't get tired of the unending mental battle against your natural mind. Consider Him there' (Lk. 22:44). But, the implication is, we ultimately should. We bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body (2 Cor. 6:10)- not just at resurrection, but now. And it is through this that we bear witness to the resurrected Jesus. He can be seen as alive because He lives in us. The disciples in Gethsemane slumbered and slept when the Lord had specifically asked them to struggle on in prayer. A stone's throw from them, the Son of God was involved in a height of spiritual struggle utterly unequalled. And they dozed off in the midst of their half-serious prayers. This incident is alluded to here in a powerful appeal to us: "Consider him that endured [as the kneeling disciples should have watched the distant Lord Jesus as an inspiration to themselves]... lest *you* be wearied, and faint in *your* minds [as they did]. *Ye* have not yet resisted unto blood [cp. the Lord's sweat as drops of blood], [in your] striving against sin". Time and again Paul alludes, sometimes perhaps even subconsciously, to the record of Gethsemane. He evidently saw in those garden prayers and the disciples' sleepiness a powerful cameo of our every battle and failure; and a strong, urgent plea for us to rise up and catch the fire of real spiritual struggle.

12:5 *You have forgotten the word of encouragement which reasons with you as with sons: My son, do not regard lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor become faint when you are reproved by Him*- This alludes to the idea of a living word by speaking of an Old Testament passage as 'reasoning' with us. We are a separate people. We have been redeemed from them by the precious blood of Christ. We are spiritual Jews. What God spoke to men like Jacob, He therefore spoke to us (Hos. 12:5; Gen. 28:15 cp. Heb. 12:5,6). All Scripture is recorded for *our* learning and comfort (Rom. 15:4). The exhortation of Prov. 3:11 “speaketh unto *you* as unto children...”. Hebrews 3 quotes Psalm 95 as relevant to all readers. The warnings there for its "today" were also be a warning for the first century "today", and yet likewise we can still take hold of the past word of God and relate it to the needs of our "today”. We can fail to personalize God’s word, in the sense of realizing that it speaks to us personally. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what would happen to him unless he repented; and he wouldn’t listen.

When his judgment came, God told him: “O King Nebuchadnezzar, *to thee it is spoken*: The kingdom is departed from thee” (Dan. 4:31). We have a way of reading and hearing, and yet not making the crucial connection with ourselves.

The quotation from Proverbs 3 is about how "my son" should accept discipline. But the "my son" passages in Proverbs were particularly relevant to the Lord Jesus. Prov. 3:4 speaks of the son growing in favour with God and man, and that is quoted about the Lord in Lk. 2:52. Here, a few verses later in Prov. 3:12, the "my son" is defined as "the son in whom [the heavenly Father] delights". That Son in whom God's soul delighted was the Lord Jesus. And so a passage specifically about the Lord is quoted here about us, implying we are in Him. And that is exactly the context here in Hebrews 12. The Lord's sufferings are to be seen as ours, and all are specific hard experiences are to be understood as in some way a fellowshipping of His sufferings.

12:6 *For the Lord disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives*- The persecution of the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem is portrayed by Paul as the Lord's discipline. Their error was presumably in turning away from His Son and back to Judaism; and in resisting the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles. But discipline should never be perceived as a withdrawal of love, and Paul emphasizes that point here. Despite their apostasy, the Father was in process of receiving [Gk. admitting, accepting] them as His adopted sons, and He was chastising them so that they would adopt the family likeness. This of course was quite against the spirit of Judaism, which assumed that Jewish birth was all that was needed to be in the Divine family. The emphasis may be upon *every* son receiving discipline and chastisement; for the Greek words are used about the Lord's chastening and suffering in His time of dying (Lk. 23:22; Mt. 20:19; Jn. 19:1). His sufferings then are ours today; and they are intended as part of our spiritual path to glory.

12:7 *Endure your sufferings as a father’s chastening; it shows how God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not chastise?*- As noted on :6, the Lord's sufferings are to be ours. The Father's chastening of Him was not in the sense of correcting error, but in order to stimulate His spiritual growth. And so it is with our sufferings; they can of course be for correction, but there is no direct link between sin and suffering in the immediate term. The fact we experience sufferings which can be related to those of God's Son shows that we are indeed His children. And we can thereby take comfort that we are God's children.

12:8 *But if you are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then aren't you illegitimate children and not real sons?*- This is the error of the prosperity Gospel, the idea that God is the source of only positive experience. The idea is that if we don't experience God's chastening, we are not therefore His true children. We may

appear His children, but we are illegitimate. The Hebrew Christians were being wooed by the temple system; their persecution from them and difficulties with the Roman authorities would apparently cease if they reunited with Judaism, which was a recognized religion under Caesar. But then they would be God's children only in appearance; in real spiritual terms, they would be illegitimate. Paul uses the same argument in the allegory of Galatians 4; the Jerusalem that now is were to be associated with Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham, and not with Isaac, in whom the seed was called. "Partakers" is a major theme in Hebrews; we are made partakers in Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the calling from Heaven (1:9; 3:1,14; 6:4). But these wonderful things involve likewise a partaking in the Lord's sufferings under God's good hand; and "all" the true children must partake of them.

12:9 *Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them respect; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*- The chastening of our natural fathers was to set us in the path of being normal responsible human beings after the flesh. But all the same, a life no matter how well lived ends in death. God's chastening is so that we might develop spiritually, and live eternally. To submit ourselves to God means more specifically submitting ourselves to the gift of His righteousness and not seeking to 'get' righteousness by our own works; Judaism had failed to submit to God in this way (Rom. 10:3). We have been made subject to the Lord Jesus (Eph. 1:22; 5:24), made the footstool of His feet in status (10:13), but we must live this out in practice. Thus all things have been put in subjection under Him in prospect and in status, but now we see not yet all things subjected unto Him in practice (2:8). In :23 we will read of the spirits of just men perfected; their spirits, who they were in essence, had been perfected by the Father's work with them through the processes of chastisement throughout their lives.

12:10 *For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness*- This was an appeal to the Hebrew culture of respect to fathers. The problem was that many of the Hebrew Christians had fathers who were or had been in their lives staunch Judaists. The call of the Gospel was to be in subjection to our heavenly Father more than to the fathers of our flesh. The discipline of human fathers is often *ad hoc* and at times inappropriate; here too severe, there too lax. But the hand of the heavenly Father is not like that; we can be guaranteed that every touch of His hand is for our eternal "profit". That word is associated with the work of the Spirit in human lives (Jn. 16:7; 1 Cor. 12:7), which is how in practice God chastises / operates in our lives.

Our chastening by God is so "that we might be partakers of His holiness". The ideas of sanctification and holiness are parallel (e.g. "sanctify yourselves… for I am holy", Lev. 11:44). It is the word of the Gospel that sanctifies (Jn.17:17), thus enabling us to be

partakers of God's holiness. The message of the Gospel word is that event now has ultimate meaning, for it is the good news that God's chastening is preparing us to be sanctified / made holy so that we may do His work. Paul has previously argued that the goal of our spiritual journey is that we in Christ might enter the holiest to do God's service, for others to His glory. As noted on :8, we are partakers in the Lord and His sufferings, but our identity with Him means that we are both now and eternally partakers in His holiness, His righteousness imputed to us.

12:11 *All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yields peaceable fruit to those that have been exercised thereby- the fruit of righteousness-* There is a parallel between the action of the Gospel word upon a man and the effect of trials: "Chastening... yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby" (Heb. 12:11 AV).Yet "the word of righteousness... strong meat" leads to those who respond to the word of God "by reason of use (having) their senses *exercised* to discern both good and evil" (5:13,14); and the word abiding in us also yields the fruits of righteousness (Jn. 15:4,7). The word of the Gospel enables us to make sense of "all chastening", and there is a synthesis between our life experience and that word, whereby we can be assured that there is no such thing as random event in our lives, but all chastening has a potential role to play in exercising us unto the fruit of righteousness. The "fruit of righteousness" is a term elsewhere used about the fruits of the Spirit filling our lives insofar as the gift of the Spirit works within believing hearts (Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11). Paul speaks of the work of the Spirit here in terms of the Lord's chastening, designed to bring forth spirituality in our spirit or character. To receive the Spirit, therefore, is no joyful thing in practice in that it will be associated with Divinely directed chastening.

12:12 *Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees-* The Hebrews were fainting in the Gospel race. Now if Scripture interprets Scripture at all, this just has to be an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex. 17!'. This allusion also critiques the Judaist view of Moses as the supreme icon of spirituality. But the quotation in full is from Is. 35:3, which urges the spiritually weak to be strengthened because the day of the Messianic Kingdom is very near. And this was so relevant to the Hebrew Christians. Paul again reasons as if the second coming was just around the corner; and it could've been in the first century. But God's people refused to heed the exhortations, and so that day was delayed until our last days.

12:13 *And make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be disabled further, but rather be healed-* The unbelieving world is repeatedly characterized as

walking in a crooked path (Lk. 3:5; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:15 and often in Proverbs). Quietly starting every day right is part of our walking in a *straight* path, following the way of the cherubim, walking in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and by walking in that straight daily path we will not have opportunity to stumble. But the message here is not just personal; we are to make straight paths for our collective feet as a community, so that the lame may not be further stumbled but rather be healed. Church life in community so often ends up placing a cloud of legislation and legalistic conformities in the way of the stumbling, so that they are not healed but made to stumble further. The church should be a straight path between God's Kingdom and stumbling man; that is to be the repeated and simple focus of all collective activity. And by not doing so, we are going to be guilty of causing others to stumble, which nets condemnation.

12:14 *Follow after peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord*- The idea of "peace" is of peace with God and each other on the basis of sin forgiven. This is the way to make straight collective paths for our communal feet (see on :13). If we are to partake in the Lord's holiness (see on :10), we are to seek it proactively. The idea of following after connects with the picture of following a straight path in :13. It is a lack of peace within the community which causes the lame to stumble further; and a focus upon holiness and holding in view the final end of 'seeing the Lord' will lead us to avoid making others stumble. Seeing the Lord is understood in Revelation in fairly literal terms; God Himself shall dwell upon earth, we will see His face, as Job and others hoped for. This is further evidence that we are to understand God as a personal being rather than as an abstraction.

12:15- see on 1 Jn. 2:28.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many are defiled- The bitter root refers to a poisonous plant growing up in the path to the Kingdom spoken of in :13 and :14. It is the responsibility of each of us, and not just the elders, to ensure that none fail of God's grace; and the Judaist menace was taking people away from that grace. The bitter rooted plant could lead to many being defiled, a term with cultic overtones. Defilement meant that the defiled could no longer serve in the temple cult, and the holiness / imputed righteousness which was to be followed after and attained by grace would then be made null and void. The quotation is from Dt. 29:18 LXX which speaks of a false teacher arising and inviting God's people to serve the idols of the world around them. This is how Paul presented the Judaizers with their appeal to the Jerusalem Christians to return to the apparent monotheism of the temple cult. It was no more than idolatry; and we noted on 1:1 that Paul was deeply touched by Stephen's address in Acts 7 and reflects it in his reasoning to the Hebrew Christians. Stephen too had by inference made this same point. And this is how Judaism should be seen by Christians today.

12:16 *Ensure that no one is an immoral or Godless person like Esau, who for one meal sold his own birthright*- The false teachers of :15 are associated with immorality; and this connection is seen throughout the New Testament warnings against false teachers. They were not simply intellectually mistaken. There was a moral issue too; Judaism was attractive even to Gentile converts in places like Corinth and Ephesus because the idea of justification through a few rituals opened up the way to behave immorally in other areas of life which were outside the circumference of the rituals. The Hebrew Christians had identified with Isaac, the true seed; and thereby with Jacob too. It was Judaism which was the illegitimate seed of Abraham, associated with Hagar (Gal. 4), the illegitimate children of :8. By returning to Judaism they were selling their birthright for temporal benefit of the moment- the apparent safety from Roman and Jewish persecution. Judaism is here called "Godless", just like Esau, despite his public attempts to be pleasing to his father Isaac by choosing wives he thought might please them. Esau was the firstborn, but he threw this away. The Lord Jesus is the "firstborn" of all creation, a form of the same Greek word used for "birthright". The believers are counted as the firstborn who were saved by the Passover lamb (11:28), and thus are "the church of the firstborn" (:23). But they were giving away that birthright for temporal benefit, just as many do today in different contexts.

12:17 *For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no conditions for a change of mind, though he sought it diligently with tears*- Esau before Isaac, pleading with him to change his irrevocable rejection, is picked up here as a type of the rejected at the day of judgment. The implication is that Jacob at this time symbolized the saints; yet he was no saint at that time. If Esau's rejection by Isaac is indeed a picture of the rejection of the goats at the final judgment, Isaac there becomes a hazy prefigurement of our future judge. And yet the record presents a scene of both father and rejected son as shaken and helpless together, both dearly wishing it could be different (Gen. 27:33). The sadness of Isaac becomes a figure of the pathos and sadness of God in rejecting the wicked. Note how the LXX of Gen. 27:38 adds the detail: "And Isaac said nothing; and Esau wept". We are left to imagine the thoughts of Isaac's silence. Truly our God takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11).

Esau's great and bitter cry for blessing is quoted here as typical of the attitude of all the rejected. He had earlier shrugged at the implications of selling his birthright, but now his self-rejection was being worked out in practice. The rejected argue back "When did we see you...?". Surely they wouldn't have bothered doing so, unless they were upset at their rejection, and desiring to see the verdict altered. Israel's passing through the Red Sea is a definite type of baptism, and their largely unsuccessful wilderness journey therefore becomes a pattern of failed Christian lives. Yet when they were told that they

were unworthy to enter the land, obvious as it must have been to them, they repented and were willing to make any sacrifice to enter it (Num. 14:40-48). When they disobeyed God's word and fled to Egypt from the Babylonians, they then so wanted to return to their land [cp. the Kingdom]- but it was all too late (Jer. 44:14). Cain is another type of the rejected- instead of going as far away from Divine things as possible after his condemnation, he went to live on the east of Eden- where the cherubim were, guarding the barred entry to God's paradise (Gen. 4:16). The Hebrews were warned not to follow Esau's sinful example (Gen. 27:34), otherwise at the judgment they would experience what he did. In view of this, the weeping of the rejected at judgment may be as a result of desperate pleading with the Lord to change his mind. Earlier in Hebrews the point is made that "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy". The phrase "without mercy" is surely included to point out that the condemned would have earnestly pleaded for mercy, after the pattern of Cain, the foolish virgins pleading for entry... The next verse continues: "Of how much sorer punishment... shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God?" (Heb. 10:28,29), indicating that the sad picture of those condemned under the old Covenant, pleading for mercy, will be repeated at the judgment of those under the new Covenant.

And yet the impossibility of retracting the decision may not only refer to the finality of judgment day. The passage reads more comfortably as if Paul means that if they returned to the temple cult, there would be no way of coming back to Christ. And yet surely any sinner can always repent? Perhaps Paul is reasoning as in :12 (see note there) as if the Lord's return is around the corner. The temple cult was about to be destroyed as the Lord had predicted in the Olivet prophecy, and if now at the last moment the Hebrew Christians returned to it, then they were going to be destroyed in its destruction.

12:18 *For you have not come to a mountain that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest*- The new covenant means that we are not under the old covenant. We are not as Israel standing nervously before the mount Sinai as the covenant was given. The language of darkness, blackness and fire is all used elsewhere of condemnation at the last day. This was what the old covenant would lead to for sinful man. But the awesomeness of the scene there, however, looked forward to the even greater awesomeness of the things to which we stand related. The blood of Christ is as palpable as fire, and as real and actually demanding as words booming from Sinai. The mount "might be touched"- but on pain of death (Ex. 19:12), and :20 implies that some did touch it and die.

12:19 *And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words which they that heard them begged that no more words should be spoken to them*- The trumpet sound will be associated with the Lord's return and the summons to meet Him in judgment. But we can come boldly, knowing we are covered in His righteousness, not fearing our own sins

and disobedience, knowing all sin has been dealt with. Israel there sensed their weakness and tendency to disobedience; they begged that the words of command would no longer be spoken to them, for they feared their own tendency to disobedience. This fear of sin and disobedience is not to be felt under the new covenant; instead we eagerly seek for progressive relationship with God through the revelation of His word to us, without fear of our spiritual inadequacy.

12:20 *For they could not endure that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned-* Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain; let alone to the actual content of the covenant. The old covenant therefore propelled men away from God rather than towards Him.

12:21 *And so fearful was the appearance that Moses said: I am exceedingly afraid and trembling-* Again there is the implication that Moses was not to be read as the acme of spirituality which Judaism presented him as. He himself sensed his own moral weakness as he climbed the mountain which would lead to death for any other being, human or animal, who touched it. There is no direct record of Moses saying what he here says; Paul may have been inspired to share this with us for the first time. But he reasons as if Moses' words were already recorded and known. We read in Ex. 19:16 that the people trembled; perhaps we are to understand that Moses as one of them, the sinful mass, trembled likewise, and said so before God. He as a sinner received the old covenant, trembling at his sense of moral failure. The contrast is thereby heightened with how the Lord Jesus, without sin, although also one of us, mediated the new covenant.

12:22- see on Jud. 5:19,20; Gal. 4:26; Eph. 2:19.

But you have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels- Paul was writing to the Jerusalem Christians who were tempted to return to the temple cult on mount Zion. He is seeking to persuade them that the true Zion and Jerusalem is "heavenly", the community of true believers in the new covenant is a city waiting to come down from Heaven to earth as it were [as spoken of in Revelation]. But "the Jerusalem that now is" remained in bondage (Gal. 4). The new covenant is associated with hosts of Angels, just as the old covenant was, but as explained in Heb. 1, they are under the control of the Lord Jesus and work for the guidance of those in the new covenant and not in the old.

12:23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect-* Just as :1 says we are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses of former believers who died in faith,

so we are associated with the heavenly church. There is no conscious survival of death, no immortal soul that goes to heaven after death. But through the Spirit, God is at work maturing or perfecting the spirits, the personalities, of His people; and on death, they continue to live on in His memory, as it were. Their names are in the book of life, "enrolled in heaven", and they have already been judged by God "the judge of all" His people, as being acceptable. If we abide in Christ, we can be confident of salvation should the Lord return now or we die. We are therefore associated with the community of God's true Israel, those who shall live eternally. We are all saved because of being effectively "in Christ", the firstborn (see on :16 concerning the birthright or right of being the firstborn). Only the firstborn was saved at the Passover. We are the church of firstborns, a paradox as it stands written. For there can be only one firstborn. A whole community can't be "firstborns". But we are, through being in Christ. We are the new priesthood; and the priests gave their lives to God in recognition of the fact that He had saved the lives of the firstborn at the Passover and Red Sea deliverance (Num. 3:12). Our deliverance from the world at baptism was our Red Sea. We have been saved. Those firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). We are now being led towards that glorious Kingdom, when by rights we ought to be lying dead in that dark Egyptian night. The wonder of it all demands that like the Levites, we give our lives *back* to God, in service towards His children.

We are come *now* "to God the judge of all" (Heb. 12:23); God is *now* enthroned as judge (Ps. 93:2; Mt. 5:34 "the heaven *is* God's throne"). We are now inescapably in God's presence (Ps. 139:2); and 'God's presence' is a phrase used about the final judgment in 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10. Hence "God is [now] the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another" (Ps. 75:7) – all of which He will also due at the last day (Lk. 14:10). So "The day of the Lord is coming, but it is even now" (Mic. 7:4 Heb.). God isn't passive to human behaviour- right now "To every matter there is a time and a judgment (LXX *krisis*)" (Ecc. 8:6 RVmg.). He perceives our actions right now as critically important. And this should highlight to us the crucial importance of life and right living today.

Israel's exodus from Egypt on Passover night was a type of our exodus from the world at the second coming (Lk. 12:35,36 = Ex. 12:11). The firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). Perhaps 90% of the firstborns failed to be delivered because they murmured (see on 1 Cor. 10:10), they allowed themselves to be distracted from the fundamental basis of their redemption: the blood of the lamb. What percentage will it be for the new Israel?

It's also possible that the "spirits" are the guardian Angels of the righteous (see on Dan. 5:23). We are associated with the hosts of Angels (:22). These Angels enrolled the names of the responsible at the beginning of the world, but they are capable of removal from the book. It is as if God informed the Angels of all those they would be dealing with

during human history, and they subsequently have kept a record of the works of each of them as they guide them through life.

12:24 *And to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel*- Moses mediated the old covenant, shaking with fear because of his moral weakness; whereas the Lord Jesus mediates the new covenant in an ongoing sense to all who believe, confident in His moral perfection. The blood of Abel spoke, crying out for vengeance from the ground (Gen. 4:10); but the Lord's blood is not so much a cry for vengeance as of victory and vengeance achieved. It is "the blood of sprinkling" in that blood sprinkling was used to sanctify priests and equipment for service in the tabernacle. It has been a repeated theme of Paul that the whole wonderful path of salvation is so that we might serve with the Lord Jesus in the Holiest, working for others to the Father's glory. And yet the blood of sprinkling recalls that sprinkled on the day of atonement upon the mercy seat.

The blood of Christ speaks a message, better than that of Abel. As we examine ourselves before His cross, reconstructing in our own minds the physicalities of His time of dying, we hear a voice from Him. It is a voice that shakes heaven and earth (Heb. 12:24,26). This is after the pattern of how the commanding voice of Yahweh was heard above the blood sprinkled on “the atonement cover of the ark of the Testimony” (Num. 7:89 NIV). It shows forth, as a voice, God’s righteousness (Rom. 3:25,26 RV). The ark was made of shittim wood- from a root meaning ‘to flog, scourge or pierce’, all replete with reference to the cross. And it was there on that wooden box that Yahweh was declared in the blood sprinkled upon it. Note how there is an association between the blood of atonement and the throne of judgment in 2 Sam. 6:2 and Is. 37:16, as if we see a foretaste of our judgment in the way we respond to the Lord’s outpoured blood for us. The Lord Jesus in His time of death is the “propitiation", or rather ‘the place of propitiation’ for our sins, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. “There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat… of all things which I will give thee in commandment" (Ex. 25:20-22). The blood of Christ is therefore to be associated with the commanding voice of God, such is the imperative within it. Rev. 19:13 draws a connection between Christ’s title as “the word of God” and the fact His clothing is characterised by the blood of His cross. Ps. 40:9 describes how the Lord Jesus accomplished God’s will as the ultimate sacrifice, through the death of the cross. That death is foretold by the Lord, in the prophetic perfect, as ‘preaching righteousness to the great congregation’ [LXX *ekklesia*]. In living out the dying of the man Christ Jesus in our daily lives, we are making the witness of Christ.

12:25 *See you do not reject him that speaks. For if they did not escape when they rejected Him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn*

away from him that warns from heaven- The One who speaks ["warned" is not a good translation; the Greek means literally to preach or speak] is the Lord Jesus, personified as His blood in :24. The same word translated "reject" is that used in :19 of Israel rejecting the word of the old covenant. They rejected God's word because they feared the massing up of commandments to obey. They totally missed the point of relationship with God on the basis of His word. And the same fear of God's demands was to be seen in the Hebrews of the first century turning away from the voice of the cross of Christ. He there is indeed a voice speaking to us, demanding much of us- not in terms of obedience to legislation and commandments, but in asking us to believe that because of His work there, we shall surely be saved, our sins are no longer a barrier between God and us; and the joy and confidence arising from this should lead us to a life of total response and commitment. To turn away from the voice of the cross, as the Hebrews were doing, means there can be no escape, no place to run, at judgment day. The Lord had used the same word in saying that the Jews would have no way to "escape" condemnation (Mt. 23:33). The same word is also used in each of the accounts of the Olivet prophecy of how the Christians would "escape" from Jerusalem; it was those who remained dedicated to the temple who did not escape and were destroyed in AD70.

The events of the crucifixion are an epitome of who the Lord most essentially was and is. His soul was made 'sin' in that He "poured out His soul unto death" (Is. 53:12). The Hebrew for "poured out" also means to make naked, to stretch out. The Lord bared His soul, who He essentially was, was displayed there for all to see; the wine was His blood which was Him, in the sense that the cross is who the son of God essentially was and is and shall ever be. "This is Jesus" was and is the title over the cross. There, for our redemption, He died (Heb. 9:15), He gave us *Himself* (1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14), His life (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45), His blood (1 Pet. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7). His death, His life, His blood, these are all essentially *Himself*. The blood of Jesus speaks to us as if *He personally* speaks to us; He is personified as His blood (Heb. 12:24,25). This is the preaching (Gk. the word) of the cross. Paul makes the connection between the voice of Christ's blood and the earthquake that shook all things at the time of the Old Covenant's inauguration. The voice of that blood can shake *all things* with the exception of the Kingdom, which cannot be shaken. This is the power of the cross. Human words, platform speaking, magazine articles- all these are so limited, although our communal life is inevitably built around them. See on Jn. 6:51; Heb. 9:20.

12:26 *Whose voice then shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying: Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also heaven*- The voice of the cross is far stronger than the voice associated with the old covenant, which was so powerful it caused an earthquake which shook Sinai (Ex. 19:18). The voice of the cross made and makes all of heaven and earth to shake. The quotation from Hag. 2:6 speaks of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and its rebuilding in the Messianic Kingdom. But the restoration did not work out as it potentially could have done. The temple was not

rebuilt according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48, and most of the Jews preferred to remain in Babylon. But the essence of the restoration prophecies comes true in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus and His work. The implication is that the past destruction of the Jerusalem temple was the first shaking of the earth; but a shaking of the whole planet was coming, and the only thing left would be the Kingdom of God, that which cannot be shaken and destroyed, in the language of the image prophecy of Dan. 2:44. The language of 'shaking' connects with the Lord's prediction of the shaking of the heavens as a prelude to the destruction of the temple and His return in glory (Lk. 21:26 s.w.).

12:27 *And further: Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain*- The things made and visible were those of the Jerusalem temple cult. These too were to be shaken and destroyed; the only unshakeable things which remain are those of the Kingdom of God. As noted on 11:1, the things that are made, that are visible, referred to the immediately visible things of the temple cult; the eye of faith saw beyond them to the city which has foundations, the Kingdom of God to come on earth. "Yet once more" was being understood by Paul to mean that as the first temple was destroyed, so the temple which stood in the first century would also be destroyed as Haggai's prophecy had its fulfilment. But in the final fulfilment of these things, absolutely all things shall be shaken and fall, just as Sinai shook and the temple was brought to nothing. The only permanent thing which shall remain will be the solid mountain of God's Kingdom on earth. But this shaking of all things is on account of the voice of the blood of Christ; it is His victory on the cross which would remove the temple cult, and on account of His life [represented by His blood] all things on earth would be shaken to nothing so that His eternal Kingdom can be established, the fulfilment of the new covenant promises to Abraham.

12:28 *Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe*- The receipt of the Kingdom is ongoing in this life. But the language of receiving a kingdom is appropriate to the king of the kingdom, rather than the subjects. The same words are used in the Lord's parable about Himself going to the "far country" of Heaven "to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Lk. 19:12). Yet again, language personally relevant to the Lord Jesus alone is used about all who are in Him. We recall how in chapters 8-10 Paul has argued that because we are "in Christ", we are also with Him in the Holiest, in Heaven itself, doing the work of the High Priest. The rest of this verse goes on to use language appropriate to the priesthood; doing pleasing service to God with reverence. This priestly service is essentially service of others, for the glory of God. And we do this 'having grace', the idea being that we do so motivated by gratitude (see GNB "let us be grateful"). Our eternity is not in question; as explained earlier, we should be humbly but

totally confident that if the Lord comes or we die, we shall surely be saved by grace. We are "in Christ", and so we are in that sense in process of receiving the Kingdom. Whilst works shall not save us, it is also true that if we believe this great salvation, we cannot be passive. We shall in reverence do priestly service in deep gratitude, but with the "awe" or fear that comes from realizing the eternal future which we may miss. There is a comment in the next verse :29 about the reality of condemnation for some; and this leads me to understand the fear / awe spoken of in :28 in that context.

12:29 *For our God is a consuming fire*- The allusion may still be to how the old covenant was associated not only with Sinai shaking but a consuming fire coming down upon it (Ex. 19:18). Those who remained within the old covenant system were associated with this condemnation, because they simply could not be perfectly obedient to that covenant. By identifying with the temple cult, they would find in a literal sense that God consumed them in fire, for this was how many Jews perished within the temple in AD70. The same word is used of how the Lord at His return would "consume" the system which sat in the temple of God (2 Thess. 2:4). The Hebrew Christians were being warned ahead of time that if they returned to the temple cult, they would meet their end in the fire which would consume that temple, just as the first temple had been burnt with fire.

The quotation is from Dt. 4:24 "For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire"; this was spoken in the context of 'forgetting the covenant of Yahweh' (Dt. 4:23). This was in fact what the Hebrew Christians were doing; forsaking the new covenant for the old.

Is. 33:14 is being alluded to, which speaks of the sinners within the surrounded city of Jerusalem at Hezekiah's time: "The sinners in Zion are afraid. Trembling has seized the godless ones. Who among us can live with the devouring fire? Who among us can live with everlasting burning?". Note the reference to "trembling" too, which has also figured in this context in Hebrews 12. Zion, the temple mount and cult, was sinful and would suffer the condemnation of fire. Those who wanted to return to it were not being more righteous or obedient; they were sinning. Legalism, not trusting in the Lord's blood but in our own few works, is just that- sin.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 13

13:1- see on Lk. 12:42.

Let love of the believers continue- The shift towards legalism and Judaism was associated with a decline in love. For as with legalistic churches today, belief in justification by works and ritual breeds a distrust and dislike of anyone who doesn't think the rituals are important for salvation and even actively discourages them. And it was of course hard to show love to uncircumcised Gentile believers if one believed that circumcision was essential to have covenant with God.

13:2- see on Rom. 12:13.

Do not forget to show love to strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares- As noted on :1, the Hebrew Christians were prone to consider uncircumcised Gentile Christians as outside covenant relationship with God. The reference could also be to the itinerant spirit gifted prophets, cp. 2 Jn. 10). Paul is appealing to the Hebrew understanding that all people had representative Angels. By refusing Gentile brethren, they were turning away Angels. The only Gentiles in Jerusalem would have been associated with the Romans or Arabs. If there were believers amongst them, it is understandable that orthodox Jewish Christians were tempted to refuse them hospitality (Gk.). But by doing so they were leaving Angels out on the street. For each believer had a representative Angel.

The allusion is clearly to Abraham entertaining the Angels unawares. If they were the true seed of Abraham, then they would be eager to have Gentiles, strangers, under their rooves and provide them with hospitality. As Peter reminds us, it was considered illegal for a Jew to come under the roof of a Gentile. So the Hebrew Christians needed encouragement to allow Gentiles into their homes, and to realize that by not doing so, they would be going against the spirit of Abraham. Perhaps he was motivated to receive strangers by reflecting on the promises to him, that all Gentiles would be blessed through his seed.

But there is also an allusion to Lot unknowingly entertaining Angels, on the eve of Sodom's destruction; and Isaiah had portrayed Jerusalem as Sodom, as does Rev. 11:8. The hint was that they were living in the very last days or even moments before Jerusalem was to be destroyed; and they should be as Lot rather than the men of Sodom - Jerusalem.

13:3 *Remember those that are in bonds, as if you were bound with them; those that are ill treated, as being yourselves also in the body*- The Hebrews were tempted to return to Judaism because it saved them from persecution by the Roman and Jewish authorities. Judaism was a recognized religion within the empire, and adherents were free from army service. The Hebrew Christians were attracted by this, and were tempted to not identify with those who were imprisoned or persecuted.

If we are truly members of the one body, we will be affected by the sufferings of others in that body. The fact we are members of the one body of Jesus should exclude all self-centred feelings, in the sense that if one other part of the body suffers or rejoices, then we are to be affected by this. Heb. 13:3 tells us to "*remember* them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (AV). We are to feel as if we are inside the body of our brethren. This is quite something. There is a purposeful ambiguity here. Whose body? The body of Jesus, or that of the suffering brother? Effectively, the one is the other. We can truly place ourselves in the place of others. The only other time the Greek word translated "remember" occurs is in Heb. 2:3: "What is man that thou art *mindful*

of him". Because of the almost senseless mindfulness of God for us down here on this speck of a planet, dust and water as we are… we must be inspired to likewise be mindful of our suffering brethren. "Those that are ill treated" is a Greek term found elsewhere only in 11:37; the suffering Christians in Jerusalem were in direct connection with the faithful of old who had likewise suffered for their faith.

13:4 *Let marriage be held in respect among all, and let the marital bed be undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers God will judge*- I noted on 12:16 that sexual immorality was an issue amongst those wishing to return to Judaism; they felt liberated to misbehave in other areas of moral life if they were technically obedient to ritual. The allusion to Jerusalem as Sodom in :2 (see note there) is continued here; Judaism and the temple cult was actually sexually immoral and would face God's judgment for this. We have here a classic case of where legalism doesn't curb sinful behaviour but actually encourages us. The grip of grace will teach us to deny such lusts, whereas legalism encourages those lusts. There may also be a swipe at the tendency for some Jewish false teachers to deprecate marriage (1 Tim. 4:3); and we noted on Ephesians and 1 Cor. 7 that the Judaists had encouraged the denial of marriage in order to indulge in sexual licence outside of it.

The adulterers who would be judged were those within the ecclesia and responsible. This is matched by 1 Pet.3:1-5 warning that the sisters were increasingly rebelling against their great prototypes of Eve and Sarah, unwittingly egged on by their unspiritual husbands. So many other New Testament passages imply a surge of marriage and sex related problems in the run up to AD70. The ecclesia of Israel was an adulterous generation; this was their main characteristic (Mt. 16:4). Looking around our sisterhood and brotherhood today there can be no doubt about the reference of all this to our last days. Add to this the parallels with Sodom and the times of Noah in this respect too.

13:5- see on Dt. 31:3; Josh. 1:5.

Be free from the love of money, content with such things as you have. For God Himself has said: I will in no way fail you, neither will I in any way forsake you- This again must be understood in the context of the Hebrew Christians wanting to return to Judaism. The economic discrimination against Christians in Jerusalem would have been significant, and surely contributed to the dire poverty of the Jerusalem church which Paul had sought to address through the Jerusalem poor fund. The Pharisees were covetous and materialistic (Lk. 16:14), and the Sadducees were famed for their love of money. The economic attractions of Judaism were to be resisted by faith that God would not fail to provide for His people. Paul demonstrates this by quoting the Father's words to Joshua-Jesus. So again we have a case of words specifically appropriate to the Lord Jesus being applied to all those who are in Him, just as the Lord's passage into the Holiest as supreme High Priest is applied to all in Him.

Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together. See on Rom. 11:26.

Those Old Testament promises are surely relevant to us: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said (to you, as well as Joshua), I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5 AV). Notice once again that the Old Testament scriptures are seen as alive and speaking directly to each of us in whatever generation. The message was that it isn't the actual possession of wealth that is condemned, but the way of life that seeks more than what we have been given. This is the real danger of materialism.

13:6 *So that with good courage we can say*- This is the word for "boldness" which is so characteristic of Hebrews; if as reasoned earlier we are bold before the very presence of God in the Holiest, we can be bold against all fears of human persecution.

The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What shall man do to me?- The quotation is from Ps. 118:6 "Yahweh is on my side, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?". Just as Scripture speaks personally to us (see on :5), so we can put the words of scripture in our own mouths. The context is relevant to those who wanted to trust in the apparent strength of the temple cult to save them from persecution: "It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to put confidence in man" (Ps. 118:8). The Psalm is clearly Messianic, stating that "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (Ps. 118:22). So again, words directly personally relevant to the Lord Jesus regarding His enemies in Jerusalem become just as directly relevant to all those "in Him" in Jerusalem.

13:7 *Remember those that had the rule over you, those who spoke to you the word of God*- The past tense "had" invites them to recall the earlies leaders in Jerusalem such as Peter and Stephen. If as noted in 1:1 Paul is speaking or writing Hebrews with his eye on Stephen, this takes on powerful relevance. The outcome of his life and faith was death at Paul's hands, but with the sure assurance of salvation. The basis of authority within the pastoral structure is that those who 'have the rule' are those who taught the Gospel to those over whom they have authority. Paul elsewhere uses family language to express the same truth; elders / fathers in the church family are those who brought us to spiritual life by teaching us the Gospel. This is the basis for eldership in the local church; such positions of authority cannot be attained by a vote or simply by default or age itself.

Consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith- Elders are especially responsible. They can shut up, or open, the Kingdom to men. They watch “in behalf of” the souls of the ecclesia (Heb. 13:17 RV). Their very examples can influence the flock positively or negatively- for “like priest like people” is a Biblical idea. When the leaders “offered themselves willingly”, so did the people (Jud. 5:2,9).
Respect must be earnt by elders, never demanded. Their way of life is the basis of their authority; in this sense, we have the choice whom to consider as our elders, whom we will respect and follow. Jesus taught as one who had authority, unlike the scribes (Mk. 1:22). Yet the Scribes had authority in terms of their position, and yet they were not respected; and hence they couldn’t teach with authority as Jesus could.

In illiterate societies, or those with limited access to the Old Testament scrolls and the Gospel records, the direction in spiritual life was given by elders, by living examples. That is true today, but moreso in their early situation.

Amongst those tending towards returning to the temple cult, there was a tendency to despise those who had first taught them the Gospel and suffered at the hands of Judaism for doing so. This is also mentioned as a last days problem in 1 Pet. 5:5; 2 Pet. 2:10 etc. See on 1 Tim. 3:4.

13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever*- "For ever" is literally 'for all ages'. There will be many "ages" to come, as there have doubtless been many "ages" of previous creations already (Rom. 1:25; 9:5); but for our "age" alone was the only begotten Son of God given as a representative of *us*, the humans who live in this brief "age". God thus describes Himself as a first timer falling in love with His people; as a young marries a virgin, so God marries us (Is. 62:5); Israel were as the

lines graven on a man's palm, with which he was born (Is. 49:16). Thus from absolute eternity, we were the great "all things" to Almighty God, the God of all, all past and future creations.

Past, present and future as stated here suggests Paul saw the three elements of the Yahweh Name supremely manifest in the Lord Jesus. Which is surely why 'Jesus' in the NT becomes the Name above every Name (Phil. 2:9,10; Eph. 1:21); for only 'Yahweh' was exalted above every other name (Neh. 9:5; Ps. 148:13).

The Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. The *same* Jesus who went into Heaven will *so* come again *in like manner* (Acts 1:11). The record three times says the same thing. The "like manner" in which the Lord will return doesn't necessarily refer to the way He gradually ascended up in to the sky, in full view of the gazing disciples. He was to return in the "like manner" to what they had seen. Yet neither those disciples nor the majority of the Lord's people will literally see Him descending through the clouds at His return- for they will be dead. But we will 'see' Him at His return "in like manner" as He was when on earth. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. The Jesus who loved little children and wept over Jerusalem's self-righteous religious leaders, so desirous of their salvation, is the One who today mediates our prayers and tomorrow will confront us at judgment day. Perhaps the Lord called the disciples His "brethren" straight after His resurrection in order to emphasize that He, the resurrected Man and Son of God, was eager to renew His relationships with those He had known in the flesh. It's as if He didn't want them to think that somehow, everything had changed. Indeed, He stresses to them that their Father is His Father, and their God is His God (Jn. 20:18). He appears to be alluding here to Ruth 1:16 LXX. Here, Ruth is urged to remain behind in Moab [cp. Mary urging Jesus?], but she says she will come with her mother in law, even though she is of a different people, and "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God". This allusion would therefore be saying: 'OK I am of a different people to you now, but that doesn't essentially affect our *relationship*; I so love you, I will always stick with you wherever, and my God is your God'.

Significantly, both Luke and John conclude their Gospels with the risen Lord walking along with the disciples, and them 'following' Him (Jn. 21:20)- just as they had done during His ministry. His invitation to 'Follow me' (Jn. 21:19,22) is the very language He had used whilst He was still mortal (Jn. 1:37,43; 10:27; 12:26; Mk. 1:18; 2:14). The point being, that although He was now different, in another sense, He still related to them as He did when He was mortal, walking the lanes and streets of 1st century Palestine. Elsewhere I have pointed out that the fishing incident of Jn. 21 is purposefully framed as a repetition of that recorded in Lk. 5- again, to show the continuity between the Jesus of yesterday and the Jesus of today. It's as if in no way does He wish us to feel that His Divine Nature and glorified, exalted position somehow separates us from Him. When the Lord awoke, He would have immediately been aware of the carefully wrapped graveclothes and the anointing oil. He would have then realized the care shown to Him by His sisters. Some of the very first thoughts of the risen Lord were of His brethren. There was no gap between His mortal awareness of His brethren, and His feelings for them after resurrection.

The Lord will essentially be the same as the Gospels present Him when we see Him again. This is why Jesus even in His earthly life could be called " the Kingdom of God" , so close was the link between the man who walked Palestine and the One who will come again in glory. "They see the Kingdom of God come" (Mk. 9:1) is paralleled by "They see the Son of man coming" (Mt. 16:28). Indeed it would seem that the references in the Synoptic Gospels to the 'coming' of the Kingdom are

interpreted in the rest of the New Testament as referring to the personal 'coming' of the Lord Jesus (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20). In that very context of referring to Himself as "the Kingdom of God", the Lord speaks of His return as 'the days of the Son of man'- the human Jesus. And yet He also speaks in that context of how after His death, men will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, i.e. how He had been in His mortal life (Lk. 17:20-26). As He was in His mortal days, so He will essentially be in the day of His final glory. It just isn't true that He came as a meek, gentle person, but will roar back as an angry lion. At His second coming, He will reveal " the wrath of the lamb" . Can you imagine an angry lamb? Yes, lambs can get angry. But it's a lamb-like anger. He came as the lamb for sinners slain, and yet He will still essentially be a lamb at His return. The Jesus who loved little children, sensitive to others weaknesses, desperate for their salvation, is the same one who will return to judge us. Even after His resurrection, in His present immortal nature, He thoughtfully cooked breakfast on the beach for His men (Jn. 21;9,12). And this is the Lord who will return to judge us. After His resurrection He was recognized by the Emmaus disciples in the way that He broke bread. The way He handled the loaf, His mannerisms, His way of speaking and choice of language, were evidently the same after His resurrection as before (Lk. 24:30,31). The Lord is the same today as yesterday.

"The Kingdom of God" was a title used of Jesus. He 'was' the Kingdom because He lived the Kingdom life. Who He would be, was who He was in His life. At the prospect of being made "full of joy" at the resurrection, "therefore did my heart rejoice" (Acts 2:26,28). His joy during His mortal life was related to the joy He now experiences in His immortal life. And this is just one of the many continuities between the moral and the immortal Jesus. Pause for a moment to reflect that the Lord's resurrection is a pattern for our own. This is the whole meaning of baptism. "God has both raised the Lord and will raise us up through his power" (1 Cor. 6:13,14). Yet there were evident continuities between the Jesus who lived mortal life, and the Jesus who rose again. His mannerisms, body language, turns of phrase, were so human- even after His resurrection. And so who we are now, as persons, is who we will eternally be. Because of the resurrection, our personalities in the sum of all their relationships and nuances, *have an eternal future*. But from whence do we acquire those nuances, body languages, etc? They arise partly from our parents, from our inter-relations with others etc; we are the sum of our relationships. And this is in fact a tremendous encouragement to us in our efforts for others; for the result of our parenting, our patient effort and grace towards others, will have an eternal effect upon others. Who we help them become is, in part, who they will eternally be. Job reflected that if a tree is cut down, it sprouts (Heb. *yaliph*) again as the same tree; and he believed that after his death he would likewise sprout again (*yaliph*) at the resurrection (Job 14:7-9,14,15). There will be a continuity between who we were in mortal life, and who we will eternally be- just as there is between the pruned tree and the new tree which grows again out of its stump. All our obedience and response to God's word in this life is likened to building a foundation which will endure beyond the storm, representative as that is of judgment day at Christ's return (Lk. 6:48). There is therefore a link between who we are now and who we will eternally be; we are building now the foundation for our eternity.

Who the Lord Jesus was is who He will be in the future; in the same way as who *we* are now, is who we will eternally be. For our spirit, our essential personality, will be *saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). "Flesh and blood" will not inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50); and yet the risen, glorified Lord Jesus was "flesh and

bones" (Lk. 24:39). We will be who we essentially are today, but with Spirit instead of blood energizing us. It's a challenging thought, as we consider the state of our "spirit", the essential 'me' which will be preserved, having been stored in Heaven in the Father's memory until the day when it is united with the new body which we will be given at resurrection. For in all things the Lord is our pattern; and we will in that day be given a body like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21)- which is still describable as "flesh and bones" in appearance (Lk. 24:39.

Note that whilst flesh and *blood* cannot inherit the Kingdom, the risen, immortal Lord Jesus described Himself as flesh and *bones* (Lk. 24:39). In fact, we find that "flesh and bones" are often paralleled (Gen. 2:23; Job 10:11; 33:21; Ps. 38:3; Prov. 14:30), and simply mean 'the person', or as the Lord put it on that occasion, "I myself". We ourselves will be in the Kingdom, with similar personalities we have now [that's a very challenging thought of itself]. "Flesh" doesn't necessarily have to refer, in every instance, to something condemned. Who we are now is who we will essentially be in the eternity of God's Kingdom. Let's not allow any idea that somehow our flesh / basic being is so awful that actually, the essential "I myself" will be dissolved beneath the wrath of God at the judgment. The Lord is " the saviour of the body" and will also save our " spirit" at the last day; so that we, albeit with spirit rather than blood energizing us, will live eternally. Understanding things this way enables us to perceive more forcefully the eternal importance of who we develop into as persons, right now. The Buddhist belief that we will ultimately not exist, that such 'Nirvana' is the most wonderful thing to hope for, appears at first hearing a strange 'hope' to be shared by millions of followers. But actually, it's the same essential psychology as that behind the idea that 'I' will not exist in the Kingdom of God, I will be given a new body, person and character. It's actually saying the same- I won't exist. And it's rooted in a terribly low self-image, a dis-ease with ourselves, a lack of acceptance of ourselves as the persons whom God made us and develops us into. Whilst of course our natures will be changed, so that we can be immortal, it is *we* who will be saved; our body will be resurrected, made new, and our spirit " saved" in that day, reunited with our renewed and immortal bodies. We have eternal life in the sense that who we are now, in spiritual terms, is who we will eternally be. Our spirit, the essential us, is in this sense immortal; it's remembered with the Lord. In this sense, not even death itself, nor time itself, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ (Rom. 8:35-39). Just as we still love someone after they have died, remembering as they do who they were and still are to us, so it is with the love of God for the essential us. Hence 1 Pet. 3:4 speaks of how a "gentle and calm disposition" or spirit is in fact "imperishable" (NAB)- because that spirit of character will be eternally remembered. This is why personality and character, rather than physical works, are of such ultimate and paramount importance. How we speak now is in a way, how we will eternally speak- I think that's the idea of Prov. 12:19: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment". Our "way" of life and being is how we will eternally be- and for me that solves the enigma of Prov. 12:28: "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death". In Jeremiah 18, God likens Himself to a potter working with us the clay. We can resist how He wants us to be, and He can make us into something else... we are soft clay until the 'firing'; and the day of firing is surely the day of judgment. The implication is that in this life we are soft clay; but the day of judgment will set us hard as the persons we have become, or have been made into, in this life.

The continuity between the mortal, human Jesus and the exalted Lord of all which He became on His ascension is brought out quite artlessly in Heb. 4:14: "Our

great high priest, who has passed through the heavens". The picture is of "this same Jesus", the man on earth, passing through all heavens to 'arrive' at the throne of God Himself to mediate for us there. His ascension to Heaven was viewed physically like this by the disciples, and is expressed here in that kind of language of physical ascent, to bring home to us the continuity between the man Jesus on earth, and the exalted Lord now in Heaven itself. The same Jesus who once experienced temptation can thereby strengthen us in our temptations. We need to realize that nobody can be tempted by that which holds no appeal; the Lord Jesus must have seen and reflected upon sin as a possible course of action, even though He never took it. And for the same reason, several New Testament passages (e.g. 1 Tim. 2:5) call the exalted Lord Jesus a "man"- even now. Let's not see these passages merely as theological problems for Trinitarians. The wonder of it all is that Jesus after His glorification is still in some sense human. He as "the pioneer of our faith" shows us the path to glory, a glory that doesn't involve us becoming somehow superhuman and unreal.

And so the Man who walked dusty Galilee streets is the very same one, in essence, whom we will meet in judgment day. The ultimate question for each of us, is whether we will be accepted by Him. In the Gospels, we see the Son of man, Son of God, so acceptant of others, so patient with their weaknesses, passionately dying for our salvation. Will He turn as it were another face on us at the day of judgment, showing Himself suddenly and unpredictably to be someone else? Like people we know, who suddenly surprised us one day by showing a completely different aspect to their character? I believe He won't. Because integrity and consistency of character, sharing His Father's characteristic of not changing, is what He is essentially about. He won't show another face then, that we've not seen now. The same basic Jesus, who so wished and wishes to eternally save us, will be the One whom we meet in the final day.

If we truly love the Lord, we will fantasize about our moment of meeting with Him. I suspect that His very appearance of ordinariness and evident human aspect will impress me in that first moment of meeting. Perhaps it will be that He appears to me in the midst of everyday life, when I'm desperately consumed with doing something, and interrupts me. And He'll seem like an ordinary local person, speaking with the same accent, wearing normal clothes, just as He did after His resurrection. And then He'll say with a very slight, cultured kind of smile: "Duncan, I'm Jesus…". Who knows how it will be. But if you love Him, you'll fantasize of that moment, as you love His appearing.

13:9 *Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings. For it is good that the heart be established by grace- not with food laws, which have not profited those who have been so occupied with them*- The Hebrews were indeed being carried away and back to Judaism. But if we have known grace, the certainty of salvation in Christ, looking forward 'boldly' to future eternity with Him, then our heart will be stable; the hope we have will be as an anchor of the soul. Our heart will be stable.

It's easy to assume that the arguments about "regulations about food" in the first century hinged about what *types* of food should be eaten, i.e. whether the Mosaic dietary laws should be observed or not. But the angst about "food" was more passionately about *with whom* you ate. Peter explains in Acts 11:3 how utterly radical it was for a Jew to eat with a Gentile. Bearing this in mind, the way Jew and Gentile Christians ate together at the Lord's supper would've been a breathtaking witness of unity to the watching world. And yet ultimately, Jew and Gentile parted company and the church divided, laying itself wide open to imbalance and every manner of practical and doctrinal corruption as a result. The problem was that the Jews

understood 'eating together' as a sign of agreement, and a sign that you accepted those at your table as morally pure. The Lord's 'table manners' were of course purposefully the opposite of this approach. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue With Trypho* 47.2-3) mentions how the Jewish Christians would only eat with Gentile Christians on the basis that the Gentiles firstly adopted a Jewish way of life. And this is the nub of the problem- demanding that those at your table are like you, seeing eating together as a sign that the other has accepted your positions about everything. The similarities with parts of the 21st century church are uncanny.

13:10 *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat*- As noted on :9, the arguments about "food" were more about with whom one ate. In the same way as the Jews were connected with the altar by reason of eating what was upon it, so all who are connected with the Christ-altar (Heb. 13:10) show this by eating of the memorial table. If we deny the breaking of bread to brethren, we are stating that they are outside covenant relationship with God, that they have no part in Israel. The argument here is not that the priests or Judaists were forbidden from breaking bread with Christians. Rather was it that they considered that they partook with the literal altar and thereby as it were fellowshipped the tabernacle system as a whole; they themselves denied themselves the right or [Gk.] authority to eat at any other altar. For Judaism was exclusive; if you were partakers of the Jerusalem temple altar, you were not allowed to partake of any other altar. And so they themselves declared that they had no authority to eat of the Christ altar. Return to the temple system was therefore a radical separation of themselves from fellowship with Christ, for Judaism had become so exclusive. Initially, Christianity could exist as a sect within Judaism, but Judaism soon began to exclude Christians, and the time came as the Lord predicted when Christians would be cast out of the synagogue system.

However as explained on :11, it is the day of atonement ritual which is in view; and those who kept the Mosaic laws had no right to eat of the sin offering whose blood brought atonement. But Christian worshippers do.

13:11 *For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the Holy Place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside of the camp*- The sin offering at the day of atonement, which is the situation in view throughout Hebrews, could not be eaten of by the priest nor worshippers. Its blood was important, but the body was burnt and not eaten. Yet Christians by going outside of the camp of Israel and the tabernacle system could eat of that ultimate sacrifice.

13:12 *Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside of the gate*- The reference is to the day of atonement ritual. "The people" are no longer natural Israel but those who believe in His blood and are sanctified even in their consciences, cleansed from all sin. Bu "sanctify" is the word used by the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel (Ex. 28:41). If we reject the call to priesthood today, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us. The Lord's death was not within the temple system; it was outside the city gate.

13:13 *Let us therefore go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach*- We recall Simon carrying the Lord's cross in the sad procession which went outside the camp of Jerusalem to Golgotha; and he becomes a type of us. See on Mt. 27:32; Jn. 8:56.

When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp- thus making Joshua

symbolic of us all.
We are to go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach, his 'having it cast in the teeth' (Gk.; Heb. 13:13). *We* may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5,6). In this especially, Joshua is our example.

The call to even now go to Him outside the camp speaks as if He is still there, outside the city gates, and we shoulder our crosses and His reproach as He walked the Via Dolorosa, and go out to be crucified next to Him, as we endure being fools for Christ's sake in our worldly decisions. It's a rather strange idea, at first consideration. But His sufferings are ongoing. The cross is still there- wherever we go, and however far we fall away from Him. And the implication appears to be that the Hebrews had already returned within the camp of the temple system, and were being asked to come out from it, to Golgotha.

"Without the camp" is full of Old Testament allusion. The cross convicts of sin, for we are impelled by it to follow Christ in going forth "without the camp", following the path of the leper who had to go forth without the camp (Lev. 13:46).

We'd sooner skip over the words of Deuteronomy 23:12-13 than analyze them closely: "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith". Yet there can be no doubt that this is one of the source passages for the words of Hebrews 13:13: "Let us go forth therefore unto him (Jesus) without the camp, bearing his reproach". When the Israelite soldier had a call of nature, he went forth "without the camp", doubtless with a sense of sheepishness as he carried his spear-cum-spade with him. Everyone knew what he was doing. This commonplace incident is picked up by the Spirit and made relevant to the Jewish Christians going forth from the camp of Israel, carrying with them the obvious reproach of the cross of Christ.

13:14- see on Eph. 2:19.

For we do not have here a permanent city, but we seek after one which is yet to come- The exodus of people from Jerusalem to Golgotha was seen as symptomatic of how we as God's people, as Abraham, are ever on the move, looking for a permanence and stability that is yet ahead for us in literal terms (11:10). Jerusalem with its apparent solidity was not a permanent city, it was about to be destroyed. The Jerusalem yet to come is the community of believers whose memories / spirits are in God's memory, who shall in symbolic terms come from heaven to earth at the Lord' return. And the apparent solidity of secular life is likewise far from permanent.

13:15- see on 1 Pet. 2:5.

Through him, therefore, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name- Mosaic sacrifice could never be continual; the whole nature of the rituals precluded that. But with such a priest as the Lord Jesus, we can continually offer the sacrifice of praise, rather than animals. The praise is for the certainty of our salvation and for the certainty of our forgiveness; for "confession" can mean just that, confession of sin. Our praise is for the forgiveness of sin confessed, celebrated in the peace offering.

The peace offering was offered with unleavened cakes as was the Passover. The bitterness of sin was to be ever remembered, amidst the joy of peace with God. The

description of the peace offering as “the sacrifice of thanksgiving" is alluded to in Heb. 13:15: "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God"- praise and thanks for our spiritual peace with God, our forgiveness through His grace.

True sacrifice is praise of God; thus Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac was "praise" (Gen. 22:5). Israel in their repentance "will account our lips as calves" (Hos. 14:3 LXX, RVmg.), i.e. as sacrifices. The "fruit of the lips" there was repentance. Which is why Paul says that we "make confession to his name" with the fruit of our lips (13:15 RV). Continually we should offer this sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the thankfulness that wells up from knowing we are forgiven, the joy born of regular, meaningful repentance. And we do this "by" or 'on account of' the sacrifice of Jesus for us, which enables this forgiveness and thereby repentance (Heb. 13:12,15). "Continually" in itself suggests that "praise" does not mean singing or musical expression. This "sacrifice of praise" is a quotation from Jer. 33:11, which describes our offering "the sacrifice of praise... for his mercy" at the beginning of the Kingdom. Praise will [and does] bring forth sacrifice / action. Yet " praise" here is the same Hebrew word translated " thanksgiving" ; and the sacrifice of thanksgiving was the peace offering, a commemoration of our free conscience and the peace of sin forgiven (Lev. 7:12-15). If we seriously confess our sins and believe in forgiveness, we should be experiencing a foretaste of the praise we will be offering at the start of the Kingdom, as we embark upon eternity. Our offering of this sacrifice of praise will be "continual" if we continually maintain a good conscience through the confession of our sins. This is surely a high standard to have placed before us: to *continually* confess our sins, to *continually* receive God's mercy, and therefore to live *continually* in a spirit of grateful praise. The way David praises God so ecstatically for immutable things and principles (e.g. His character) is a great example in this (e.g. Ps. 33:3-5); our tendency is to only seriously praise God when He resolves the unexpected crises of life.

The Name of God of itself elicits repentance. Faced with the wonder of who He is, we can’t be passive to it. We realize and are convicted of our sin by the very reality of who He is, was and shall be. Heb. 13:15 speaks of the fruit of our lips, giving confession to His Name. The “fruit of lips” in Hos. 14:2 RVmg. to which the writer alludes is clearly enough, in the context, the confession of sin. And the context in Heb. 13:12 is that Christ’s blood was shed to sanctify us. That declaration of the Name elicits a confession of sin, albeit in words of praise, to His Name. Mic. 6:9 has the same theme. When the Lord’s voice calls to the city demanding repentance, “the man of wisdom shall see [perceive] thy name”- i.e. repent. We come to know God's Name in practice through the cycles of sin-repentance-forgiveness by God which we all pass through. It is through this process that we come to know the very essence of God's Name. Thus Is. 43:25 LXX: "I am '"I AM", who erases your iniquities". We come to know His Name, that it really *is* ("I am") all about forgiveness and salvation of sinners. See on Eph. 3:15.

13:16 *But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*- This was a prompt to remember the early days of the Jerusalem church, when the members shared their possessions. In the immediate context here we have been reminded of the Lord's sacrifice and our partaking in it. But there is to be a practical response to that, in sharing what we have rather than solely partaking in the sharing of the Lord Jesus.

The letter to the Hebrew Christians describes salvation and the Kingdom with the idea of inheritance. The believers had possessions (Heb. 10:34), had been generous to

others (Heb. 6:10), and yet needed the exhortation to "not live for money; be content with what you have" (Heb. 13:5) and to "share what you have with others" (Heb. 13:16). We could surmise that this audience weren't unlike many of us today- not overly wealthy, but sorely tempted to be obsessed by possessions and material advantage. And to them, as to us, the writer emphasizes that salvation in Christ is the ultimate inheritance or possession (Heb. 1:2,4,14, 6:12,17; 9:15; 11:7; 12:17); this is the ultimate "profit" (Heb. 13:17). Hence Esau was quoted as an example- he gave up his inheritance for the sake of a material meal (Heb. 12:15-17). The *eternal* inheritance which is promised to us in the Gospel, rooted as it is in the promises to the Jewish fathers, should make us not seek for great material inheritance in this present world.

13:17 *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive; for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you*- Given the apostasy of the Jerusalem church and their lack of support for Paul and his positions, this was surely an attempt by Paul even from prison in Rome to yet ingratiate himself to the Jerusalem leadership.

Elders must give an account for their flock as a shepherd must for his sheep- implying that there will be a 'going through' with them of all in their care. The drunken steward was condemned because he failed to feed the rest of the household and beat them. If the capricious behaviour of the flock makes the shepherd watch out for them "with grief", with groaning and heaviness, then this is not profitable for us the sheep. For they will not shepherd us well if all the time they are grieved by our wayward behaviour and need to restrain all the time rather than lead forward.

13:18 *Pray for us. For we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honourably in all things*- The prayer was for Paul's from prison (:19). Paul's sense of injustice at his incarceration comes through so often, and again here. His conscience had been cleansed in Christ, as he had previously taught in this letter; he felt no guilt over his sins as they had truly been dealt with. A lesser faith in the Lord's sacrifice would have surely led him to consider his imprisonment as a just reward for the bad life he had previously lived, involving as it did torture and murder of civilians.

The argument seems to imply that the more they prayed, the sooner he would be released from prison. Thus prayer can hasten things, given certain preconditions are fulfilled. So it is in our experiences, and so it may be with the Lord’s return.
It was accepted in Judaism, as well as in many other contemporary religions, that faithful saints [e.g. the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets etc, in Judaism’s case] could intercede for the people. Yet in the New Testament, *all* believers are urged to intercede for each other, even to the point of seeking to gain forgiveness for others’ sins (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18; James 5:15). They were *all* to do this vital work. The radical nature of this can easily be overlooked by us, reading from this distance.

13:19 *And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner*- As noted on :18, Paul felt that the answer to his prayers depended upon how many others were praying for him. Revelation uses a similar idea in visualizing a situation where there is enough incense arising to trigger a response from Heaven. This in God's wisdom is how prayer operates, so that we share our situations with others and urge their prayers for us, and we too pray for others. This explains why we cannot be Christians in splendid isolation from others, but rather active communion and prayer for each other are a vital part of our collective lives.

I suggested in commentary on Acts that Paul was not warmly received by the Jerusalem church on his last visit there, and it would appear that his arrest and imprisonment there was partly due to Jewish Christian elements collaborating with the temple system. Yet Paul wishes to be restored to them; he intended after release from prison to return to see them in Jerusalem again. His fervour for their spiritual strength and holding on in faith is remarkable after such betrayals.

13:20 *Now the God of peace, who brought from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, through the blood of an eternal covenant*- The idea of "peace" speaks of peace between believers as well as with God; and this would be the context provided by :19, where as noted there, Paul has in view the restoration of his relationship with the Jerusalem church. God is the author of peace both with Him and within His people on account of the blood, resurrection and covenant relationship of the Lord Jesus. "*Our* Lord Jesus" is another attempt to demonstrate that they had in common a joint acceptance of Jesus as "Lord"; even though it would seem many amongst the Hebrew Christians were losing that sense of His exaltation. The references to the Lord's resurrection, His blood and the eternal new covenant pave the way for the desire in :21 that God would continue working within them. For it was the Lord's death and resurrection which brought into effect the new covenant for those in Him, with its promise of the blessing of being spiritually transformed within.

"In the blood of an eternal covenant" (Gk., through the power of the blood) is a hard phrase to understand if we isolate it from the rest of the verse. The GNB gives the best general sense: "God has raised from death our Lord Jesus, who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep as the result of his blood, by which the eternal covenant is sealed". The Lord's qualification as the supreme elder was on account of His death. The Abrahamic covenant is the new covenant of eternal inheritance (see on 9:15), but this was sealed, brought into operation for us and guaranteed, by the Lord's death. The connection between the covenant and God's people as sheep, shepherded by God through Messiah, is made clearly throughout Ezekiel 34. The sheep of Israel shall be led by the shepherd into an eternal covenant. This is true of all the Lord's sheep today as it will be for natural Israel in the last days.

13:21 *Perfect you in every good thing to do His will; working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen*- We work God’s will, and He works in us (Gk.). There is a mutuality between God and man. The new covenant involves the blessing of the Spirit, preparing us, perfecting and maturing us, so that we might do God's will in practice. But all this is predicated upon the ongoing work of the Lord Jesus within us. It is the internal gift of the Spirit through which God works within us (Eph. 3:20), and this is an outflow of the new covenant (:20). The "Amen" brings to a close the sermon we have transcripted here (see on :22); and the final appeal to glorify the Lord Jesus would be an appropriate end to breaking of bread sermon.

13:22 *But I urge you, brothers, bear with this word of encouragement; for I have written to you in few words*- I suggest that the letter to the Hebrews is actually a breaking of bread sermon first given by Paul to the Jerusalem ecclesia, against a background of Judaist pressure to return to the Law, and also bearing in mind some specific moral and doctrinal problems which were in the ecclesia; see on 1:1. If you read it through out loud, the "letter" takes about 45 minutes. The last few verses seem to be 'tacked on' to turn it into a letter. Paul asks them to "suffer the word of

exhortation" (Heb. 13:22 AV), although, he says, it was a brief one. This would imply that usually "the word of exhortation" was a lot longer. Remember how Paul exhorted all night at Troas at the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7-9).

There is evidence that the early breaking of bread service was based upon the Synagogue Sabbath service. Heb. 13:17,24 speak of "them that have the rule over you" , the language of the 'ruler of the synagogue' (cp. Lk. 8:49; 13:14; Acts 18:8). There were weekly portions of readings which were read, similar to our *Bible Companion* (1) and then expounded by the Rabbi and any others who would like to offer a "word of exhortation" (Acts 13:15). Acts 13:15 is the only other place apart from Heb. 13:22 that "the word of exhortation" occurs. It is clearly a synagogue phrase. It is possible that "suffer the word of exhortation" was also a Synagogue phrase, said at the end of the 'exhortation' on the Sabbath. This suggests that the whole of Hebrews was a "word of exhortation" at a Sabbath breaking of bread (probably this was the day the Jewish ecclesias met in Jerusalem), being a commentary on the readings for that week (perhaps the Melchizedek passages and parts of the Law), constantly bringing the point around to the death of the Lord Jesus. In this, Hebrews is an ideal sermon: it continually comes around to the work of Christ.

Hebrews is also a series of quotations and allusions (over half the sermon is comprised of these), interspersed with commentary and brief practical exhortation (e.g. to disfellowship false teachers, 12:15,16), all tied together around the theme of Christ's sacrifice and our response to it. Our sermons should be Bible based, after this same pattern. This is surely the way to construct sermons: re-reading verses from the chapters in the readings, commenting on them, bringing it all round to the work of Christ. A recurring theme of the Hebrews sermon is a reminding of the hearers of the reality of their future reward, made sure by Christ's work (4:9; 5:9; 6:10,19; 9:28; 10:34; 11:40; 12:10). This should surely be a theme embedded in our sermons: the personal Hope of the Kingdom, made sure for us by the work of Christ.

So much in Hebrews is obviously relevant to the memorial meeting. The wine represents the blood of the new covenant. That new covenant is repeated in 8:10,11; and the word "covenant" occurs 14 times, and the parallel "testament" 7 times. The blood of the covenant is explicitly referred to in 7:22; 8:6; 9:1 and 13:20. 12:24-26 personifies that blood as a mighty voice speaking to us, manifesting the voice of God, capable of shaking Heaven and earth. This is truly the power of appeal behind a consideration of Christ's blood, as symbolised in the wine. There are 22 references to "blood", 4 to “body", 8 to "sacrifice" i.e. the body of the animal, and 9 to "offering", also a reference to the body of the animal. The breaking of bread is designed to remember the body and blood of our Lord's sacrifice. And this is exactly the theme of Hebrews. Yet at the same time as doing this, Paul was getting over his specific point to the Jerusalem ecclesia: the utter supremacy of Christ's sacrifice ought to obviate the need for any other theory of reconciliation to God. If only we could exhort like this: make the specific points we need to make under the umbrella of a *sustained* emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ.

1 Cor. 10:17,21 (probably an epistle known to the Jerusalem ecclesia) speaks of us being *partakers* of the one bread at the breaking of bread, *partaking* of the Lord's table there. The same word is used in Heb. 3:14 concerning being *partakers* of Christ, again suggesting that Hebrews was first spoken in a breaking of bread context. The

same word occurs in Heb. 12:8: we are *partakers* of Christ's sufferings. We are Christ's *partakers* (AV "fellows"; 1:9); Christ *partakes* of our nature (2:14). Yet we are only ultimately *partakers* of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence (3:14). All these ideas are brought together in our *partaking* of the emblems of Christ at the memorial meeting. In them, Paul is reasoning, we should see our partaking of Christ's sufferings as a response to His partaking of our nature, and thereby our partaking of the promised reward, the "heavenly calling" (3:1).

Oral Style

The references to "let us" do this or that are all so appropriate to a verbal sermon, encouraging the listeners to respond to the work of Christ. "We see Jesus" (2:9), "Consider... Jesus" (3:1; 7:4; 12:3) would fit in well to the context of a sermon given with the emblems before the audience. "Concerning whom in our discourse..." (Heb. 5:11 Diaglott) would certainly fit in to an oral discourse. “And, so to say…" (Heb. 7:9 RV) is another example. Saying above, Sacrifice and offering…" (Heb. 10:8 RV) sounds as if a scroll is being read and quotation made from passages “above" in the scroll. "Of the things which we have *spoken* (RV we are saying) this is the sum" (8:1) is language more appropriate to a transcript of an address than to a written composition. "As I may so say" (7:9) is another such example. "One in a certain place..." (2:6) is an odd way to write in a formal letter. Yet it fits in if this is a transcript of a sermon; it's the sort of thing you would say verbally when you know your audience can't turn up the passage. The word of exhortation contained in Hebrews was in "few words" (13:22); but this is a bad translation. Strong defines it as meaning "a short time, for a little while" (2)- i.e. Paul is saying 'It won't take long in terms of time to hear this, but consider the points carefully'. Note that the RV speaks of “suffer the exhortation", unlike AV “the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22). One almost gets the impression that Paul is speaking with great constraints on his time: "the cherubim... of which we cannot now speak particularly... what shall I more say? for the time is failing me, running out" (Heb. 9:5; 11:32 Gk.). These sort of comments would surely be irrelevant in a written letter. But as a transcript of a live sermon, they make perfect sense. M. R. Vincent in his *Word Studies Of The NT* observed in Hebrews "a rhythmical structure of sentences (with) sonorous compounds", as if what is written had first been spoken.

"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God" (13:15) would be appropriate to communal praise at a memorial meeting. Likewise "Let us draw near... we draw nigh... let us come boldly before the throne of grace" (4:16; 7:19) is appropriate to the congregation coming before God in collective and private prayer, culminating in the 'drawing nigh' of taking the emblems (cp. the idea of 'coming to God' in 11:6). The emphasis on the power of Christ as a mediator (7:25; 9:24) would be appropriate in this context of rallying the congregation's faith in their prayers and confessions of sin. The encouragement to "exhort one another *daily*" (3:13; 10:25) takes on a special relevance if said at the breaking of bread; Paul would have been implying: 'Don't just listen to me exhorting you today, or a brother doing it once a week; you must *all* exhort each other, every day, not just on Shabbat!'.

Self Examination

There is another sustained theme in this sermon, in addition to all the stress on our Lord's sacrifice. It is the repeated warning as to the likelihood of apostasy (2:1-3; 3:12; 4:1; 6:4-8; 10:26-30,38; 12:15-17,25,27) and the possibility of abusing the

blood of Christ (10:26-30)- exactly after the pattern of 1 Cor. 11:26-30, which explicitly makes this warning in the context of the breaking of bread. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye [again, oral style], shall he be thought worthy, who hath...counted the blood of the covenant... as unholy thing?" (Heb. 11:29) is almost allusive to 1 Cor. 11:29, warning of drinking damnation to oneself through an incorrect attitude to the memorial cup. This kind of emphasis in a 45 minute sermon wouldn't go down well in a Western church. Yet the more we consider the wonder of the work of Christ, the more we will be driven to consider our own weakness, and the need to "hold fast" our connection with it. This is why we should examine ourselves at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:28). "Hold on" is another related theme (3:6,14; 4:14; 10:23). And here and there we find brief, specific practical warnings which were doubtless especially relevant to the initial audience. It's amazing that Paul got so much in 45 minutes. Yet this is what is possible. Note that all the exhortations in Hebrews, the comfort, the warnings, are all an outcome of a consideration of first principles, especially relating to the atonement. Thus Paul turns the fact that Christ is our *representative* round to teach the need for unity amongst us whom He represents (2:11).

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (3:12) is very relevant to a call for self-examination in the presence of the emblems. "Let us" boldly ask for forgiveness (4:16) could be read in this context too. The reminder that Christ examines us, that we are naked and opened in His sight, would have encouraged them to be open with him in their self-examination (4:12). Paul reminds them of their initial conversion (3:6,14; 6:11; 10:22,32), in the same way as the Passover was intended to provoke national and personal self-examination, looking back to their spiritual beginnings at the Red Sea (cp. baptism). He encourages them with a reminder that Christ is such a powerful priest that He can really cleanse our conscience (9:14; 10:2,22); the blood of the *new* covenant can destroy an evil conscience (10:22 cp. 9:20). Therefore, Paul reasons, with this clear conscience, "let us draw near"- to the emblems, to the reality of our relationship with God. Again we see a marked emphasis on the need for self-examination at the breaking of bread.

Having created this background of self-examination, Paul is able to more easily hand out explicit rebuke; e.g. "You are dull of hearing" (5:11-14; 12:5). Yet at the same time Paul expressed a very confident view of his audience; e.g. "We are persuaded better things of you" (6:9; 10:38,39). This is an important aspect of exhortation; to convey to the brethren and sisters the fact that we genuinely respect them as brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, with the sure Hope and possibility of salvation.
There is an emphasis on the good works which a true understanding of the first principles should bring (4:11; 9:14; 10:24; 12:28). This is exactly in harmony with the idea presented above: that exposition of first principle doctrine is the basis for practical exposition. This emphasis on the need for works in response to the doctrines of the atonement could suggest that Paul expected the congregation to make resolves at the breaking of bread concerning their future behaviour. Maybe this is behind his appeal for them to appreciate that Christ offers our works to God as the priests did the sacrifices in the past (5:1; 8:3,4; 9:9).

Personal Relevance
The Hebrews sermon is shot through with internal connections; just as our preaching sessions should constantly refer back to each other. Paul is trying to get the brethren

and sisters to see that if they respond to his exhortations as they should, they will be connected in spirit with the faithful heroes of the Old Testament; they will become connected with "the spirits of just men made perfect" (12:23). Thus Noah was moved with fear, Paul says (11:7), just as we should be (4:1); Sarah "judged him faithful who had promised" (11:11), just as we should (10:23); as Moses bore the reproach of Christ (11:26), so should we (13:13). The breaking of bread is the equivalent of the Passover under the Old Covenant; therefore 11:28 highlights how Moses kept the Passover in faith as to the power of the sprinkled blood of the lamb. The implication is that if we take the wine with a similar faith in Christ's blood, we will come become united with the spirit of Moses.

There are many of these inter-connections within Hebrews. Our "afflictions" (10:32) uses the same word translated " suffering" in the context of Christ's sufferings (2:9,10); we are to " endure" (10:32) as Christ " endured" the shame of the cross (12:2,3 same word). Through these inter-connections, Paul is trying to make the sufferings of Christ relevant to them. We may never hope to achieve as much as Paul did in those 45 minutes. But the principles remain for us to try to copy. Therefore we should try not to offer unconnected comments on the readings, we should seek to tie them together under the umbrella of the work of the Lord Jesus, we should relate His sufferings to those of our brethren and sisters, we should seek to inspire them with the fact that they are fellowshipping the hope of the faithful recorded in the Bible records.

A Pattern For Us

The sermon to the Hebrews becomes more significant for us as we consider its likely background. In his book The Jewish War, Josephus explains in detail how the Jews in Palestine revolted against the Romans in AD66-70. Initially, everything went well for them. The Romans were defeated at the foot of the temple mount, the legions of Cestius Gallus were defeated, and the Jewish zealots attributed these successes to God’s rewarding of their loyalty to the Law. They purified and rededicated the temple, and appointed a High Priest who was not a collaborator with Rome. The zealots spoke of the liberation of Israel in strong religious terms; there was a great wave of enthusiasm for the Law. It seems that Hebrew Christians were caught up in this revival, and of course all Jews were expected to take up arms and fight. The exhortation to the Hebrews therefore stressed the passing of the Mosaic Law, the need to rally around Christ as the true altar and the only true, pure High Priest (Heb. 4:14; 10:19-25; 13:10). There was the command to move outside the camp of Israel, i.e. Jerusalem (Heb. 13:13). And the institutions of the temple, which the Jewish nationalists were so glorifying, are shown to be of no value compared to the blood of Christ. The references to the temptations of Jesus (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15) may be references back to the wilderness temptations, where He faced the same choice that the Jewish Christians had- to opt for a Kingdom here and now, throwing off the Roman yoke; or to hold fast our faith in the Kingdom which is surely to come. The speaker / writer to the Hebrew Christians doesn’t specifically tackle the issues affecting them in bald terms. He instead sets a masterful example of how we should approach issues and weaknesses which need our comment. He adopts a Christ-centred and Biblical approach, demonstrating that he is exactly aware of the issues which face them, and reasoning from unshakeable principles towards specific applications of them.

The Final Appeal

All good sermons have a strong final appeal and focus on the sacrifice of Christ. Heb. 12:23 appears grammatically and structurally to be a climax: "Ye are come unto... the general assembly and church of the firstborn". It is possible to understand this 'general assembly' as a reference to the combined ecclesia present at the breaking of bread. Indeed the Orthodox churches use this verse in this sense in their eucharist liturgy, rendering it "the festival of the firstborn" (3). Chapter 13 contains a series of brief practical exhortations just before the final appeal to home in on the body and blood of our Lord. 13:10 then goes on to compare us to the priests eating the sacrifice on the altar; a picture so appropriate to partaking the emblems at the memorial meeting. 13:11-15 is surely a fitting climax to the sermon, as the audience prepared to take the emblems: "The *bodies* of those beasts...Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own *blood, suffered*...let us go forth therefore unto Him, bearing his reproach... by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually* (not just at this meeting)" . Notice the emphasis on the *body* and *blood* of Christ, and an appeal for our response in praise rather than further self-examination. The whole sermon started with God (the very first word in 1:1), and ends with God; reflecting the fact that Christ's work is a manifestation of God, and is intended to bring us to the Father, and eternally reconcile us with Him.
Indeed, a fair case can be made that most of the NT epistles are in fact based upon sermons read out at the breaking of bread service. Given that most Christians would have been illiterate, the memorial meeting would have been the logical time and place to read out the latest letter from Paul or Peter, in any case (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Consider how Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 5:3-5 as if he is present with them at their memorial meeting ["ye being gathered together..."]. Many of the endings and greetings of the letters have some reference to the memorial meeting. The commands to pray and kiss each other which conclude some of the letters must be compared to the information we find in Justin Martyr's description of the early communion meetings: "When we have ceased from prayer, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president bread and a cup of wine" (*Apology* I, 65). The strange ending of 1 Corinthians 16:20-24 is an obvious allusion to the passage in the *Didache*, describing the words spoken at the breaking of bread meetings in the first century: "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha...Amen". According to the *Didache*, the president at the memorial meeting said: " If any man is holy, let him come; if any be not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen". Indeed, it is possible that the book of Revelation is a series of prophecies initially given at ecclesial gatherings. The whole book is punctuated by passages of liturgy and worship (4).

The evidence provided here that ‘Hebrews’ was a sermon at the breaking of bread is to me quite strong. As we've said, in an oral culture of illiterate converts, it is to be expected that the majority of Paul or Peter’s letters would’ve been read aloud to the assembled congregations when they gathered for worship. There is reference to a “holy kiss” at the end of some of the letters (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). This was understood by Justin, Tertullian and Hippolytus to be a signal to the hearers that now the sermon had ended, and they were to kiss each other and begin partaking of the Lord’s supper (5). Whether that’s the case or not, there’s some major homework here for the enthusiast- to study each of the New Testament letters as a sermon appropriate to the breaking of bread service.

Notes

(1) See Joe Hill, 'An Ancient Bible Companion', *Tidings*, series 1994/5.
(2) The only other times this construction occurs is in Heb. 2:7,9, where we read that Christ was for "a little while" (RV mg.) lower than Angels.
(3) Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom Of Morality* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996) p. 107.
(4) This idea is developed further in Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1953).
(5) References provided in Martin Hengel, *Studies In The Gospel Of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985) p. 176.

13:23- see on 1 Thess. 2:17.

Be informed that our brother Timothy has been set at liberty; along with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you- This is a strong indication that Paul was the author, writing from Italy (:24), where it seems Timothy was also imprisoned. Paul expressed his concern for the situation in Jerusalem by sending Timothy to them. His begging of Timothy to come to him in 2 Tim. 4 was therefore asking a fair favour of Timothy, seeing timid Timothy had apparently been imprisoned with Paul at some stage. Although it has to be said that there is no specific implication that the place of Timothy's imprisonment was Rome.

13:24 *Greet all those that have the rule over you, and all the saints*- Paul recognizes their elders (see on :17), but parallels the elders with the church membership.

They of Italy greet you- This is significant in that we get the impression from 2 Tim. 4 that the Rome ecclesia had come to ignore Paul, so that he effectively stood alone.

13:25 *Grace be with you all. Amen*- There is significance in the "all", because it's clear from the letter that some of the Hebrew Christians had returned to the temple cult. And I noted in commentary on Acts that there were apparently elements within the Jerusalem church who collaborated with the Jewish 'satan' to get Paul arrested and imprisoned. But we should likewise wish grace, the experience of God's gift working within to transform us, to all who have named the name of Christ; no matter how far they have apparently strayed from Him or personally turned against us.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: JAMES

JAMES

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

JAMES CHAPTER 1

1:1 *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*- A good case can be made that James was written as a follow up to the Council of Jerusalem. It's interesting to observe all the connections between the letter of James and the Acts 15 council. Note some of the more obvious: The salutation (James 1:1 = Acts 15:34); "Listen, my brothers" (James 2:5 = Acts 15:13); "The name which was called upon you" (James 2:7 = Acts 15:17); "Keep unspotted from the world" (James 1:27 = Acts 15:29); and there are at least three Greek words which occur only in James and Acts 15 (James 1:27 = Acts 15:14; James 5:19 = Acts 15:19; James 1:16,19,25 = Acts 15:25). Perhaps the letter of James is in some way his retraction of his wrong attitude, an example of where a man comes to understand what works are really important... or perhaps it was to dissociate himself from those who are called "certain persons who came from James" (Gal. 2:12), as if he was not actually behind them. Perhaps, however, it was that James saw through church politics for what they were, and focused upon the need for real, practical spirituality, the works of faith and spirit rather than mere legalism.

The reasons for believing James to be the Lord's brother are well summarized

elsewhere; his introduction is therefore an essay in humility and not playing on human relationships as a means to assert authority, seeing he does not mention this fleshly relationship: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ". James the Lord's brother being the clear leader of the early church, it would be fitting that at least one of his letters (and Hebrews too?) be preserved. His high position of respect is indicated by Mk.15:40 describing a "James the less"- i.e. than the great James the Lord's brother. It was not until after James' death that the Gospel mushroomed among the Gentiles, which again points to a basically Jewish readership being catered for. The Lord's brothers having been sceptical of him during his ministry (Jn.7:3-5), James' depth of appreciation must have developed at lightning speed for him to write this epistle at a relatively early date. Two outstanding characteristics of James are the constant allusions to previous Scripture, especially the Gospels and Proverbs, and the intensely practical understanding of the moment by moment spiritual battle which we all face. It is worth noting that the most senior brother of the early church scored highly on these points. His humility in calling himself a servant of the Lord Jesus is remarkable- Paul could legitimately lay weight to his reasoning by saying he had seen Christ in the flesh (1 Cor.9:1; 2 Cor.5:16); how much more so could James have gently pointed out his "(knowing) Christ after the flesh"?

To the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion- James as the elder of the Jerusalem church was writing to the thousands whom Peter had baptized in Jerusalem- who had now fled into exile. They were 'dispersed' just as Judah had been dispersed by the Babylonians; hinting that the Jerusalem authorities were in fact a kind of "Babylon", which image is developed in Revelation. He assures them that they are indeed spiritual Israel, the twelve tribes before God. Even if orthodox Judaism had excommunicated them from "Israel".

Greeting- "Greeting" means literally 'I wish you joy'. James then goes on to define what that joy is: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations". And so we are introduced to the basic theme of James- the machinery of human nature and our evil desires, and how to overcome them. Contrary to how it is often read, the temptations here are spiritual temptations- so the context of the chapter and letter require. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (NIV "evil desire"), and enticed" (1:14). The real temptations in life are to give way to our evil desires; the trials of life like illness or disaster may not necessarily tempt us so strongly in this way. It is easy to think that 'temptation' refers to these 'physical' trials, and to see those problems as things in themselves to be bravely endured. But whether we lose a leg or miss a bus, the same spiritual temptation of frustration- or whatever- may be presented to each sufferer. The flesh tends to make a big difference between physical and spiritual temptations; but to God- and James- the spiritual temptations are of paramount importance; whatever

physical temptations we have are not for their own sake but to create the situation which our evil desires will use to tempt us spiritually.

1:2 *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations*- The question is whether the "temptations" refer to tests or trials; or to spiritual temptations. Both approaches make sense; but we note that the same word is to be used in :14 of "temptation" in the sense of moral, internal, spiritual temptation. And a related phrase is used in 1 Tim. 6:9 about not 'falling into temptation' in a moral, spiritual sense. The word for "fall" is often used in a moral sense, e.g. 'falling into the ditch' of spiritual failure (Lk. 6:39), Israel "stumbled that they should fall" (Rom. 11:11,22), we are to take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 4:11); and James himself uses the term in speaking of falling into condemnation (James 5:12). We immediately get the challenge to see life differently to people in the world- for whom any test, any interruption to their life's path, is a tragedy. But we are to rejoice in these moments. This is a radically different worldview. The parallel passage in 1 Peter definitely implies that the dispersed Jewish Christians were enduring literal tests.

We must pray not to be led into temptation (Mt. 6:13); but when we fall into such temptation (s.w.), count it all joy, James says (1:2). The exercise of praying not to experience those temptations was for our spiritual benefit, and God is willing that it should be so. James exhorts us to count falling into spiritual temptation as a joy; instead of the 'here we go again...', 'sin after sin' kind of attitude descending on us as we sense such temptations approaching. We must instead rejoice that here is another opportunity to please God on the highest level possible; to have an evil desire in your heart and to overcome it. The idea of falling ("When you fall...") may create the idea of giving way to the temptations. But there may be some degree to which we fall a little way before we are tempted: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away (from his normal safe spiritual self, abiding in Christ) of his own lust" (1:14). There is surely no real temptation if the evil desire appears so unattractive as to not even lead us part way towards realizing it. Thus the devil in the sense of the Lord's natural desires (Heb. 4:15 cp. James 1:14,15) led Jesus away from His own supreme spirituality to tempt him.

1:3 *Knowing that the proving of your faith works patience*- Our joy at the onset of temptation should be because we know that we have an opportunity to develop permanent spiritual fruit, if only we can respond correctly in those split seconds when the process of being drawn away and enticed is going on. The trying of our faith due to spiritual temptation is in the sense of our faith that God "is able to keep (us) from falling" (Jude 24); and also our faith in His forgiveness when we do "fall" into temptation. In the moment of temptation, whether it be from an unkind word from someone or irritation at someone's natural characteristics, our joy will be helped by our faith that God will keep us from falling, and will not lead us any further into temptation unless we go on

ourselves. However, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

It is worth drawing attention to the remarkable parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1. The infallible principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture will therefore allow more light to be shed on much of James 1. Peter's parallel to "the trying of your faith worketh patience" is "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith... tried with fire" (1 Pet. 1:6,7). Peter is talking about literal trials in this world, the persecution of the scattered Christian Jews who had fled Jerusalem. But James sees the essence of those trials as being in terms of spiritual temptation,

A heavy spirit is more likely the result of prolonged spiritual temptation than physical trials, although these were no doubt the cause of the spiritual tests. The fire therefore represents the fire of the flesh, a figure which James also uses regarding the tongue as the epitome of our evil desires (3:5,6). Thus Prov. 16:27: "An unGodly man digs up evil (out of the evil treasure of his heart- or is this the basis of the wasted talent parable?): and (therefore) in his lips there is as a burning fire"; cp. too 1 Cor. 7:9. It is the constant reaction to spiritual trial that forges an acceptable character, not just the receipt of physical trial, as would be the case if the fire only represented persecution in itself. This trial of faith "works patience"- which must therefore be defined in this context as the ability to grit one's teeth in the moment of temptation, and cling on to one's faith in God's spiritual protection in the power of the word.

The interpretation of "faith" as faith in the Spirit keeping us from falling (Jude 24) is confirmed by a closer look at Rom. 5; "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations *also*"- as if he is saying that the "tribulations" had the same effect as "being justified by faith (in forgiveness), we have peace (through forgiveness) with God...we have access by faith (in forgiveness) into this grace..." (Rom. 5:1,2). So we see the equation: "Tribulations" (Rom. 5:3)= same effect as having total faith in forgiveness (Rom. 5:1,2)= "the trial of your faith" that God will help you overcome your sin (James 1:3), i.e. keep you from spiritually falling (Jude 24). In the language of Rom.5, the "experience" of patiently resisting sin gives birth to hope- confidence and a positive approach, hoping for grace in the last day. The more we overcome the hour by hour niggles of the flesh, the more humbly confident we will be of our eternal future.

1:4 *And let patience have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and entire*- Such patience results in a "perfect work... perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (1:4; note the triple emphasis of the same idea) in terms of spiritual development. The word of God has the power to make perfect (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 13:10), and we have seen its place in developing the faith and patience which James says lead us to perfection. But the "perfect work", the work that leads to perfection, may refer to how through the process

of trial and even 'falling' spiritually into temptation, being forgiven, pressing on... we shall eventually come to the great moment before the Lord's judgment seat when we are "perfect". God is not defeated by sin. Through our failures, our falling into temptations, we are led onwards to the point of final perfection when we stand faultless before His judgment seat, with exceeding joy. See on :20.

God's working is through His Spirit, working towards bringing us to that moment of perfection when we are immortalized at the last day. He has begun a good work in us, and will complete it at that day (Phil. 1:6). James is here saying that we should be part of that process, allowing patient endurance in faith to lead us to that end point. That is the point when He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself" (Phil. 3:21). He will then "perfect you in every good thing to do His will; working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb. 13:21). Thus Paul says that he labours / works according to God's working, that works mightily within him (Col. 1:29). Ephesians has much to say about this working of God within us, "that working of the strength of His might" (Eph. 1:19), "according to the working of His power... strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner " (Eph. 3:7,16). In this sense the Lord Jesus is "working with" those who believe in Him as they do His work (Mk. 16:20). But we must allow that work of perfection to proceed in our lives and hearts, and not obstruct it. The anger of man doesn't allow the righteousness of God to work; we will not be brought towards that final perfection if our own deep seated anger and bitterness stops that work (James 1:20). That work of God is the counter-work to the process of lust, sin and death which naturally works within us (:13-15). He implants His word in us, for us to respond to, which counters the pull of lust towards sin. This is the whole idea behind the call to be doers of the word and to be blessed in our doing (1:20-23). That is not so much a call for works *per se* but rather an appeal to allow God to work, and to be workers together with Him, rather than against Him.

The trial of faith leads to the development of these fruits of the Spirit; yet the word also leads to the same fruits (Jn. 15:7 cp. v.4,5). The goals of spiritual development James sets are high- contrast Paul, who frequently laments the realities of the flesh (why the different approach?). Maybe James was alluding to Christ's ultimatum "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect", Mt. 5:48. The idea of perfection occurs again in 3:2, where it applies to the man who does not offend in word, and therefore has his whole life in tight control- again, the result of a mind fully controlled by the word. In the context of sin and forgiveness, Paul's words in Rom.5 take on new meaning: "We glory in (spiritual) tribulations (cp. "Count it all joy...") also: knowing that (spiritual) tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and

experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed" (Rom. 5:3-5). "Tribulation" is therefore to be equated with "the (spiritual) trial of your faith" in James 1.

"That you may be perfect" may seem an unreasonably high target. In Eph. 4:13 Paul says that through the ministry of the Spirit (now in the word) we are on the way to the "perfect man" state; he implies that he too is on that journey ("till we all come"). Yet in Phil. 3:12-17 Paul speaks as if whilst he has not yet reached that state, striving for literal perfection is the same thing as being perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after... reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize... let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded... be followers together of me" in this example of all out striving for a perfect character. Does this indicate that a state of perfection is theoretically possible for us in this life, through developing a full faith in God's total justification of us on account of our being in Christ? Thus both the word and the blood of Christ sanctify us, seeing that the word reveals and develops faith in Christ's sacrifice (Jn. 17:17; Heb.10:10-14). Both blood and water (the word- Eph.5:26) came from Christ's side on the cross.

Lacking in nothing- The allusion is surely to the Lord's words to the rich young man. This man "lacked" (s.w.) one thing if he wished to be "perfect" (Lk. 18:22). What he lacked was not so much the need to give his wealth to the poor; but the humility to throw himself at the Lord's feet, admitting 'Sorry, I can't be perfect', so that he would be accepted by grace, and have perfection imputed to him. He lacked the 'wisdom' (:5) to do this. This is why in that context, the Lord had enquired why the man considered Him to be "good" or perfect (Mk. 10:18). What the man needed was to be "in" that perfectly good one, and have perfection imputed to him, rather than seek it through obedience to commandments. The allusion to the rich young man continue; in that we are now told to ask God for wisdom (:5), clearly alluding to what the rich young man Solomon did, preferring wisdom above wealth.

1:5 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproaching, and it shall be given him*- The allusion is to Solomon, asking for wisdom instead of worldly advantage. His right choice is set up as our pattern. The context requires that "wisdom" is associated with the faith and perfection which James well anticipates his readers would complain they lacked. We have seen that the word is the source of such faith, perfection and endurance; it seems fair to equate wisdom with the word. We will see by and by that James makes frequent reference to Proverbs- and in that book wisdom is almost a synonym for the word, in the local instance the Law of Moses, upon which Proverbs is often a commentary. Again, James anticipates the natural human fear that a totally spiritual God will upbraid us for our lack of spiritual strength; but God's giving of such strength is "liberal", to whoever asks. God will not be mean in providing spiritual strength. James evidently interpreted "Ask, and it shall be

given you" (Mt. 7:7) as primarily referring to asking for spiritual strength and knowledge. Similarly "...how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things ("the Holy Spirit", Lk. 11:13) to them that ask Him?" (Mt. 7:11). These passages appear to be alluded to by James here- thus wisdom, the word, the Holy Spirit, good things, "every good gift and perfect gift" (1:17), God's spiritual help to overcome sin, are all equated. These things are further defined in 3:17 as resulting in peace and harmony. "Reproaching" can imply to taunt, to cast in the teeth. James says that *God* doesn't do that, implying some others did. No doubt he was referring to the spiritually elitist Judaizers, who would have rejoiced to mock the spiritually immature who humbly sought for spiritual strength to overcome their temptations. God expects us to crawl to Him seeking for such strength to do better. But half the time our love of true spirituality just isn't strong enough to motivate us, and we let our fear of God's holiness and righteousness make us fear His 'upbraiding'.

1:6 *But let him ask in faith, never doubting. For he that doubts is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed-* A half hearted 'Dear God please keep me from this sin I think I may well commit soon' is no good. It is easy to conceive of faith as a sense of hope and trust in God in time of physical trial. But far more is it a totality of belief that God will hold us back from sinning as the temptation starts to develop- surely the supreme way of showing faith. There can be no doubt that God is totally willing to strengthen us against temptation. He wants to perfect or complete His work in us (:4). Truly we can be "confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

There must be a connection with the later description of a controlled tongue being the force that overcomes fierce winds (3:2-4). Words being a reflection of the mind (Mt. 12:34), controlled words show a controlled mind, which is through the influence of the word. Such a man is a "perfect man" (3:2)- i.e. matured by the word (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 Cor. 13:10). Thus the only way to ask for spiritual strength is if the mind is firmly controlled by the word, which thus generates an upwards spiritual spiral- "unto every one that hath (of spiritual strength) shall (more) be given... but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Mt. 25:29). This parable of the talents must refer to spiritual knowledge and strength, and the need we have to develop (trade) the spiritual gifts we have been given. Notice how we are given the talents/ gifts of spirituality, totally at the discretion of the Master. In a similar way, the gift of wisdom in James 1:5 equates with the "good and perfect gift... from the Father... the word of truth" of 1:17,18 and the wisdom that descends from above that is pureness, peace, gentleness, mercy etc. in 3:17.

"Doubts" comes from a root meaning 'division', giving the idea of inner debate. We will see that time and again James is warning us against having a semi-spirituality, whereby

only part of our mind is totally influenced by the word, whilst other parts still retain the thinking of the flesh. James being so shot through with allusions to the Gospels, it is tempting to think that James is as it were taking a snapshot of Peter, wavering both in his physical movement and in faith as he stood on the water. Jesus did not upbraid Peter (cp. 1:5) for his request for strength and support, but was eager to satisfy it. There is also a possible connection with Eph. 4:13,14, which says that the miraculous Spirit gifts were to be possessed *until* the church reached the "perfect man" state, i.e. when the canon was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10 cp. 2 Tim. 3:16,17), and that through being in that state they would "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine... and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive". The primary reference is doubtless to the doctrine of the Judaizers. This would liken the brother in James 1 whose faith in the Lord's protection from temptation is weak, to the brother in Ephesians 4 who will not make full use of the word to remain in the "perfect man" state, and is therefore liable to be influenced by false teaching. Both brethren are weak for the same reason- not making full use of the Spirit's gift in the word. Eph. 4:13,14 implies that firmly grasping the basic doctrines of the one faith results in us not being blown about by winds. This connection with James teaches that true doctrine will have a very practical effect upon our lives; in this case, by developing a firm faith.

It's significant and instructive that the other leaders of the early church not only accept Peter's authority, but do so exactly because of how he had dealt with his weaknesses and failures. It's as if they see in his humanity a reason to elevate him in their own estimations. Thus Peter’s wavering when walking on the water is picked up by James, in one of the earliest of the New Testament letters [note the allusions to Stephen, John the Baptist, the references to Christians as still meeting in the synagogue, etc.- it has been argued by John Robinson that James was in fact the first of the epistles. It seems that the “scattered abroad” audience of James 1:1 refers to the scattering abroad of the Jewish believers in Acts 8:1]. James warns that we shouldn’t waver in faith, like a wave on the water, blown and tossed around by the wind (James 1:6). James of course had seen Peter wavering on the water; and he holds up Peter, who at that time was the senior elder of the very early church, as an example of how *not* to be. My point is that the greatness of Peter was in his example of failure and how he overcame it.

1:7 *Do not let that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord*- James constantly sets before us the need to strive for a "perfect" (complete, mature) man state, through having a mind wholly committed to the word. His black and white, "hot or cold" approach is now powerfully shown: "Let not that man (the waverer) think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (1:7). This squashes the natural human reasoning that a bit of faith in prayer will lead to a bit of response from God. Faith is an absolute

state. We either pray in faith- or with what are effectively empty words. But of course by contrast, if we do not waver, we certainly shall receive of the Lord. Again, there is another warning against semi-spirituality: having faith within certain limits, being content with expecting a small answer to our requests in accordance with our shaky faith. The way James understands human nature shines through, and it is fitting that someone of his experience and insight into the moment by moment ways of the flesh should have been the great leader of the early church. He too must have analysed his sins and temptations like we also can do. The correlation between his being such a senior brother and his evident appreciation of the wiles of the flesh must be significant; something to think about at the next ecclesial election?

1:8- see on Mt. 14:31.

He is a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways- The theme of semi-spirituality continues: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways"- i.e. all his spiritual ways. "Ways" is often used in a spiritual context in Proverbs, to which James alludes so much. The more evident allusion here is to Mt. 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for he will hate the one, and love the other. You cannot serve God and mammon". James inspired interpretation of Matthew would make this apply to our minds. One can quite easily serve two masters physically, externally; as every self-examining Christian should be all too aware. It is only in our heart that we can only serve one master. "Mammon" in the James context is thus not just material goods, but more importantly the lack of a totally spiritual mind which is behind these things. Note again the 'all or nothing' approach. While surely every reader of these words finds this somewhat worrying, tempting to conclude that this exposition is so idealistic as to be out of touch with reality, it does us no harm to reflect that ultimately in God's sight things are in black and white. As we read these words we are either in black or white with God. The ideal standard is set by Christ speaking of taking up the cross daily and following him. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Paul could say. If our conscience is tuned according to the word, we should be able to sense whether we are "double minded... wavering" or with that totality of commitment to the word in our heart, even if sometimes we falter. Considering these things should make us all recognize that spiritually we are but candles in the wind, desperately needing to make every effort to resist the winds of the flesh, and seek the shelter of Christ and His word of grace which keeps us from falling. "Double minded" means literally 'two souled', showing that the soul can refer also to the spiritual side of man, as well as the carnal. Notice how in the context James is talking about the mind being split into carnal and semi-spiritual divisions. The 'souls' referred to in the phrase 'double minded' would therefore be referring to attitudes of mind.

1:9 *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation*- The riches which exalt the poor brother are the spiritual riches contained in the word (Ps. 119:14; Prov. 3:16 etc.). A poor brother

being exalted recalls the parable about taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia so we may rise up higher at the judgement. Yet James uses the present tense- "he *is* exalted". This is one of many examples of believers being spoken of as if in prospect they are already in the Kingdom, in the same way as Israel were constituted the Kingdom of God at Sinai after their Red Sea baptism, but were not fully manifested as such politically until their entry into Canaan. Thus "The rich... *is* (present tense) made low (i.e. told to take the lower seat, as he will at judgement)... he *shall* (future) pass away" (v.10). However, this may have had a primary reference to the rich Jews of the first century being stripped of their wealth in some parts of the empire. Note that Heb.10:34 was also written to the scattered, persecuted Christian Jews whom James was addressing: "Ye... took joyfully the spoiling of your goods". If James is alluding to the parable of the wedding feast, then the reference to the poor brethren being given an honoured seating place in God's sight in this life, would have telling reference to the practice of the rich Christian Jews having their own honoured seats in the ecclesias to whom James was writing (2:3). This command to "rejoice" is in the context of v.2 speaking about rejoicing in spiritual trial. For the low brother who was to be exalted, the very thought of such greatness in the Kingdom could be a temptation to pride- and he should rejoice in the chance to fight this. '*Let* him rejoice' shows that the kind of joy James is thinking of would not come naturally, as it would if the brother was just thinking of his exaltation in this life.

1:10 *But the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away*- 1 Pet. 1:24,25 has a similar passage: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: But the word of the Lord endures for ever". The fading grass is contrasted by Peter to the enduring Word of God, and this is repeated by James. The humble brother taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia (cp. the more spiritual members being told in 2:3 "sit here under my footstool... you stand there" because all the chairs were taken by the rich) is connected with the one who asks the wisdom from God (v.5), who is not wavering or double minded, and who through the word is attaining to the perfect man state (v.4). Thus the poor in this world are rich in the faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

The figure of fading grass suggests reference back to Is. 40:5-8: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together... The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades... surely the people is grass... but the word of our God shall stand for ever". The "glory of the Lord" being revealed primarily refers to Christ's manifestation to Israel at his first coming. The preceding verses 3 and 4 describe John's preparatory work: "The voice of him that cries in the wilderness...". "All flesh" were to see the revelation of God's glory in Christ. This "all flesh" can refer to the Jews, "all" of whom went out into the wilderness to hear John's testimony regarding the

coming Christ. This is confirmed by v.7 "The (Jewish) people is grass". The "goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field" would then be a reference to the Jewish law, which was "holy, just and good" but offered a fading glory, which Paul in 2 Cor. 3:7-18 said epitomized the Law. The word of the Lord (v.5) and "the spirit of the Lord" (v.7) were to make the grass wither and pass away, although the word would remain. This pointed forward to the ending of the Jewish system and Law through the work of Christ, "the word made flesh", "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 R.V.), and the ministry of the word remaining. James seems to have this background in mind when he makes the allusion in 1:9-11 to Is.40. The rich Christian Jews of the first century who were not that humble to the power of the word may well also have been swayed by Judaist arguments. They are being likened to the "grass" of Is. 40, which represented the Jewish system which was to be replaced by a permanent, unfading system based on the word. The Messianic Ps. 102:4,11 describes our Lord as being "withered like grass", showing how in his life and death on the cross he took upon himself the punishment of apostate Israel. James is neatly exhorting them to commit themselves wholly to the word, lest the demise of the Jewish system should result in their fading away too. Yet there is also the very primary application to the materialism of this group, being obsessed by their earthly riches.

1:11 *For the sun rises with the scorching wind and withers the grass, and the flower of it falls and the beauty of its appearance perishes. So also shall the rich man fade away in his business*- This is an obvious allusion to the person who received the word and quickly "sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth", referring to the person who falls away due to temptation (Mt. 13:5,20,21). The rich members of the ecclesia had therefore only let the word enter them skin-deep; it had not penetrated far through the "earth" of the flesh. The rising of the sun can refer both to Christ's coming (Mal. 4:2) and also to trials. In a sense both these meanings were fulfilled in AD70, when the rich Jews converted just prior to AD70 fell away, having endured only "for a while". The call to let God's word fully penetrate our flesh goes out to us with great urgency, living as we do on the brink of the final period of trial, and the full coming of Christ.

"So also shall the rich man fade away in his business". "Business" is elsewhere translated "journeyings", and would connect with the reference to the itinerant Jewish traders in 4:13: "You (amongst the believers) that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain".

1:12 *Blessed is the man that endures temptation. For when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him* - Now James is giving us supreme encouragement in those moments when the decision between flesh and spirit looms large. When we endure spiritual temptation, hanging on to the spiritual side of our minds, we will at that moment receive a crown for overcoming in Heaven. Because of this, we will be given the crown of victory at the judgement (2

Tim. 4:8), which has been developed as a result of our moment by moment spiritual victories in this life. Therefore each temptation we face is like a mini-judgment seat. This idea of there being some recognition in heaven the moment we achieve a spiritual victory is perhaps based on Mt. 5:11,12. So much of James is rooted especially in the Sermon on the mount. "Blessed are you, when men shall revile you…rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* (present tense) your reward in Heaven". Our eternal life "is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3,4) Similarly Rev. 3:11 implies we do now have the crown in a sense: "Hold fast that thou hast (your reward you have in prospect?) that no man take thy crown". Through our trials, God "scourges every son whom he receives", and therefore we can be spoken of in the continuous tense as "receiving a Kingdom" through our continued correct response to trials (Heb.12:6,28).

1:13 *Let no one say when he is tempted: I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempts no one-* In those moments of spiritual temptation it is easy to recognize that the situation creating the temptation has clearly been arranged by God, and therefore to get bitter against Him. Now the earlier definition of 'temptation' as the spiritual temptation to sin which arises within us becomes vital. God may put the physical temptation in our way- e.g. the serpent in Eden, God tempting Abraham in Gen. 22:1- but our evil desires or "lusts" in our minds (v.14) are alone responsible for our sinning, due to wrongly responding to these physical temptations. Thus God could therefore examine the inner thought process of David's mind to reveal whether he was giving way to the spiritual temptations that would be developed by the physical trials: "Examine me, O Lord, and prove (same word as "tempt" in Gen. 22:1) me; try my reins and my heart" (Ps. 26:2). Thus "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away" (v.14).

1:14 *But each man is tempted, when he is dragged away by his own lust and enticed-* See on :13. It could be that James is arguing against the popular view that temptation is due to the overpowering swamping of a person by a cosmic Satan. Instead, we are to understand temptation as coming from our "*own* lust", internally. We can take ownership and control over the source of temptation, which is within us. We are not merely puppets of some external cosmic forces. Those internal lusts are personified here as a women enticing and then dragging away her male victim. Proverbs uses similar metaphor, appealing for the "young man" to be wise and to resist her. The Judaist false teachers are described with the same word for "enticed" (2 Pet. 2:14,18). The essence of the enticement was an appeal to the flesh, to the internal mechanism of temptation within each person.

1:15 *Then the lust, when it has conceived, carries sin; and the sin, when it is fully grown, brings death- The* lusts inside our mind are being likened to an attractive woman

enticing us. Thus the instinct to illicit sexual attraction within us is seen as a type of all wrong attraction to sins of any kind. It is a repeated New Testament theme that the punishment for sin is some kind of burning by fire. To the Old Testament mind, this image of being burnt at judgment day would have connected with the command to burn a whore (Lev. 21:9); thus all types of sin are to be seen as prostitution against God. The same process in sexual attraction of a wrong thought taking root, constantly preying on the spiritual mind, resulting in our allowing it to grow under the excuse that we are still in control, eventually bringing forth gross sin, is repeated time and again as we are faced with the spiritual temptations of life every hour. The same figure occurs in Num. 15:39 speaking of 'going a whoring' "after your own heart and your own eyes", as if our natural mind is a whore.

Our carnal mind being likened to a whore or glamorous woman is a strong theme of Proverbs. The important thing to note is that Proverbs emphasizes that it is obedience to the word which will keep us from the lusts which the woman represents. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil... hear me now therefore (says the wisdom / word), O you children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her" (by listening to wisdom's words); Prov. 5:3,7,8. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light... to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman" (Prov. 6:23,24). Prov. 7:1-5 is an even stronger emphasis: "Keep my words, and lay up my commandments... keep my commandments... My Law... that they may keep you from the strange woman, from the stranger which flatters with her words". The woman was "subtle of heart" (v.10), recalling the serpent, and had a guise of spirituality: "I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows" (v.14). She reasons that "the good man is not at home, he is gone on a long journey: he has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed" (v.19,20). This is almost certainly the basis of the Lord's parable of the talents, revealing that the reasoning of the one talent man was that since the Lord was not physically around, he need not develop. Thus that man does not represent just the lethargic Christian; but the man who consciously indulges in sin because he cannot feel the Lord's presence. "The Goodman" is further equated with the Lord in Mt. 20:11. Notice the emphasis in the three Proverbs passages mentioned on the words of the woman being her means of attraction. Prov. 7:21 is explicit: "With her much fair speech (cp. the serpent again, and 2 Cor. 11:3; Rom. 16:18, which connect the fair speaking, the whore, the serpent and the Judaizers) she caused him to yield". Words are a reflection of the mind (Mt. 12:34), again indicating that the woman represented an epitome of fleshly thinking. The parable of the prodigal son is clearly meant to show the path which we all take whenever we sin. The women upon whom he wasted his (spiritual) substance represent our giving way to sin in its various forms (Lk. 15:13).

1:16 *Be not deceived, my beloved brothers*- See on :15. This suggests there was some kind of ‘deception’ circling around which the readership needed to be aware of. And

surely it refers to the Judaist false teaching and the “evil woman” of the temple cult plaguing the Jewish converts to whom James is writing. The same word is used of “them that seduce you”, again in a Judaist context (see on 1 Jn. 2:26). So often there is the appeal by Paul and Peter to not be deceived, to resist the seduction of the Judaists. This was a major problem in the early Jewish churches. And James gives an interesting window onto that seduction, by portraying it was actually appealing to the flesh. The idea of ritualistic obedience, thereby freeing us up to act how we like in other areas, is terribly appealing. It explains why religion *per se* is so popular. But true Jesus-based spirituality is not like that.

1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation nor shifting shadow*- Again, James warns us not to err in thinking that God is leading us into sin by stressing that "every good gift and every perfect gift (gift of perfection) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (v.17). The gift that leads to perfection is that of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to bring us towards the maturity of Christ. This coming down of the "good gift" (cp. "the good word of God", Heb. 6:5) is parallel with the gift of wisdom in v.5, which gift is further expanded in 3:15-17: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure (cp. "the words of the Lord are pure"; "Your word is very pure", Ps. 12:6; 119:140), then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits". Thus the effect of asking for wisdom (1:5) is to be liberally given the gift of responding to the word so that it cultivates a fullness of spiritual fruit in us (1:17; 3:17). The gift of wisdom produces a fullness ("full of...") of characteristics which recall the moral characteristics of God's Name as declared to Moses: "Merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant (cp. "full of good fruits") in goodness and truth, keeping mercy..." (Ex. 34:6,7). The R.V. describes Yahweh as a God "full of" these things. Thus the Spirit through developing those characteristics in us leads to God's Name being upon us and God being manifested to us.

The gift of the Spirit "comes down from the Father". 'Coming down' is the language of God manifestation- e.g. God "came down" upon Mount Sinai in a mighty theophany; Jesus "came down from Heaven"; God "came down" to destroy Sodom and Babel. It is through the word 'coming down' into our hearts that we are able to manifest God. Thus Jn. 3:5 speaks of being born again (lit. 'from above') by the Spirit.

"The Father of lights" means that the light within us is from God, by His direct gift. Another connection in this context starts in 1 Jn.1:5: "This then is the message (word) which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all". The prologue of John's Gospel is closely linked to that of his epistles. The parallel to 1 Jn. 1:5 is Jn. 1:4 "In him (the word) was life, and the life was the light of men". Thus the Father of lights is the source of the logos-word, which is the gift that can be given to us in our hearts.

James again puts his finger on the feelings we have in those moments of weakness- there is "no variableness, nor shifting shadow" in the amount of spiritual strength He gives. It is tempting to think that the power of the Spirit does vary, and therefore God's involvement somehow waxes and wanes in our lives, and this affects the likelihood of us overcoming sin. But this is not the case. There is no variableness from His side; any such sensation is solely our fault. There is a subconscious element of doubt within us as to the stability of God; and we need to recognize that and realize that we are wrong and it is we who move from Him and not He from us:
- In Num. 23:19 Balaam assures Balak that God will not suddenly give him a different prophetic word after the one he had just given, and that the prophecy he had just given would be surely fulfilled: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the Son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?".
- Later Saul thought that the word of God was variable, in that he doubted whether the command to totally destroy the Amalekites still stood. Samuel rebuked him for not "obeying the voice of the Lord... the Strength of Israel will *not* lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Sam.15:22,29).
- Mal. 3:6 "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed"- because of the eternal covenant of grace which God made with Israel.
- Titus 1:2,3: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised... in... His word through preaching".

1:18 *Of His own will He gave us birth by the word of truth*- God took the initiative. It is not that we chose Him, but rather He chose us; not that we know Him, but rather that we were known of Him. Whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for the unGodly. Always the intiative is His. Just as a person is the result of the initiative of their parents. See on Job 22:27,28.

In contrast to the process of conceiving sin explained in v.14,15, "Of His own will He gave us birth by the word of Truth" (v.18). The child of God is born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:13)- i.e. of the will of God. The act of intercourse which leads to human conception is the ultimate and strongest expression of the fleshly will of man. The same immense drive and will is possessed by God, who channels it through His word and Spirit to result in the conception of spiritual people. What *tremendous* power there is therefore in that word! Note the comparison: "Of his own lust... of His own will... the word" (v.14,18). God's will to save is as it were facing off against the will of man to fail.

"Being born again, not of corruptible (human) seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). Jn. 3:3 says that the new birth comes from above- James 1:17 describes the good and perfect gift of the word as being "from above". Notice that the

word of God is connected with the will of God. Perhaps our faith in our prayers is militated against by our resigned 'If it be Your will' being so liberally sprinkled in them. Generally the Biblical examples of prayer- which presumably guide our approach- are conspicuous by their omitting of 'If it be Your will...'. They seem to request things in total faith- and normally receive them. Even Paul in recounting his experience of having three prayers go unanswered (2 Cor. 12:8) does not make any specific comment about the will of God. If we have the word of God in our minds and guiding our prayers, then we will be praying according to the will of God, "in the Holy Spirit". John 15:7 is explicit: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what *you* will, and it shall be done unto you". Jesus doesn't say that our prayers will be answered according to *God's* will, but according to our own will. This is because the word guiding our thoughts results in our will becoming identical with that of God, in so far as it is guided by the word. Again, an ideal is being suggested to us- a wholly spiritual mind filled with the word will result in a far more powerful prayer life. It is by birth of the word, therefore, that we become a son of God, part of the Divine family; and Jesus said "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt.12:50)- thus equating the will of God and the word. Similarly Jn.7:17 "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (in the word). Even more fundamentally, the covenant name of God is 'I will be who I will be' (Ex. 3:14 R.V.mg)- and God executes the will that is intrinsic in His very Name through His word.

That we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creations- We are living the eternal life, the Kingdom life, right now- if we have the Spirit living within us. We are already part of a new creation by the Spirit, which is a foretaste of the new order / creation which is to come. We can have the firstfruits of that state now in our minds, which if they are spiritual are the only part of our bodies which are experiencing the Kingdom life now, albeit in a limited form. An alternative approach to this verse is to view the "creatures" as the whole multitude of the redeemed, of which the present believers are only "the firstfruits". In this case, all the faithful who have been influenced acceptably by "the word of truth" are only a small foretaste of the many who will be so converted at the Lord's coming.

According to John 17, our unity will convert the world. The Gospel is a message of reconciliation with God which overflows into reconciliation between each other, according to Ephesians. The church is a foretaste, an advertisement, of what the future Kingdom will be like (James 1:18). Who are we now is a firstfruit of who we shall eternally be.

But then we can also understand that we who are "in Christ" are counted as Him, the firstfruits. As His path to glory was the pattern for leading us there, the many other sons being led to glory; so here we may have the hint that we are the firstfruits of some other spiritual "creations".

1:19 *You know this, my beloved brothers! But let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger*- If we are truly born by the word then we will swift to hear it, as Jesus was of quick understanding in the word (Is. 11:3). We will share His aptitude for it, and we will be slow to speak anything else. The great danger is to be hearers and not doers of the word (James 1:22), but James implies that the antidote to this is to reflect upon the very nature of the word which gave us spiritual birth.

Because of the glorious power of the word of the Gospel as outlined in the previous verses, we should be quick to hear that powerful word. The idea of running swiftly in eager response to the word is quite a common Biblical idiom (2 Thess. 3:1; Ps. 119:32,60; Hab. 2:2; Amos 8:11,12; Dan. 12:4). Inevitably some practical examination of our eagerness of response to the word has to be made. How frequently do we rise up from our readings with an eager resolve to do something practical, to make some subtle change in our character? How often do our minds burn and race within us as we chase connections and themes through Scripture (cp. Lk. 24:32) and God's word falls open to us? Or are we content to dash through our Bible readings on the way to work, or leave them to the dog end of the day? God and the Angels no doubt look eagerly to those parts of the day when we read the word as their opportunity to guide and teach us, to strengthen us against the flesh. What a despite to them if our minds are somewhere else as we read- if we bother doing any Bible readings at all that day. The practical effects of swiftly hearing this powerful word are to make us "slow to speak, slow to wrath". Along with many other examples in James, this definitely alludes to the Proverbs- in this case 10:19 and 17:27 for "slow to speak", and 14:29 for "slow to wrath". The context in these passages is that "instruction... reproof (10:17)... knowledge... understanding (17:27) ...understanding" (14:29) lead to the control of speech and wrath. All these things are true concerning the word- the ultimate source of reproof (2 Tim. 3:16,17) and understanding. This is exactly the context of James 1- by being "swift to hear" the spiritual strength which is in the word, we find the strength in practical terms to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath". It may be that James is alluding to Moses being "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"- i.e. rather quiet, unsure of his words. Hence God reassured him: "I will teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex.4:10-12). This would be specially relevant to James' persecuted Jewish readership; telling them to 'be like Moses' in his quiet speaking. And remember that James is writing to Jews, for whom Moses was an unattainable saint. But they are asked here to actually be like him.

1:20 *For the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God*- The Jerusalem Jews baptized were Peter were likely wealthy. But now they were scattered in dispersion, as refugees fleeing persecution. It's unsurprising that they would have anger issues. But this anger would retard the work of God, which is intended to elicit righteousness, leading to the ultimate perfection of the changed nature we receive at the Lord's return.

The Lord is working towards our perfection at the last day (:4). But that work is precluded by those who cannot get over their own anger.

The implication is that the word making us "slow to anger" *does* work the righteousness of God- i.e. the word works or develops the righteous attributes of God within us, e.g. being "slow to anger". This is a specific characteristic of God's Name (Ps. 103:8; 145:8); thus the word gives us God's Name. In a similar way, the spiritual trial of our faith "*works* patience" (1:3)- another aspect of "the righteousness of God". In this case, we see that the word has the same effect upon us as trials. Our present tribulation "*works* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). 1 Jn. 2:29 is also relevant- "every one that does righteousness is born of God", which James and John say is by the Spirit. Thus the word and Spirit of God acting on a man "works... the righteousness of God". There are so many allusions in James to the Sermon on the mount that the mention of the righteousness of God probably links with the only time Jesus mentioned this, in Mt. 6:31-33: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat... but seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". Thus seeking God's righteousness is contrasted with over-concern about food. In the wilderness Jesus made the contrast between not living by bread alone, but by every word of God. Thus living by the word of God is associated with seeking the righteousness of God. It is also stressed that we only receive ('work') the righteousness of God by faith (Rom. 3:22; 10:3-6; Phil. 3:9)- which comes from the word (Rom. 10:17- which is in the context of a whole chapter showing that righteousness comes by faith).

1:21- see on Lk. 8:11.
Wherefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls- The letter of 1 Peter is intended for the same audience- the Jerusalem Jews whom Peter had baptized and James had pastored, who were now in dispersion as refugees, having lost their previous wealth and status. They were tempted to be angry, and also, as is apparent here and in 1 Peter, to simply indulge the flesh. They had originally asked 'What must we do to be saved?' and Peter had urged them to 'Save yourselves [save your souls]' from the surrounding Jewish generation that was to perish. Now they are urged to continue to receive with humility the word of the Gospel, and be saved. The word of the Gospel must be progressively heard by us, and responded to. The basic Gospel is not something we forget or move on from as we mature; it is something we progressively respond to.

The word of the gospel is “implanted”. It’s not that we come to it by a process of correct intellectual study. Again, the initiative is with God, just as it is the sower who takes the initiative to plant a seed, and not the seed or ground itself. As Paul points out in Romans, our calling is a matter of grace and even predestination. The call operates through the word, but that word is implanted in human hearts. God operates directly on

human hearts. But it all depends how we “receive” that implanted word. Receiving the word so that it makes us "slow to speak, slow to wrath" is helped by laying apart "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness". The Greek phrase translated "lay apart" is elsewhere used always concerning forsaking the practical, specific characteristics of the flesh (Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:1; Eph. 4:25; Rom. 13:12). We have seen so far that James is emphasizing that it is through the new birth from the word that this can be achieved. 1 Pet. 2:1 also tells us to lay aside fleshly characteristics by being "newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (v.2). Similarly Eph. 4:23-25: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind... put on the new man (created by the word)... putting away lying" (etc.). Rom. 13:12,13 gives us the greatest motivation to make this effort to so apply the word: "The night is far spent, the day (of the Kingdom) is at hand; let us therefore cast off (same word "lay apart") the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as (if we are) in the day" of the Kingdom. Thus we can therefore live now to some degree as we will in the Kingdom- by using the word to cast off the flesh and put on spiritual attributes, resulting in us walking (living in our day to day lives) as if we are in "the day" of the Kingdom.

The word acting on our minds should help us lay apart all "superfluity of naughtiness". "Superfluity" is from the same word translated "abundance" in Mt. 12:34 "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". It must have occurred to us all at some time that the command to bring "into captivity *every* thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5) seems impossible to achieve. There are so many thoughts which are necessary in our secular lives, they cannot all be brought around to Christ. However, the word "abundance" means 'that which is over and above the necessary'. The point of bringing our thoughts to Christ is so that our words will be Christ-like, and as our thoughts lead to our words, we must control them. The context of 2 Cor. 10:5 is Paul justifying the apparently hard words he was having to use to the Corinthians- he assured them that in practice he was bringing all his thoughts captive to Christ, therefore his words were not the outpouring of unspiritual bitterness. Thus only those thoughts which are "of the *abundance*" of the heart (the mind) control our words; those thoughts which are over and above our necessary ones. James is saying that this "abundance" or "superfluity" of wrong thinking ("naughtiness") can be displaced by the word.

The Greek for 'implanted' means more literally 'something placed inside you which springs up'. This must have some reference to the sower parable- "The seed is the word", and if we are to receive the word meekly, James must be likening us to the ground of the parable- in this case, 'meek' ground. Are we meek to the word- 'quiet, mild', as 'meek' implies? It is so true that a settled, quiet mind is vital if we are to let the word really act on us. There may also be a reference back to Romans 11, where Paul reasons that the Gentiles had been grafted into the Israelitish olive tree. Having a Jewish readership,

James is maybe gently hinting that *all* men, including Jews, need the word grafted into them.

We have spoken in general terms about "the word" being the power of righteousness, which comes down from above and germinates spiritual life within us. This verse 21 gives us some hints as to a more precise definition. We have noted the clear allusion to the parable of the sower- the "engrafted"/ implanted word-seed. "The word of truth" of v.18 "begat" us, which the almost parallel passage in 1 Pet. 1:23 says is the seed-word of God. The word in the parable of the sower is defined as "the word of the Kingdom" (Mt.13:19)- i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom. The sower parable shows the response of various people to the Gospel which they *initially hear*. James 1:21 continues by saying that this word is "able to save your souls". This recalls a number of passages which say that it is the message of the basic Gospel which saves our souls:

"To you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:26).
"The Gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom.1:16)
"I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received (cp. "receive with meekness the engrafted word")... by which also ye are saved; if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you" (1 Cor.15:1,2); this Gospel which would save them was centred around the basic truths of the resurrection and second coming of Christ which Paul goes on to reiterate in 1 Cor.15. There really *is* power in them, to save our souls.

1:22 *But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your selves*- This plainly states how easy it is to hear the word, and *deceive* ourselves into thinking that this very process justifies us. But if we are not doers of the word, we only “seem to be religious... (*deceiving* our) own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26). We are invited to see a parallel between the process of hearing God’s word, and seeming to be religious. The context of :21 requires we understand the "word" as the word of the Gospel, which is implanted in human hearts. The reference is not to the entire Bible. The simple message of the Gospel requires 'doing', which is why the first response to the word is baptism, an act, a deed. But that practical response is to continue. Clearly enough, James sees the danger of mere intellectual assent to the word of the Gospel.

The subsequent warning "Be doers of the word" in the sense of bridling the tongue and visiting the sick (:22,26,27) implies that "the word" of the Gospel included practical matters- something hinted at in many other passages. The believers to whom James was writing had already received the implanted word-seed of the Gospel at their conversion- but James implies that they needed to keep on receiving it. 1 Pet.1:22,23 connects loving "one another with a pure heart fervently" with "being born again... by the word of God". Thus again the new birth is not just a question of accepting doctrine in the sense of 'first principles', but also the doctrine of practical Christian living. Thus it

needs continued intercourse with the word to create a stream of new life. On a practical note, let us remember that we should get this power of new life entering us from re-hearing the basic Gospel as much as from the deeper parts of our Bible study. Notice that the word can "save your souls", showing that the soul does not always just refer to the life or body/creature, but can also refer to our spiritual selves, which the word is able to save or preserve.

One of the easiest forms of self deceit is to hear the correct exposition of the word and feel that therefore we are on the right track towards the Kingdom. Yet a comparison with :27 indicates that it is quite possible to be "spotted by the world" as well as being a hearer of the word. This must be something we are especially liable to, hearing as many of us do up to three times a week the correct exposition of the word at church meetings. There must be a reference back to Rom. 2:13: "for not the hearers of the Law are justified before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified". Thus again James is thinking of the Jewish nature of his readership, and leading them to redirect their zeal for keeping the Law to zeal for receiving and doing "the engrafted word" of Christ's Gospel. "Deceiving" implies 'reasoning'- and again, James has his finger on the pulse of human nature. If we ask ourselves, 'Do I reason with myself that I am doing the word when actually I'm only hearing it' the instinctive answer is, 'No, I'm not aware I do anyway'. The reasoning or "deceiving" goes on in our deep subconscious. "Doer" is also translated "poet", in the sense of a performer of a written script. Thus Paul speaks of "how to perform that which is good (i.e. the law/word of God, :16) I find not" (Rom. 7:18). This theme of self-deception is continued in v.26- if a man "seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue (he) deceives his own heart". Words are a product of the mind (Lk. 6:45), and thus to bridle the tongue is to bridle the mind, which can only be done through the application of the word. If this is not done, then we deceive ourselves- which v.21 says we do by hearing and not doing the word. Thus to be a doer of the word in this case is to apply the word to our minds, to consciously make the mental effort to let the word control our thinking and words when in a provocative situation. Therefore being a doer of the word does not necessarily involve any physical work. There are other examples of 'works' not being physical actions but mental effort to apply the word to our minds, allowing the operation of the Spirit:

- "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent" (Jn. 6:29- cp. Rom. 10:17 "Faith comes by hearing... the word of God"). Prov. 12:22 (Septuagint) speaks of the man that "works faith".
- "The work of the Law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15)
- Sin "did work in our members" (Rom. 7:5)
- God "has begun a good work in you" (Phil.1:6)- i.e. in your spiritual development
- "Fruitful in every good work... patience... longsuffering... joyfulness" (Col. 1:10,11)
- A man carefully examining himself by the word, "the perfect law of liberty", is "a doer of the work" (James 1:25).

- We will be judged according to our works (Rev. 22:12)- and our spiritual development rather than physical achievements will be of paramount interest to our Judge.
- Those who believe false doctrine about Christ's nature should be shunned because "He that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds", i.e. his beliefs (2 Jn. 11,7). A like example is in Rev. 2:6,15: "The *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate... the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate".
- Similarly the Lord worked "the works of Him that sent me" (Jn. 9:4; 17:4) not just in miracles and good deeds, but in developing that perfect character until He "finished the work (of saving man) which you gave me to do".
- "The works of Abraham" (Jn. 8:39) in the context were to believe in Christ.
All this is part of the great Bible theme that our thoughts really are reckoned as works by God. In the light of this housebound housewives and hard working bread winners can take courage that their lack of 'works' physically achieved is totally appreciated by the Father. With this definition of works it is no longer necessary to feel we can only work for God at weekends or in the evenings- or after the children are asleep. Our whole life can be one of active, working service. But to inspire those works, constant contact with the word must be made. The odd glances at the pocket Bible during the day, or the Commandments of Christ on the wall, will be worth their weight in golden faith in the great day.

1:23 *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like to a man seeing his natural face in a mirror*- Hearing the word but not doing it is a sermon on the mount allusion- those who *heard* those sayings but did not *do* them were likened to the man building his house on the sand (Mt. 7:26). In the same way as he *thought* that he was building and was doubtless quite pleased at his progress, so the man who glanced in the mirror thought all was well with his spiritual development. The acquiring of knowledge ('hearing') can give the impression that we are progressing; but practice ('doing') is the real foundation. It is sad that the ever deepening level of the church's Bible scholarship is not always matched by such 'doing'. Hearing the word is likened to glancing in a mirror and then going on with life, immediately forgetting that vision. Like the quick glance at the mirror, straighten the tie, brush the hair, off to the office. Maybe this equates with the sleepy, half awake doing of the readings in the morning and then off into the day with not a further thought about our real spiritual figure.

"Beholding" means 'observing fully'- the man's mistake was in his immediate forgetting of the image he saw. Thus he was a very careful hearer- because it is not always that we apply ourselves so much to the word that it is as if we are staring into our own face, observing fully our real spiritual self. In the previous analogy, here is someone who got up, washed, dressed and did his readings at the table with a concordance, and was really helped in those minutes to examine himself. But Bible study was only part of his

life- he "immediately forgot". Surely none of us can feel complacent at this challenge of James?

Notice how the word is likened to a mirror- our study of it should always lead to some form of self-examination and assessment as we compare ourselves against the deep things of the Spirit. Thus our studies should revolve around the application of the word to our moment by moment spiritual lives, rather than the mental gymnastics with Scripture at one extreme and empty platitudes at the other, which seem to characterize so much of our communal Bible study. The idea of the word being represented by a mirror occurs again in 1 Cor. 13:8-12. Verse 8 describes the withdrawal of the miraculous spirit gifts, and their replacement by the completed word- "that which is perfect", v.10 (cp. 2 Tim. 3:16,17). Paul then contrasts the dispensation of the Spirit gifts and the word: "Now we see through (look into) a glass, darkly; but then face to face". Thus the dispensation of the word would enable him to see a clear reflection of himself- "Then shall I know (myself) even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). The implication of these few words are tremendous- through using the completed word to examine ourselves, it is possible for us to see ourselves as God sees us- to know ourselves even as God knows us. Paul expresses his lack of full knowledge in 1 Cor. 4:4: "I know nothing by myself (therefore) am I not hereby justified". The context is Paul's countering of the Corinthians who claimed to have examined and judged him. Paul is saying that he is not qualified to fully examine and judge himself, so therefore cannot comment. But now, with the completed revelation compared with the partial understanding of only some facets of God's revelation to man given by the ministry of the miraculous gifts (1 Cor. 13:9), we are able to achieve a fuller self-examination. James' description of the word as the "perfect law" (1:25) strengthens the impression that he is consciously alluding to 1 Cor. 13 (cp. "that which is perfect" concerning the completed word); as if he is preparing his readers for how they should use the completed word which he, like Paul, knew in advance would soon be available.

The word enables us to 'behold' ('Observe fully') our "natural face". "Natural" is from the Greek *gennas*- to regenerate, conceive, gender, beget. This must connect with the concept of v.17,18 and the parallel 1 Peter 1:23- we are conceived by the word entering us, through God’s initiative through the Spirit. The man James is speaking of looked at his "natural face". This could imply at least two things- he examines the state of spiritual regeneration he has reached from the word; or he looks back to his initial spiritual birth, how he was at his first 'genesis' by the word of the Kingdom when it developed within him for the first time. The same idea is picked up in 3:6; the tongue "defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell". Our thoughts lead to the words of the tongue. Thus ultimately an undisciplined mind "sets on fire the course of nature"- unless our thoughts are restrained by the word, our 'genesis'

("nature") so far developed by the word, and our initial spiritual strength developed by the word of the Gospel, will be destroyed, "set on fire". Strong interprets "course" as meaning 'A circuit of effects'- the circuit of effects due to our 'genesis' ("nature") will be destroyed or broken unless we make a conscious effort to control the mind. We have seen that the 'genesis' is a result of the action of the word on a man's heart. This creates a 'circuit of effects'- hence 3:6 AVmg. speaks of the "wheel of nature" (the 'genesis') in the sense of something continuous. Surely the implication is that once the word starts to take effect, it initiates a circular, upwards spiral of spirituality- spiritual strength leading to spiritual strength, a certain level of appreciation of the word steadily leading to a higher level. However, this "course of nature" can be broken by not making a conscious effort to control the mind and the words which follow from it (in the context of James 3:6), and of not making the effort to *continue* beholding our "natural face" in the mirror of the word, and letting the word act on the results of our self-examination.

The "natural face" or *porsopon* seems to refer to the outward appearance. Internal, spiritual things like control of the tongue (:26) received no emphasis. It was all about what you looked like. And this indeed was the trouble with Judaism, which stressed the appearance of your "face" (s.w. Mt. 6:16). They were of those who 'glory in appearance not in heart' (s.w. "face", 2 Cor. 5:12), looking on things after "the outward appearance" (s.w. "face", 2 Cor. 10:7).

That the word should lead to an ever-increasing level of self-examination and recognition of the urgency of our need to spiritually improve is also hinted at in 1 Jn.1:10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"- implying that the more the word is in us, the more we recognize the degree to which we have sinned. But notice it is not just a reading of the word that results in this- seeing that the Jews to whom Paul partly wrote Romans, for all their Bible knowledge and ability to assimilate the detailed Old Testament allusions Paul makes in Romans, were of the opinion they could "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1)- i.e. they reasoned that whatever they did was automatically blotted out by reason of being in Christ (and Jewish?). "We make Him (God) a liar" must refer back to the serpent in Eden, who also lacked the word of God in him, thus effectively leading him to the conclusion that Adam and Eve could not sin, even if they consciously disobeyed the commandments. Saying we have not sinned is equivalent to saying that we do not need Christ- both statements make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10 cp. 5:10); which again was the implication of the serpent reasoning. Paul picks this point up in 2 Cor. 11:3, where he connects the reasoning of the serpent with that of the Judaizers, who also argued that Christ was not vital for salvation. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge made Adam and Eve aware of their sin- as does eating of the word of knowledge in our day. Jn. 15:22; Lk. 12:47,48 and many other passages clearly teach that the more knowledge of the

word a man has, the more aware he is of his sins, and therefore the more answerable to judgement.

1:24 *For he sees himself and goes away and immediately forgets what manner of man he was*- James 1:24,25 parallel looking at ourselves, and looking into the perfect law of liberty. To read Scripture as God really intended, not as mere words on paper, is to find ourselves engaged in an inevitable self-examination. Reflect a while on two consecutive verses in Ez. 8:18; 9:1: “Though they [Israel] *cry in my ears with a loud voice* [when they are under judgment for their actions, which I now ask them to repent of], yet will I not hear them. He [God] *cried also in my* [Ezekiel’s] *ears with a loud voice*, saying…”. Do you see the connection? As we read and hear God’s word today, He is passionately crying in our ears with a loud voice. Just imagine someone literally doing this to you! If we refuse to hear it, then we will cry in *His* ears with a loud voice in the last and final day of condemnation. The intensity of *His* appeal to us now will be the intensity with which the rejected plead for Him to change His verdict upon them; and God, like them in this life, will refuse to hear. What arises from this is a simple fact: as we read and hear the pages of Scripture, as we turn the leaves in our Bibles, God is crying in our ears with a loud voice. Our response to Him is a foretaste of our acceptance or rejection at the day of judgment.

1:25 *But he that looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues, being not a hearer that forgets, but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in what he does*- The very nature of life in this present world appears to make it impossible to permanently "continue therein" ("continue"= 'to stand beside'). Thus looking at the word and hearing the word are paralleled. The only access to the word by the average believers was probably by hearing it read publicly. The ability to read would not have been widespread, and copies of the scrolls not widely available (hence the ministry of the miraculous spirit gifts to provide the word of prophecy and its interpretation). Other passages refer to this hearing of the word through public reading of it in the ecclesia: Acts 13:27; 15:21 (cp. James 2:2 AVmg.); 2 Cor. 3:15; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Rev. 1:3; 2:7,11. The believers should hear the word spoken or read and look into it continually- i.e. keep it in mind, meditate upon it. Thus 1:19 encourages them to be "swift to hear" the word of God- not to mentally doze through those all-important meetings of the ecclesia when the word was read. Thus James never intended these words to be read as meaning 'You must walk around with your head in a Bible all day'- he was too practical to advocate that. But he was offering an even greater challenge- to live each day continually looking into the things of the word in one's mind, with "the eyes of your understanding being (open)", Eph. 1:18. We who can read and have convenient access to the written word have so much more opportunity- but we seem to lack the degree of mental spiritual alertness to the word that James is speaking of. Surely every Christian who can afford one should have a pocket Bible close at hand during the day and frequently refer to it-

even for a few brief seconds in the hour. But above all, we must strive to achieve that continual mental looking into the things of the word. But he who continues looking into "the perfect law", "this man shall be blessed in his deed"- and that in itself means that James is not setting an impossible standard. It is realistic for a man to achieve it. Note how the continual looking into and application of the word is "his deed". We have earlier commented how 'deeds' and 'works' can refer to the mental effort made in daily life, rather than specific physical actions.

The language of looking into a mirror, the idea of hearing and also doing, the image of "liberty"... all this is surely developed by Paul in 2 Cor. 3:17. He says that we look at the face of the Lord Jesus, and the glory of His character shines from His face. We look at Him as if looking at a mirror. Instead of seeing our own image in that mirror, we gradually come to see Him. Because the glory of His character rubs off on our faces; we reflect it, just as the glory of the Angel's face was reflected from Moses' face. This transformation is achieved, Paul says, by the spirit of Jesus; "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). James uses the same ideas, but writes of "the law of liberty". God's law is not a chain, nor a leash; for man is not a dog. It is God's intention to lead us to the glorious liberty of His dear children (Rom. 8:28). Through the process effected by God's law, man can come to ultimate freedom, radical personal self determination. The law of liberty is therefore the law or word which leads to ultimate liberty or freedom. We are either under the law of Christ, or the law of the flesh. It is mythical to imagine that 'freedom' means being free from law. But the law of liberty, the law of Christ, leads us to the ultimate, perfect freedom which is part of the Divine nature.

Notice the reference to "the law of liberty"- another gentle dig at his Jewish readers, reminding them of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...be not entangled again with the yoke of (Mosaic) bondage" (Gal. 5:1). Other references to "liberty" are clearly in the context of liberty from the Mosaic Law, and they also have indirect hints at our liberty being because of a word ("law") of liberty:

- "We are not children of the bondwoman (the Law) but of the free" (Gal. 4:31). We are children by being born of the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). Thus "the free" is the free word of the liberty of the Spirit.
- "You have been called unto liberty... (to) walk in the spirit" (Gal. 5:13,16)- i.e. in a way of life guided by the Spirit (Jn. 6:63 etc.)
- "As free... (doing) the will of God" (1 Pet. 2:16,15)- which is in the word (James 1:18; Jn. 1:13)
- "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17)- the Lord's Spirit is in the hearts of His people who are influenced by the word of the gospel.
- "The truth (the word- Jn.17:17) shall make you free... the servant abides not in the

house for ever (alluding to Hagar being cast out, representing the casting out of the law, Gal. 4:30). If the Son therefore (i.e. because the law was being cast out) shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (Jn.8:32,35,36). That freedom comes from the Truth (Jn.8:32), which is the Spirit.

Now it may be argued that if "the law of liberty" is the words of Jesus and the New Testament, then that part of Scripture is far more spiritually powerful than the Old Testament, particularly the Law. Why not just concentrate our Bible reading on the New Testament? Two comments present themselves:

- "The spirit of Christ was in (the prophets)" (1 Pet. 1:11). The Spirit of Christ was in them, but it was only there for our benefit who came after Christ (1 Pet. 1:12). Thus the prophets "searched diligently" for the meaning of their prophecies (1 Pet. 1:10)- the implication being that they were unsuccessful because the purpose of the prophecies was for our benefit not for theirs- "not unto themselves... they did minister the things, which are *now* reported (explained) unto *you*" (1 Pet. 1:12). We have shown that the Spirit-word is the law of liberty, which is contrasted to the Mosaic law or word of bondage. The contrast is not specifically made between the word and the Mosaic law, but between the Spirit word and the Mosaic Law. Thus it may be that the Spirit in the sense of a power of righteousness that can change a man's mind was only released fully from the Old Testament word when it was read by believers after Christ. Notice how the parallel with us looking into the law of liberty in 1 Peter is in 1:12 concerning the Angels desiring to look into the word. This is a parallel with 1:10, describing how the prophets desired to look into the word. Thus seeing that prophets and Angels have unsuccessfully tried to look into the word, we should grasp the opportunity we have. This parallel show that the "law of liberty" was also the prophetic word of the Old Testament which the prophets tried to "look into".

- There is considerable evidence that the power of the Old Testament word was opened by the death and resurrection of Christ, when He became "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17,18 RV), thus enabling us to be changed from the Mosaic glory to the Christian glory- "From glory to glory... by the Spirit of the (risen) Lord" (cp. Jn. 1:16,17). In passing, it is worth considering whether Paul's other reference to contrasting types of glory also has reference to the Mosaic/ Christian system comparison- "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another... so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:40,42). Thus Paul would be likening the present mortal state of our bodies to the earthy (terrestrial) Jewish system, compared to the glory of the spiritual heavenlies in Christ.

The man who keeps mental hold of the Spirit of the word in his daily life "Shall be blessed in his deed". This must be alluding to Lk. 11:28 "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it". Again, the hearing of the word was a literal hearing, as Jesus

had been speaking orally to the people. Thus James' interpretation of keeping the word was to continually look into it in one's mind and let it have the effect of self-examination upon us. The preceding verse records the comment "Blessed is the womb that bare you, and the breasts which you sucked" (Lk. 11:27). Jesus is saying that the more important spiritual equivalent of this is to "hear the word of God". Thus being breast fed is likened by Jesus to hearing and keeping the word. In Peter's language: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). It is only the spiritually young who should feed on the milk of the word (1 Cor.3:2; Heb. 5:12,13). Those to whom Jesus spoke about the sucking of breasts being like hearing and keeping the word were also spiritually young, having only just heard the word. James 1:24,25 is saying that the man who continually looks at his natural face in the mirror of hearing and keeping the word will be blessed for his effort. Lk. 11:27,28 is saying that the spiritually young who as newborn babes keep hearing and keeping the word will be blessed. Remember that it was suggested that the "natural" (Genesis-ed) face of the man could refer to his recently spiritually born self. This would fit the connections with Lk. 11:27 nicely. Thus James implies that there is an especial temptation for those newly converted or spiritually conceived by the word to soon give up their zeal for the word and to stop carefully examining their own position in the light of the word. The parable of the sower puts this in black and white.

"If (we) know these things, happy (blessed) are (we) if (we) do them" (Jn. 13:17). Also worth mentioning is Lk. 8:21: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it". By being born again of the Spirit by hearing, doing, keeping and continually looking at the word, we take on the family likeness- Jesus can feel to us as to a mother or brother. These things help us appreciate the real spirit of the frequent commands to "Keep my commandments, and do them" (Lev. 22:31). This implies that keeping and doing the word are different. God is not so much looking for individual cases of us 'doing' the word in the sense of occasionally obeying a highly specific command- but for us to "keep" the word in the sense of continually keeping it in mind in our lives, so that as a consequence we 'do' the specific commands when necessary. The copious parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1 further illuminate the looking into the word of this v.25; the parallel is Peter's description of the Cherubim Angels earnestly looking down into the mercy seat in 1 Pet. 1:12, as if paralleling that supreme place of God manifestation with the Word.

1:26- see on 1 Pet. 1:18.

If anyone thinks himself to be religious while he does not hold his tongue but rather just deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain- The parallel is between 'hearing the word' and 'thinking oneself to be religious'. Here we see the contrast between religion and spirituality. Hearing the word of the Gospel and intellectually assenting to it... this is

our great temptation. This is self deceit. It is religion in vain. Control of the tongue is rightly presented as the epitome of personal spirituality. Judaism, just like some sects of Protestant Christianity today, thought that "pure religion" (:27) was a case of hearing God's word in truth. But unless that word was allowed to work in a man's deeply personal life, it was not "pure" but in fact "in vain". The huge emphasis upon 'having the truth' can lead to the same error. If that is all it remains at, a pursuit of intellectual purity of interpretation, then it is all a case of deceiving our own heart. The parallel in 1 Pet. 1:18 tells those one time religious Jews that the traditional religion of their fathers [which was Judaism] was "vain" (s.w.). Yet the Hebrew idea of 'vanity' suggests idolatry, and the same Greek word is used of the "vanities" of idols in Acts 14:15. Judaism was no better than paganism, that's the idea. Indeed, no matter how much intellectual, theoretical 'truth' we may have in terms of correctly understanding God's word, it is likewise idolatry- unless it takes a deep personal hold upon our thinking, our speech, our hearts. The problem with being "religious", of hearing but not doing God's word, is that we as it were see ourselves in the mirror, and think we are so handsome or beautiful (:23,24). We are self deceiving. We see our "natural face" (:23), our *porsopon*, our outward appearance, and think that this is all that matters. Without looking inside, to the things of the Spirit, like control of the mind and the tongue. And in this lies the danger in any approach to the Gospel which tends to emphasize intellectual purity of understanding of itself.

The Greek word translated "religious" is elsewhere always used in the context of the Mosaic law; James is implying that they were not properly keeping the spirit of the Mosaic law if they "bridled not (their) tongue". This idea of bridling the tongue is picked up again in 3:2-4, where James says that we put bits in the horses' mouths to control them, "but the tongue can no man tame", i.e. bridle (3:8). "No man" here must mean 'no ordinary man of the flesh', since James 1:26 says that the believer must bridle his tongue. In the preceding verses in James 1, James has been talking about 'doing' the word in practice rather than just theoretically receiving it. The prime example of this, he continues, is whether you can bridle your tongue. This is because our thoughts lead to our words, and therefore to bridle the tongue is to control the mind- and this can only be done through the conscious application of the word. This is the main 'doing' of the word. Again there is the warning against semi-spirituality; seeming to be religious.

Ps. 32:8,9 provides the basis for James 1:26: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide (mg. 'Counsel') you... be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you". Thus having the instruction, teaching and understanding of God should replace having a bridle or bit. God does not want to force our tongues and bodies to obey Him by steel will- but for us to effect this by our application of His word to our minds. Allowing the word of the Gospel to produce its fruit, this is what will lead

to controlled words. The context of Psalm 32 is David's rflections after his sin with Bathsheba; he realizes that it is the experience of grace, rather than steel willed obedience, which results in self control. Thus the word is the means of bridling our tongues and therefore our minds- our whole lives. Note too that a bridle is a two-way thing. It stops the horse approaching the rider in an ungainly and painful way. The action of the word on our minds should lead to us similarly being helped in our approach to God. The man who thinks he has his mind bridled but whose words belie this "Deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (v.26- cp. Jer. 17:9). To be "Double minded" (1:8; 4:8) is thus to have what we think is our 'spiritual' heart or mind deceiving our real heart- that of the flesh, "his own heart".

1:27- see on Acts 6:3.

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: To visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unstained by the world- Visiting (in the Hebrew sense of coming near to) the fatherless and widow in the ecclesia is associated with being unspotted from the world; our closeness to the world of the ecclesia in itself will keep us separate from the pull of the kingdoms of this world (James 1:27). Visiting the fatherless and widows will result in the believer keeping himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27 Gk.).

"Pure ('clean') religion" may refer to the system of religion that comes as a result of "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). This religion is also "undefiled"- possibly implying that to not let the word totally affect our lives is to allow ourselves to be defiled by our fleshly mind and desires. The sexual connotations of the word for "Undefiled" would suggest that passive laziness to apply the word is equivalent to active unfaithfulness against Christ. This pure and undefiled religion "Before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (v.27). The reference to God as the Father is in the context of v.17- "the Father of (the) light" of the word which came down to us. We may well ask 'Why is God so especially concerned for "the fatherless and widows"'? Maybe because He had witnessed the emotional agony of His humanly fatherless Son, Jesus, and the broken heart of Mary on the Lord's death? There is a possible connection between this verse and John 14:18 where Jesus promises that he "Will not leave you orphans (fatherless- A.V. 'comfortless'): I will come to you" through the Holy Spirit Comforter.

The ideas of God 'coming down' and 'visiting' people are common Old Testament idioms for God manifestation. Thus it may be that James is implying that in the same way as Jesus has visited us through the Spirit-word, so we should share the spiritual Comfort of the word with the fatherless and widows. We have noted the association between 'coming down' and the gift of the Spirit-word already in v.17, which provides the

background for this v.27. This pure religion is also to keep ourselves "Unspotted from the world". The words "pure", "undefiled... unspotted" are all the language of marriage. Because the notion of us being the bride of Christ, engaged to Him, seems so far above our feeble spirituality, it is tempting to think that the relationship between a man and his bride is just being used as a vague likeness of our relationship with Christ. But the glorious fact is that we are in absolute reality the typical bride of Christ! Intercourse with the world and fleshly mind is as bad as being unfaithful to our bridegroom- and almost on the night of our marriage, too. The comment is sometimes made that Christians are too dreary and weighed down by our sins. But bearing in mind the nature of our relationship to Jesus and His faithfulness unto death for us, it is not surprising that we are seriously worried about the continual failures which we have to admit to; these are equivalent to being unfaithful to Him. To balance this, there is the joy of receiving "every good and perfect gift" from our loving, truly merciful Father, the knowledge that He is delighted by our strivings to truly develop spiritually; and the happiness ("blessedness") of the man who does try to keep the word in his heart. Whilst we need to be careful that we are not giving way to spiritual pride, there can be a sense of deep joy and peace at the little victories we slowly win against the flesh.

JAMES CHAPTER 2

2:1 *My brothers, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality*- This gives the Lord Jesus the title of "the glory" (Gk., as also in Lk. 2:32; Eph. 1:17). And James makes the point that we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory and have respect of persons. This may seem a strange connection at first sight. But perhaps the sense is that if we see the *height* and surpassing extent of *His* glory, all others will pale into insignificance, and therefore we will be biased for or against nobody and nothing because of the way they are all as nothing before the brightness of the glory of the Lord we follow. "The Lord" is not in the original- "Our Lord Jesus Christ of glory". This idea of Jesus being the glory is picked up in 1 Peter 4:14: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory (parallel with "the name of Christ") and of God rests upon you"- as the cloud of glory did over the tabernacle. Also on the same track is 2 Cor. 3:8,9: "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit (in Christ) be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation (the Mosaic law) be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory". Thus James describing Jesus as the Lord of glory may be yet another hint against keeping to the Mosaic glory. Notice the gentle yet firm way in which James makes the point- appealing to his Jewish readers through Biblical allusions which he knew they would appreciate.

"With respect of persons" is another link back to the Proverbs- here to 24:23: "These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgement". Thus through having wisdom- which is from the word- respect of persons is avoided. This is the point made in 2:8,9: "If ye fulfil… the Scripture... you do well: but if you have respect of persons, you commit sin"- through fulfilling the Scriptures, we avoid respecting persons. There is also a link with the fact that "God is no respecter of

persons" (Acts 10:34) in a Jew/ Gentile context. It seems from this allusion that the Jewish brethren were prejudiced against poor Gentile believers.

2:2 *For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing*- Gk. 'Gold fingered'- not just one ring!. The use of the word 'synagogue' here shows that some of the early Jewish ecclesias were the result of whole synagogues being converted to Christ. The ecclesias are also called synagogues in Acts 6:9; thus Heb.10:25 reads literally "Not forsaking the synagoguing of yourselves together". The fact James uses the word 'synagogue' rather than 'ecclesia' indicates the degree to which early Jewish Christians still kept a fair amount of the Jewish approach to religion. The Lord said that the time would come when they would be cast out of the synagogues; He made no demand that they leave the system at that stage, for He had no concept of guilt by association. Thus the letter of Acts 15 concerning this implies that it was felt quite in order for Jewish believers to continue being circumcised, whilst the Gentile believers still had to abstain from blood (Acts 15:29). Elsewhere Paul vigorously argues that obedience to both these Mosaic commands was quite irrelevant to salvation or spiritual growth. Similarly Paul seems to have placed great importance on keeping a Jewish feast (Acts 18:21), whilst telling the Colossians (2:14-17) that this was not necessary due to Christ's death. The rich stranger who unexpectedly turned up at their ecclesia perhaps refers to the same class of Jewish itinerant preachers as are mentioned in 2 Jn.7-11. James is writing to Jewish believers. The "poor man" walking into the ecclesia was a brother- "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom" (v.5). If this poor brother was also a Jew, why does James talk about "Your assembly… you have respect to (the rich)... and say to the poor...."""? We have two possibilities at least:

1) The letter was written just to a group of rich Jews; or
2) The letter was written generally to all Jewish believer and the "poor man" represented the poor Gentile brethren whom the Jewish believers despised.

There is fair support for both:

1) Poor believers are equally in need of exhortation as are the rich. They are even more prone to the temptations of materialism; but there is nothing aimed at this group in James. Chapter 2 rebukes rich brethren for belittling these poor brethren. Chapter 3 is about brethren seeking to be "many masters" (3:1) and proudly talking to that end. These are the temptations especially faced by rich, capable brethren. Chapter 4 describes the itinerant Jewish traders always hungry to make more money (4:13). Chapter 5 is specifically about "you rich men... your riches are corrupted" (5:1,2).

2) "The poor of this world" could be Gentiles- "He has dispersed abroad; he has given to the poor" (2 Cor. 8:9) is quoted by Paul to show that the poor Gentiles had received spiritual riches, and should therefore contribute their earthly riches to the poor Jewish believers at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). "Rich in faith" would then refer to the Gentiles being given the spiritual riches of Christ (2 Cor. 9:9). "Heirs of the kingdom" recalls Eph.3:6 "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs" through also having the promises of inheriting the Kingdom made to them (Gal. 3:27-29).

There are no doubt elements of truth in both views. Thus the letter does seem to be aimed at the rich Jewish Christians who had fled Israel from the persecution of Saul;

but there may also be a secondary implication that the poor brethren they were despising were Gentiles. This would be in keeping with the fact that every reference in James to the Jew/Gentile, Moses/ Christ question within the ecclesia is indirect and subtle.

One of the reasons for James writing was to encourage the Jews to spiritually improve so that the second coming would be hastened and the Kingdom established for real, rather than the 'coming' being just a 'coming down' manifestation of the Lord, as it actually was. It was the affluent sector of Jewry who had a partial faith in Christ whom James singles out as being the important ones whose repentance would hasten the second coming. Applying these things to the last days, it cannot be without significance that the 'Jews for Jesus' movement is gaining phenomenal ground- amongst whom? The affluent, loud mouthed (cp. James 3), money-loving, trade-crazy Jews of North America (cp. James 4:13; 5:2). Bearing in mind the orthodox false doctrines these people are full of, they fit well their prototypes in James- Jews who were not truly humble to the power of the word, committed to a 'hail fellow well met' Christianity (cp. 2:2,3). Notice that generally it has not been the poor Jews of London's East End or downtown Tel Aviv who are professing Christ. We know that the Jews are still to face their greatest holocaust. How relevant then is James 5:1-3: "You rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you... you have heaped treasures together for the last days". Every persecution of the Jews has been partly inspired by Gentile jealousy at their wealth- not least in these last days. Turning the spotlight to spiritual Israel- maybe the implication of James is that if only we can summon the courage to repent of our gross materialism into which the ecclesia of the last days has slumped, then there will be a hastening of the second coming. It is Biblically argued elsewhere that a specific rejection of materialism by the ecclesia of the last days may save us from part of the tribulation to come, and thus hasten the coming of Christ for us. If we do not curb it, we may need to go through the tribulation to achieve the same spiritual effect upon us as would a specific repentance from it here and now.

"A gold ring, in goodly apparel" probably connects with 1 Peter 3:1,3: "you wives... whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of... wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel". The links between James and Peter are so numerous that it seems fair to assume that there is a conscious connection here. In this case it is worth noting that the passage in 1 Peter 3:3 about adorning has subtle reference to Judaism- e.g. "adorning" is the Greek 'kosmos'-ing, often used about the Jewish age. 'Cosmetic' is derived from this word too.

"A poor man in vile raiment" may also be talking about spiritual pride and partiality. For the word "vile" carries the idea of morally filthy- it is translated "filthiness" a few verses earlier in 1:21 in a moral sense; and "the filthiness of the flesh" in 1 Peter 3:21 (note Rev.22:11 too). The idea of raiment or clothing representing a spiritual state is common in the New Testament. Thus James may be warning them against judging a brother who, due to his poverty, appears outwardly to have an appearance of evil when this is not the case.

2:3 *And you have regard to him that wears the fine clothing, and say: Sit here in a good place; and you say to the poor man: Stand there, or, Sit under my footstool-* The Greek for "fine" implies dazzling bright- it is used of the "white (same word) linen" in which the saints will be clothed (Rev. 15:6; 19:8), the "bright clothing" of the Angel in Acts 10:30 and "the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). This further

supports the suggestion that James 2 is referring to spiritual pride- apart from wearing gaudy clothes, these brethren were imagining themselves to be supremely righteous, and therefore lording it over those they considered to be spiritually poor. This is almost confirmed beyond question by the rest of the verse being an allusion to the parable of the guests at the marriage supper- some come into the ecclesia wanting to immediately have the places of honour, whilst others -the truly spiritual- gratefully accept whatever place they are given. There is also possible reference to Mt. 23:5,6 which also speaks of outward dressing by the Jews to give a spiritual impression, and a loving of chief seats in the synagogue: "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at (Jewish) feasts (cp. the communion service), and the chief seats in the synagogues". The fact that within the Jewish ecclesias there were seating arrangements in order of seniority further shows how they were based around the Jewish synagogue system, even suggesting that the ecclesia had the actual building as their ecclesial hall. Similarly there is ample evidence that the communion service was originally run on the lines of the Jewish Passover, with the eating of a meal in fellowship as a vital part of the 'love-feast'. Notice that James does not criticize the existence of such seating arrangements in themselves, but the wrong brethren being put in the wrong place. "A good place" does not just imply a nice seat- "good" is normally used in the sense of being morally good, and is also translated "honest"; it comes from a root meaning 'virtuous, morally worthy'. "Sit here under my footstool" also has a mainly spiritual implication- unless some brethren were so pompous that they had virtual thrones to sit on in the ecclesia. Jesus being seated at God's footstool shows his subjection to Him spiritually, and does not necessarily refer to the physical place where Jesus sits. Marshall's Interlinear renders "sit here" as "sit here well", implying that James' readers were thinking well of brethren in spiritual terms due to their outwardly impressive appearance.

2:4 *Do you not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*- Being partial within their minds, resulting in them respecting ('judging') the thoughts generated by their evil minds continues the theme of being only semi-spiritual due to being "double minded", a result of not letting the word totally dominate the mind. Verses 8 and 9 also go on to show that only through lack of application to the word was this partial thinking coming about. In similar vein Jeremiah accused the Jews of 'dissembling in their hearts' (42:20), using a Hebrew word which can mean both 'to go astray' and also 'to vacillate'; as if partiality and spiritual vacillation between good and evil are the same as rank disobedience.

It makes an interesting exercise to read through the letter of James and note how frequently we are warned about our internal thought processes; to control them and have them influenced by the Lord is the essence of following Him. James 2:4 would be an obvious example – when we see a well dressed believer, we are not to judge him “within yourself” as a judge who has evil thoughts, an unjust judge (see R.V.). We shouldn’t deceive ourselves within ourselves (James 1:22), our mind is not to immediately forget the truths we encounter in God’s word (James 1:25).

2:5 *Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those that are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those that love him?*- James really pleads with us to see the importance of all this, as if he is physically with them and known to them. This would again imply that the initial readership which James was focussing on was quite a small group of brethren. This

should not be read merely as meaning 'God has called the poor people to the Gospel'- seeing that the rich to whom James was writing had also been called (cp. Is. 66:2). Rather the emphasis is on "*God* (has) chosen the *poor* of this world" for positions of authority within the ecclesia- implying, in the context of v.3, that *they* had made a wrong choice, saying to the man in gay clothing "sit here in a good place" in the ecclesia. Thus James implies that God's choice should be our choice. The fact has to be faced that looking around the ecclesias of today, it is not "the poor of this world" who are in places of authority. Yet James here implies that they should be- as does Paul (1 Cor. 6:4). Now it can reasonably be argued that this category of brethren do not want such positions, and are happy to see those humanly more competent doing the job. Because of this, it is not the done thing to even nominate such brethren for office. Perhaps the fault lies with both sections of our community- surely those brethren should both be nominated and be prepared to accept responsibility, in the light of what James and Paul are saying? Remember that Peter, James and John were simple working men- but through the power of the Spirit James could talk to his brethren as "my beloved brethren" and rebuke them. That same Spirit can be in us through the word. 1 Cor. 6:4 shows beyond cavil that in a case of disagreement or difficulty in judgement- and such cases are now increasingly common- the opinion of the most humble and least esteemed brother should be sought and accepted. Such a brother will, by his very qualification for the task, naturally demur- as doubtless the brother chosen in the Corinth ecclesia did initially (if they obeyed Paul's advice). But surely this is what is required by these passages?

"Heirs of the Kingdom which he has promised to them that love Him" (v.5) mirrors 1:12 "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which he has promised to them that love Him". The implication is that it is "the poor of this world" who successfully endured spiritual temptation by the power of the word, and who therefore will have the reward "which the Lord has promised to them that love Him". The repetition of this phrase in 1:12 and 2:5 encourages us to make this interpretation. Yet in the first century, "the poor of this world" would have been those with the least free time, probably unable to read and anyway unlikely to be able to afford their own Scriptures, and probably more heavily burdened with domestic cares than the "rich men" of the ecclesia. Thus the point is again made that our spirituality is not related to the amount of spare time which we have free to devote to Bible reading. It is from the constant daily meditation on whatever spiritual food we have had time to feed on that we can overcome temptation and thus have the heart-warming knowledge of being thought of by God as "them that love Him". "If you love me, keep (in memory) my commandments" Jesus had also said. Note that "the Kingdom" and "the crown of life" are equated by comparing 1:12 and 2:5; as in 2 Tim.4:1,8. Thus "the Kingdom" does not only refer to the 'political' situation on the earth when Christ's rule has been established, but is also a synonym for eternal life, "the crown of life". Thus at the judgement seat the sheep are told "Inherit the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34)- when the Kingdom in the sense of Christ's political rulership of the earth has not yet been established. Similarly, Christ's preaching "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God" to Israel (Mt. 4:23) was not just composed of details about the state of the world after His second coming- but also about the opportunity of receiving "the crown of life" at His return. A study of the Greek word 'basileia' translated 'Kingdom' indicates that it can refer to all aspects of the King's rulership, not just the political Kingdom.

2:6 *But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and*

themselves drag you before the courts?- "The poor" here are brethren- and therefore the poor labourers who were oppressed by the "rich men" of the ecclesia in 5:4 must also refer to brethren in the ecclesia. "Dishonour" here in 2:6 in the Greek can also carry the idea of active abuse- it is also translated "dishonour" in Jn. 8:49, "suffer shame" in Acts 5:41 and "entreated shamefully" in Lk. 20:11. These are all concerning the Jews persecuting Christ and the early church. The only other occurrence of the word (Rom. 1:24) is also concerning the apostate Jews. Thus it may be that James is implying that this despising of the poor Jewish believers and Gentiles in the ecclesia was the same as the Judaizers and Jewish authorities behind them were doing. It would be surprising if the letter of James, being addressed to Jewish Christians, did not make some reference to the Judaist infiltration of the ecclesias, which Paul's letters show was a major threat to the early church (e.g. Gal. 2:4). The use of this word "despise" may thus imply that this group of rich Jews had been infiltrated by the Judaizers. Their lack of total commitment to the word would mean that their resistance to the Judaist infiltration was low indeed. It is therefore to be expected that they succumbed.

This recalls the descriptions of Jewish persecution of the saints:

"Saul… entering into every house (church?), and haling ("Dragging"- same word in Jn.21:8) men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3); "they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city" (Acts 17:6). The believers to whom James was writing had therefore suffered violent physical persecution, and yet still they lacked any deep spirituality. The rebuke later in this chapter of their attitude that works alone could substitute for their weak faith may well have reference to this (cp. 1 Cor. 13:3; Rev. 2:13,14). No doubt it is extremely tempting when being physically persecuted to feel that this excuses us from making the effort to control our minds by the application of the word. In the holocaust to come which we may well have to endure we will do well to remember this. The implication behind James' use of these words is that as the Jews were doing to them, so they were doing to their brethren, thus equating them with the Jews- maybe implying that the Judaist infiltration was so subtle that they were being influenced doctrinally by these people, and yet also submitting to persecution from their 'provisional' wing. Israel's relationship with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon had been similar.

2:7 *Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which you are called?*- Or 'that is called upon you'- in baptism. 1 Tim. 6:1,2 associates the blaspheming of God's Name with servants despising their masters who were believers. The context in James is of believers despising their poor brethren (v.6), perhaps through despising the brethren who were in their employ (5:4). Thus the suggestion is that the same spiritual blasphemy which occurred when believers were persecuted was repeated when a rich brother abused or despised a fellow brother. Notice that it is the name of God which is blasphemed in 1 Tim. 6:1, whilst at baptism the believers called upon themselves the name of Christ- they were baptized into Christ and thus became Christ's. This interchangeability of the name of Christ and God occurs frequently in the New Testament- because God's Name was given to Christ on his ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12). The reason for the rich brethren despising the poor was through not appreciating that God's Name was called upon those brethren- in the same way as the Jews' blasphemy of the Name was through their lack of appreciation that the believers carried the Name. Thus the key to successfully, humbly relating to our brethren is to

remind ourselves of the mighty Name which they bear, and that to despise them is to despise God.

2:8 *However, if you fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture: You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well!*- "Royal" means the Kingly law- James' comment on the emphasis which Jesus gave to the command to "love your neighbour" in Mt. 22:39, and especially to the giving of the "new commandment... that you love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). Mt. 22:37,38 clearly states that the command to "love your neighbour" was secondary to that to love God. Yet the "new commandment" of Jn. 13:34 to love your neighbour ("one another"), and James' calling of this "the royal law" implies that now the law had been ended on the cross, including the ten commandments written in stone (Col. 2:14-17), these two commands were one- because to love God is equivalent to loving your spiritual neighbour, because by calling on the name of Christ the neighbour therefore carried the Name of God, and thus to love the neighbour is the same as loving God. This is the teaching of the preceding v.7, as we have seen. Alternatively, "the royal law" may refer to the entire Mosaic law- seeing that the law was fulfilled in the keeping of that one commandment, to "love your neighbour as thyself" (Rom. 13:9). Gal. 5:14 says the same, and as in James 2 the context is of not biting and devouring one another within the ecclesia, as a result of Judaist infiltration to stir up strife (Gal. 5:11,12,15). If the command to "love your neighbour" was fulfilled with no subsequent despising of poor brethren, "you do well". The Greek for "well" is the same word translated "good" in v.3- the rich were invited to sit in a "good place" in the ecclesia, i.e. in a place of spiritual honour and respect. Thus James is saying that the ultimate qualification for sitting in the "good place" in the ecclesia was to love the members of the ecclesia as oneself, especially those whom it was tempting to despise. If the "royal law" refers to the whole law of Moses, it should be noted that *we* must fulfil it in spirit. It is easy to think that the Law was fulfilled solely by Christ's death on the cross.

2:9 *But if you show favouritism, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors*- This conviction by the Law may refer to the command to Israel's judges: "You shall not respect persons in judgment; but you shall hear the small (poor) as well as the great" (Dt. 1:17). These judges were therefore matched by Spirit-gifted ecclesial elders in the New Israel. These judges were 'given' as heads over Israel (Dt. 1:15 A.V.mg), as the ecclesia were 'given' Spirit-gifted elders (Eph. 4:11). Because of their power, "all the people shall hear and fear" (Dt. 17:13), exactly as they did after Peter's Spirit-guided judgment of Ananias (Acts 5:11). The judges were "wise men" (Dt. 1:13)- hence James' rebuke of the elders because they were *un*wise: "Who *is* a wise man... among you?" (3:13 cp. 1 Cor. 6:5). The book of Malachi is a rebuke of Israel's priests and judges- James' many allusions to it tabulated in our comments on 4:8 are understandable once the connection between Israel's judges and ecclesial elders is appreciated. Psalm 82 condemns the judges for doing many things which James accuses the elders of doing: possessing the Spirit, but respecting persons, overlooking the poor, fatherless and needy; neglecting the true knowledge of God, although they had been called to be God's children. Col. 2:14-17 clearly shows that the law in the form of the ten commandments, including that to "love thy neighbour", had been replaced by Christ. Yet James reasons with his readers as if they still respected the old law of commandments- again indicating the slow transition to an acceptance that the Law had been ended in Christ. The command to love one's

neighbour as oneself is an absolute statement; it cannot be fulfilled if one neighbour is loved more than another. The love a man has for himself is complete- in fundamental terms the degree of this love does not change with time or with the characteristics he exhibits. This nature of love should be shown to the brethren. To respect persons was to break this ideal. Thus Jesus could ask us to love each other "As I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). He loved us as the church as a whole ("you" is plural), and therefore each of us receives the same all consuming love of Christ, shown in summation by his death on the cross. Our love to each other should be equally constant and without the favouritism which seems almost inevitable with our natural mind.

2:10 *For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of breaking all of it- As* with so much in James, this seems almost too idealistic. But James drives the importance of it home: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (v.10). This is identical reasoning to Gal. 3:10-13, where Paul is arguing that the Galatians should resist the inroads of the Judaizers and not return to the Law- therefore suggesting that there was an identical situation amongst James' readers, as there probably was in nearly every first century ecclesia, especially the Jewish-dominated ones.

2:11 *For He that said: Do not commit adultery, also said: Do not kill. So if you do not commit adultery but if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the law*- "For that law which said (AVmg.), Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the Law" (v.11). The statement that "that law" included two separate commandments (concerning murder and adultery) shows that "the royal law" of v.8 may well refer to the whole law of Moses, which was fulfilled by loving the neighbour (Rom.13:9). These two commands concerning adultery and murder occur together elsewhere; it may be that James chose them because in spirit they are easily broken due to an uncontrolled mind; and the control of the mind is the great theme of James. Spiritual adultery is further defined in 4:4: "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?", thus interpreting adultery as having worldly friends. Those to whom James was writing were aware, so v.11 implies, that literal and spiritual adultery were wrong, but were not so conscious of the command not to kill each other by hating them in their heart (Mt. 5:21,22). The fighting and killing which James describes as happening amongst his readers (4:1,2) must refer also to this spiritual murder due to lack of love (to what else can it apply?). It is noteworthy that James is one of the few New Testament letters that does not contain explicit warning against sexual misbehaviour. We can thus start to build up a fuller picture of James' audience- keeping dutifully away from worldly friendships, holding themselves back from sexual sin, yet trading zealously with the world to make much profit (4:13), and unaware of the supreme importance of the command to love each other, resulting in them transgressing the law in spirit. Perhaps they are not without their counterparts today.

2:12 *So speak and act as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty*- The Saviour came more to save than condemn (Jn. 12:47); it is men who condemn themselves as inappropriate to receive eternal life. It is *their* words, not His, which will be the basis of their rejection. We must so speak as those who will be judged, knowing that he who shewed no mercy in his words will receive none (James 2:12,13); our words of mercy or condemnation, and perhaps *the way we say them,* will be the basis upon which we will be accepted or rejected.

This lack of love was especially shown in their words: "So speak and act…". Notice the equation of words and actions ("speak... do"), continuing the theme of thoughts and words being the same as physical actions. "The law of liberty" is normally used elsewhere in contrast to the Law of Moses- another subtle swipe at the Judaist tendencies in the early Jewish ecclesias. We must speak our words in accordance with the fact that we will be judged by the word; if we have the word/law of liberty (cp. 1:25) in our hearts and therefore influencing our words, we need not fear our judgement by that word. Thus we judge ourselves now by our response to the word in practice, by how far we let it influence our words and doings, especially in the area of showing love to our brother.

2:13 *For judgment is without mercy to whomsoever has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment*- This appears to be alluding to Job 22:6-11, where Eliphaz says just the same about Job, saying that the harsh judgements coming upon Job were a result of him being harsh in his dealings with his fellow men previously- e.g. "Thou hast sent widows away empty...therefore snares are round about thee" (AV), as they were around a widow. Several of the things Eliphaz mentions in his accusations of Job are also themes in James:

Job 22:6-11	James
"Thou hast...stripped the naked of their clothing	"If a brother or sister be naked" (and you don't clothe them), (2:15)
Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry...	"Destitute of daily food"
But as for the mighty man, he had the earth (i.e. you gave much to *him*)	"You have respect to him that wears the gay clothing" and neglect the poor (2:3)
...thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the (1:27) fatherless have been broken".	"Visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction"

If these connections are valid- and there are several other places where James is writing with Job in mind- then it appears that James did not see Job as beyond reproof; but that like those to whom James wrote he was a rich businessman, trusting in his own strength. This fits in to the many other indications that Job represented those Jews who trusted in the Law. If the allegations of Eliphaz in Job 22 are therefore partly true, Job's clearing of himself from these things in Job 31 is to be read as sophistry- and therefore this clearing of himself is vigorously rebuked by Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, in Job 32. It is not unreasonable to think that it is not just the recording of the friends' words that was inspired but that to some degree their rebuke of Job was also directly inspired by God, although not all they said can be treated like this. We are quick enough to accept their reasoning regarding the mortality of man as inspired statements of Divine truth- why not some of their other statements about Job?

"*He* shall have judgment without mercy" suggests the picture of two people at the judgment seat being judged for the same sin; one is forgiven because he had showed mercy, while the other is rejected for not doing so. The rejoicing of the merciful brother is then set against the misery of the unmerciful brother. Mercy will then rejoice *against* judgment in the same way as the men of Nineveh will rise up *against* the unworthy at judgment day.

Note the implication that the believer should *shew* mercy. The Greek word translated "shewed" in v.13 is not the normal word translated thus. The word used here means literally 'to do a work', again continuing James' theme that spiritual actions are still 'works'. This lack of love and harsh judgement amongst James' audience was also connected with an academic emphasis on faith to the neglect of works- seeing that v.14 continues "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?". It seems true in practice that those who are busy actively expressing their faith in works tend to have less time for unnecessarily harsh judgement of others in the ecclesia. It did not "profit"- literally 'heap up'. Those to whom James wrote were hard working traders (4:13); thus such language was especially relevant to them. Again, James is working out a very telling play on words: 'Your heaping up of material profit while being academically familiar with your faith is not heaping up spiritual profit'. These brethren *said* they had faith. Later in chapter 3 James points out that because the word was not really controlling their thoughts, their words were uncontrolled. An example of this would be this public talking about their faith, heaping up a reward in the eyes of men.

2:14 *My brothers, what good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can that faith save him?*- James speaks of the man who says to his poor brother 'Be ye warmed and filled' but does nothing about it practically. This, James says, is dead faith; faith without works is not faith. But the man said those words, so James' logic goes, *in faith* that somehow the poor man would be helped. Yet he did nothing, and therefore his faith wasn't really faith; "can *that* faith save him?" (James 2:14 RV). There is true faith, and 'that' kind of faith which only appears to be faith in the eyes of the person holding it.

A notable example of faith without works is then given in v.15,16. It ends with the challenge "What does it profit"- cp. v.14 "What does it profit...though a man say he has faith, and have not works?".

2:15 *If a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food*- It is probable that this was not a hypothetical situation; 5:4,5 describe some rich brethren as oppressing their brethren who were their agricultural employees. "Lack" means literally 'coming short', perhaps connecting with the fact that the employers kept back these brethren's wages (5:4).

2:16 *And one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled! And yet you do not give them the things needful to the body- what does it profit?*- 1 Cor.13:2 makes the point that it is quite possible to have great faith without having any true love for one's brother. Similarly, these people were saying in absolute faith, really believing it would be done by God, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled". "Go" or "Depart" either implies they were told this by their employers to whom they came with their request, or perhaps that they were told to depart from the ecclesial meeting where such requests were considered. It would seem that their rich employers were these brethren who refused their requests. The mention of lack of food and clothing

("naked") recalls Mt. 6:25, where the Lord assures His people that these needs will always be provided for. Yet the believers James writes of had to be concerned about these things. It may be that God provides for our needs by giving the means to the rich in the Ecclesia, but it still depends on their freewill decision to share what they have.

2:17 *Even so, faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself*- This is in the context of the previous eight verses which have been reprimanding the readers for the lack of a loving mind. These are the "works" which were lacking, as well as the physical "works" of giving material support. There must be a connection here with Christ's words: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit" (Jn. 12:24). If this connection is valid, then James is equating faith with the seed of wheat. The seed represents the word (Lk. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23), supremely manifested in the Lord Jesus. The equation is because "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". Thus James is saying that the word seed in us should bring forth fruit in our caring for others, in the same way as Jesus died in order to bring forth much spiritual fruit in us. The rich brethren needed to make the same kind of short term sacrifice due to the effect of the word in their lives, in order to care for their brethren's welfare, as Jesus did for them. It is significant that in v.26 faith is likened to a dead body, which is the same figure being used here in v.17.

2:18 *Yes, a man will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I, by my works, will show you my faith*- The man is implying that if James has faith and he has works, then between them they should be accepted. Thus the man was effectively advocating salvation by works, whilst agreeing that faith was also important- although not essential for him personally to develop. This sounds like the reasoning of the wavering Jewish believers. James replies that faith and works are indivisible, that true spiritual works cannot exist without faith. Thus it is irrelevant for a believer to think that he must concentrate on developing 'faith' or 'works' as independent things- what God looks for is 'faith-works', i.e. a faith whose very nature leads to works; a faith that *works* by love (Gal. 5:6). Thus the works follow as an inevitable corollary from the faith, and therefore are not consciously performed. Therefore James reasons that a wise man will "shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (3:13). "You believe that there is one God"- the fundamental truth of Judaism which the Christian Jews prided themselves on- "the devils (demoniacs) also believe, and tremble" (v.19), alluding to the sick often trembling before their cure. This may refer to the many incidents of curing of demoniacs in the Gospels, all of whom were parabolic of the hopeless state of the Jewish system. More significantly, James is referring to the fact that many people during Christ's ministry had had the faith to be cured, but only a handful had responded with the works which a word based faith should have produced- as opposed to the intense hope and belief in personal betterment which the people had. The other person in the conversation is described as a "vain man" (v.20); "vain" meaning empty headed or minded, referring to the demoniac state of v.19. We saw in 1:26 how the man who did not have the word in his heart to control his tongue was also "vain". The man referred to here in 2:20 was without faith, and thus without the word, seeing this is the basis of faith. Faith without works is barren (v.20, Gk.). This is in the context of v.21 speaking of once barren Abraham (Rom. 4:19 implies he was impotent when Isaac was conceived) being "*our* father", as well as that of Isaac. Faith *with* works is therefore spiritually fruitful. Faith *without* works being barren or dead may hint at the deadness of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb (Rom. 4:19). Despite

having produced Isaac, their faith and works were only completed by the offering up of Isaac. Until that point, they were still effectively 'dead' in God's sight, not being totally proven.

2:19 *You believe that God is one! You do well. The demons also believe and shudder*- James 2:14-18 speaks of the connection between *faith* (believing) and *works* (doing). It is no co-incidence that 2:19 then says in this context: "You *believe* that God is one… you *do* well". To have *faith* in the unity of God will lead to *works*, 'doing well'. "Demons" is put here by metonymy for the [supposedly] demon possessed people, and their observed 'trembling' at the time of their cure. But I don't think that this verse is James as it were telling us doctrinal truth about demons. The context of James 2 shows it to be part of an imagined dialogue between the "works man" [who thinks works can save], and a "faith man" [who thinks merely saying we believe is enough and our lives are irrelevant]. Both these imaginary men come out with 'wrong' statements, so it's not surprising that the 'works man' disparages 'faith' by saying that even demon possessed people can believe and be cured. Of itself, this passage can hardly be taken as proof that demons really do believe – the usual position taken is that demons are fallen angels who cannot believe and cannot repent nor be healed. This passage even taken on face value would contradict that system of belief.

2:20 *But, O vain man, do you need evidence that faith without works is useless?*- Faith without works is "barren" (James 2:20 RV)- the implication being that if we do the works which our beliefs elicit from us, yet more creative fruit is brought forth. And James goes straight on to speak of Abraham offering Isaac (James 2:21)- as if to say that Abraham and Sarah's 'barrenness' was overcome by their faith, and this led them to the 'opportunity' to show yet more faith in being prepared to offer Isaac.

2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?*- James goes on to show how Abraham's faith brought works as a natural by-product. The phrase "Abraham our father" looks back to Mt. 3:8,9 and Jn. 8:33,39, where the Jews who said this were told to "bring forth fruits (works) meet for repentance" and to "do the works of Abraham" respectively. Thus James was telling his readers to do the works of Abraham. The fact they were doing works already shows that the real 'work' of Abraham they needed to develop was his faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe" (Jn. 6:29), Jesus had said. The Biblically minded would have spotted the apparently flat contradiction between "Abraham our father (was) justified by works" and Rom. 4:2, which stresses that Abraham was not justified by his works but by his faith. Thus again the "works" which James says Abraham was justified by were his faith *and* the practical outworking of it in being prepared to offer Isaac. Abraham's "works" were that "he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (v.21). Notice the past tense of "he had offered" and that it does not say 'he bound Isaac...'. Because of Abraham's faith that God would resurrect Isaac on behalf of the perfect lamb sacrifice that he believed was to come (Gen. 22:5,8,14), it was reckoned to Abraham as if he had performed the 'work' of offering Isaac even though he had not physically performed it. Thus the Biblically minded would be able to see from these allusions to other Scriptures that the spiritual attribute of faith and the concept of works are almost indivisible. This is confirmed by noting that the one act of offering up Isaac is described as "works" in the plural- because it involved many separate decisions of faith. And in our lives too, God may count something to us as a completed work when we have only summoned enough true faith to do it, and have not actually performed it in reality.

2:22 *You saw that faith worked together with his works, and so by works was faith perfected*- Faith is perfected / matured by the process of works (James 2:22,23). The works, the upward spiral of a life lived on the basis of faith, develop the initial belief in practice. Thus Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but the works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith "perfect". It is that faith, therefore, which does the works. Verse 22 puts this in so many words: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?". Note too the upward spiral initiated by having a basic faith- faith led to works, and those works perfected the faith. The Greek word for "wrought" is the same translated 'worker together' in 2 Cor. 6:1: "We then, as workers together with (God)". Faith 'works' alongside the physical works. The preceding verse (2 Cor. 5:21) speaks of how God is working through His gift of Christ for our salvation through our not relying on our own works. Paul says he is working together with God to get the believers not to "receive the grace of God in vain" by relying on their physical works for salvation. By having this attitude to works and faith, Abraham's faith was "made perfect" or finished, implying that it is possible for a man to develop a fullness of faith in something, a totality of belief which needs no further improvement. If Abraham could reach this dizzy height, it must certainly be within reach of all his seed.

2:23 *And the scripture was fulfilled which said: And Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as righteousness; and he was called the friend of God*- James 2:23 speaks as if the comment "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" was a one-off statement made at that time when Abraham believed; and it was subsequently justified when Abraham demonstrated his faith by offering Isaac. So the comment that "Abraham believed" surely must refer to Abraham's response as he stood there looking up at the stars.

This is quoting Gen. 15:5,6, where in the moment that Abraham looked up at the stars and believed (so Rom. 4:23 implies) "So shall your seed be", God "counted it to him for righteousness". God knew that Abraham's faith in those words would really be shown when he was asked to offer Isaac, the only human means of their fulfilment. Thus the Scripture recorded that Abraham was righteous when this was as yet unproved by his works. However, that Scripture was fulfilled when Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac. The point is being made that just that kind of intense faith is as if the works have already been done- which is exactly in line with James' preceding reasoning. The use of the phrase "The Scripture" implies that either there was a literal written account made of the words of Gen. 15:6 which was then validated by Abraham's offering of Isaac (note "*was* fulfilled", past tense), or "The Scripture" refers to some kind of (Angelic?) record in Heaven of events in our probations, similar to the concept of the deeds of believers being written in a book of life. The evidence for either seems about equal, and there is no reason why both cannot be correct. "The scripture of truth" in Dan. 10:21 appears to have been some written record available to the Angels which they revealed to man. "The Scripture" elsewhere in James seems to refer to the general spirit of God's principles in dealing with man: "The Scripture saith...The spirit that dwelleth in us..." (4:5) does not seem to refer to any specific written scripture, and "the royal law" (i.e. what was specifically placed on record) seems to be separate from "the scripture" in 2:8. Similarly "the scripture" foresaw that God would justify the heathen (Gal.3:8), and "concluded all under sin "(Gal. 3:22), hinting that "the scripture" is more than just the written words. Writing

was certainly developed by Abraham's time, and a literal written statement of Abraham's acceptance with God being verified by his offering of Isaac is an attractive idea. That "the scripture" which was fulfilled at the time of the offering of Isaac (James 2:20) was something written is suggested in Rom. 4:22,23, where the fact "it was imputed to him" in Gen. 15:6 "was not written for his sake alone". The fact Abraham was justified for his faith was written for Abraham to see at some time in his life. The point has been made that the descriptions of Sodom in Gen. 10:19 (cp. Gen. 14:3) imply that Genesis 10 was written before Sodom's destruction as recorded in Gen.19. Thus it is reasonable to suggest that Gen.15 may also have been in written existence.

2:24 *You see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith*- Romans 4 stresses that works do *not* justify a man, but rather a true faith that is expressed in actions. "Faith only" must therefore refer to a holding of true doctrine and a hope that God provides physical help, as characterized by the healed demoniacs (2:19) and exemplified by those who asked in prayer for things to "consume upon your lusts" (4:2,3). There is a definite connection between "faith" as a spiritual quality and "the faith" as the set of doctrines which the believer accepts. It is these which produce the attribute of faith. The "works" James is referring to are 'faith works'- i.e. works that come as a natural corollary to faith and which include spiritual attributes like belief in God's word.

2:25 *And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*- The use of the word "messengers" instead of "spies" implies that the spies came with a message which Rahab believed. The Joshua record stresses how she knew the covenant Name, knew and quoted the words of Moses (Josh. 2:9), and had her roof covered with flax- i.e. linen, perhaps hinting at the righteousness already imputed to her for her faith. The message which the spies brought was probably a call to repentance, or perhaps a statement of the coming destruction of Jericho. Rahab's acceptance of this message based on her knowledge of God's basic principles corresponds to the holding of 'the faith' by the Jewish Christians. Her sending out of the spies another way was the 'works' that came as a natural response to her true faith. Her hiding of the spies, courageous lying to the Jericho Gestapo or putting the cord out of the window as a public testimony to her separation were her physical 'works'- but these are not chosen as an example of her 'faith-works'. Her scheming to enable the spies to safely return to Joshua by them going out "another way" and thereby enabling the campaign against Jericho to begin, showed her real "works". She believed their message about the destruction of Jericho, therefore in faith she enabled the spies to return to bring this about. Rahab was "justified... *when*...", again showing that justification or faith being made perfect (v.22) is something that can occur at a specific moment after reaching a certain degree of faith which has been expressed in actions (cp. Abraham looking up at the stars and believing). The implication here in v.25 is that the moment the spies were sneaking through the outskirts of Jericho following her directions, Rahab was justified.

2:26 *For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead*- 'Faith' is being likened to a person, i.e. the believer in the conversation of v.18-20 who thinks that his own faith alone will save him. "The Spirit" is often a reference

to a spiritual mind, notably in Romans. Thus the body is equated with faith as the Spirit or spiritual attributes are with "works".

JAMES CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Be not many teachers. My brothers, realize that we teachers shall receive heavier judgment*- We will be condemned by the very presence of the excellence of the Lord's glory; but we will have judgment / condemnation with mercy (James 2:13); we will receive damnation, and yet be saved (James 3:1).

James continues to be increasingly specific as to how the word should act upon us to produce a spiritual character. The whole of Chapter 3 is devoted to showing how *our* words are the clearest indicator of how *the* word is affecting our heart, and the emphasis we should therefore give to the control of the tongue and the thoughts behind it. This being addressed to those leading the ecclesia further suggests that this letter was written primarily to the rich Jewish believers who were the Spirit gifted eldership in the mainly Jewish ecclesias of the first century. These two verses must have Mt. 23:8 in mind: "Be not you called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren". Hence James addresses them as "my brethren", gently reminding them that they were not masters but brethren. The context of Mt. 23 is denouncing the Pharisees for loving the prominent seats in synagogues and to be publicly recognized for their righteousness, which again indicates that these brethren were influenced by Judaistic attitudes. We have seen how in 2:2,3 they were placing great importance on having good seats in the synagogue/ecclesia. "Masters" means 'teachers'; and maybe this is echoing Paul's condemnation of the Jews in Rom. 2:17-24: "You are called a Jew... and makes your boast (cp. James 4:16) of God... and are confident that you yourself are... an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes". There are several other links:

Rom. 2:17-24	James
"Makest thy boast of God"	The tongue of the teachers in the ecclesia boasted (3:5; 4:16)
"Knowest His will"- so they thought.	They should have said "If the Lord will" (4:15)- implying they thought they already knew God's will.
"An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes"	"Many masters" (teachers); 3:1
"Dost thou commit adultery?"	"Ye adulterers" (4:4; 2:11)
"Through breaking the Law"	"Ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (2:9)
"The name of God is blasphemed among the	"Rich men… the judgement seats(Gentiles) ...blaspheme that worthy

which ye Gentiles because of you (Jews).	name by (Jewish believers) are called" (2:6,7)

3:2 *For in many things we all make others stumble. If any does not cause stumbling by his words, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also*- We all offend others (James 3:2), and he who offends his brother will be condemned. Those who are sleeping at the Lord's coming will be found unworthy, so says the spirit in Thessalonians. But in the Lord's parable, *all* the virgins are sleeping at His coming, wise and foolish alike. They were all living on far too low a level, and yet the Lord will save them [us] by grace alone. God accepts we aren't going to make it as we should. There ought to be no schism in the body (1 Cor. 12:25), but He realizes that inevitably there will be (1 Cor. 11:19).
Their desire to be teachers therefore indicated that they were bringing the attitude of their former religion and the surrounding world into the ecclesia. The rest of Chapter 3 is about the tongue; James' argument therefore seems to run 'As a teacher you will have to speak many words, and the chances are (v.2) your words will offend someone in the ecclesia. Remember that as a teacher of the ecclesia you are responsible for the flock, and therefore "we shall receive the greater condemnation"(v.1). Only a "perfect man" who has his words totally in control will not offend anyone, and only he is "able also to bridle the whole body" (v.2)- the ecclesia, the body of Christ'. It is worth noting that our judgement in the last day will take into account the quality of our converts and the effort we have made to build up others. Our receiving condemnation as a result of being masters may be alluding to Mt. 12:37: "By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned". In this case, the words Christ is speaking about are specifically our words to our brethren and sisters. The context in v.34 is Christ telling the teachers of the law that it was impossible for them to "speak (i.e. teach) good things" because their heart was evil. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things" (v.35), which connects with the description of the Scribes (teacher of the Law) instructed in the Truth bringing forth "out of his treasure things new and old" (Mt.13:52). The ideal ecclesial 'master' will not offend any in the ecclesia because his words are controlled on account of his being a "perfect man". 2 Tim. 3:16,17 says that the word of God through the spirit has the power to create a perfect man (cp. 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:8-13). James 1:4,5 has shown that by the wisdom of the word, a man can be made "perfect and entire". Only such a brother will be able to "bridle the whole body" (ecclesia). Earlier, in 1:26, the bridling of the tongue is spoken of as a result of the word acting on the heart. Thus only someone able to bridle his own tongue can bridle the ecclesia. That this interpretation is on the right lines is also suggested by v.6 talking about the "members... the whole body" being influenced by the tongue. This is the language of 1 Cor. 12 concerning the ecclesial body.

3:3 *Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also*- This can probably be read on two levels- the need to control our lives by concentrating on the control of the mouths (the tongue), and also the implication that the whole body of the ecclesia can be turned about by their leader controlling the ecclesial tongue- i.e. encouraging the members to control their thoughts and words. And this is exactly what James, the real leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia and the Jewish believers of the Diaspora (1:1), was trying to do. The way he asserts his own leadership like this is so subtle that only the thoughtful and spiritually aware would appreciate it. The Greek *pletho* translated 'obey' carries the idea of

yielding and friendly confidence- as one would deal with a horse; and this is precisely how James was trying to influence this ecclesial "body". This was to the end that the body would be turned about, a phrase implying a total about turn, thus showing the degree to which the ecclesia needed to change. The reference to bits in the horses' mouths is an allusion to Ps. 32:8,9. This teaches that the understanding of God, having experienced His mercy, should lead us to control our tongues, rather than our having to be forced to do so by a bridle. This fits in with the teaching of v.8, that the tongue cannot be tamed by man's human efforts (cp. bit and bridle), seeing that the natural mind which produces our words is 'beyond cure' (Jer. 17:9 Heb.).

3:4 *Behold the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, they are all the same turned about by a very small rudder, wherever the impulse of the steersman wills*- The figure of the ecclesia's leaders as the rider and the church as the horse is now transferred to that of a captain steering the ship. Again, emphasis is given to how relatively easy it is to control the direction of our spiritual lives and the whole ecclesia- by a dedicated concentration on the control of the tongue and the thinking behind it. The ships seem "so great" (translated "mighty" in Rev. 16:18); the flesh seems so vast and strong, the task of turning round a wayward ecclesia appears so impossible. They "are driven of fierce winds" representing the winds of false Judaist doctrine (Eph. 4:14), and the winds of the flesh and trials of life which beat upon the spiritual house of our lives and the ecclesia, as described in the parable of the house on the rock (Mt. 7:25-27). Note how the immature ecclesia is being likened to a ship blown about by the wind, and yet this was a foretaste of judgment day. Our experiences now are training for that day. The winds of the parable of Mt.7 were overcome by hacking away at the rock of our hard human heart in order to hear the sayings of Christ and put them into practice. It is significant that the winds of James 1:6 could be overcome by faith, which comes from the word. The wavering believer is likened there to a ship in trouble on a windy sea. The ship can be turned about "Wherever the impulse of the steersman wills". The hint may be that there is a greater steersman in our lives than our own steel will, and He works by the impulse of the Spirit. The word for "wills" means 'intense desire or will', showing the great concentration of mental effort required by the captain of the spiritual ship. Again, the way to have a powerful will is to have our own personal will merged with that of God. The will of God is in the word (1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18 cp. John 1:13), and a saturation of the mind with the word will result in our mind becoming like that of God. Thus John 15:7 states the tremendous encouragement: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done". Jesus does not say we must ask according to God's will- but according to our *own* will, because if the word abides in us then our will becomes that of God- and any prayer according to His will is heard (1 Jn. 5:14).

3:5 *So the tongue also is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!*- The believer is identified with his tongue. "A little (Greek: micro) member" stresses the small physical size of the tongue in proportion to the vast spiritual effect it has. If the body and its members also have reference to the ecclesia as a whole, it may be that James is implying that one very subtle member- i.e. an individual in the ecclesia- was using his words to mislead the ecclesia. The ship can be easily influenced- by either a good or bad governor. The individual referred to was probably an agent of the Judaizers, whom the New Testament often describes as doing their evil work through "Great swelling words of

vanity" (Jude 16; see too 3 Jn. 10; 2 Pet. 2:3; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Tim. 6:4; Col. 2:4; Eph. 5:6; 1 Cor. 1:17; Rom. 16:18). The tongue boasting "great things" is looking back to Ps. 12:2,3: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a *double heart* do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh great things" (AVmg.) The context of bad words coming as a result of a double mind is exactly the same as in James (1:8; 4:8). the vain man of Ps. 12:2 is mentioned again in James 2:20. Ps. 12:4,5 also have connections with James. Psalm 12 concludes with praise of God's words: "The words of the Lord are pure words" (v.6), as if to suggest that the word of God is the antidote to proud speaking. This all fits the context of James nicely. Thus "the tongue" here in James 3:5 is being used to represent a group of proud, vain talkers within the ecclesial body, who were probably all influenced by the Judaizers, possibly with one specific ringleader. Being "a little member" of the ecclesia, this group may not have been numerically large. "Behold, how great a matter ('wood') a little fire kindles!" (v.5). The Greek word for "little" here is different from that in the phrase "a little member". This implies rather a short period of time- i.e. 'consider what havoc can be caused by fire so quickly'. The implication is that James' readers needed to act quickly both to bring their own tongue under control and also to restrain "the tongue" element that were leading the ecclesia astray, and soon would burn down the ecclesia- represented by the 'wood', composed of "the planting of the Lord". The New Testament epistles often give reason to think that the ecclesia will be in a state of great spiritual weakness just prior to the second coming. Those who find this hard to believe should bear in mind how *quickly* a small group of brethren can influence the ecclesia for bad.

3:6- see on James 1:23.

And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna- Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Speaking of the last day Isaiah 33:11 had foretold: "your breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you". See on James 5:3.

If we may speak in human terms, the speed and power of God’s intellect is such that He does not need words as we do in order to reason and reach conclusions. This begins to be reflected by the way in which the Bible is full (fuller than many realize) of the device of metonymy, whereby the cause is put for the effect. The piercing analysis of God is reflected by the way in which He uses this linguistic device so frequently. Much misunderstanding of the atonement has arisen through failing to appreciate God’s use of metonymy. Other examples include James 3:6, where “the tongue” means the words the tongue speaks; and 1 John 5:15, where God hearing our prayers means (see context) that He answers them. Unless we appreciate metonymy, we will come to the conclusion that God’s word is making incorrect statements; for example, that mere possession of a tongue means that our whole body is defiled (James 3:6).

The root of all sin is in our hearts (Jer.17:9), and as the tongue so accurately reflects the heart, it is "a world of iniquity". God "has set the world in (man's) heart" (Ecc. 3:11), which means that "there is no good in" man (Ecc. 3:12), i.e. in man's heart. The tongue will defile the whole body- the ecclesia, and also our individual lives. Remember how in 2:26 a man's spiritual life is also likened to a body. The tongue defiles the body. This is alluding to the Lord's words in Mt. 15:11,18 that

"those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man". Jesus says our evil desires defile us; James describes our tongue as doing the same, again showing the effective identification of our thoughts and words. We have suggested that "the body" refers to both the ecclesia and the spiritual life of the believers. There are many references to "the body" which cannot be applied to our physical body; most obviously James 3:2 speaks of the body being bridled by control of the tongue. Similarly, every part of the body we have in the Kingdom will be spiritually aware and significant. It is for this reason that abuse of the body we now have is such a serious offence. The word for 'defile' is the same translated 'spot' regarding the need for a believer to keep himself and his spiritual garments unspotted by the world (1:27)- thus equating "the body" and the garments, and "the world" with our evil thinking which leads to our bad works. Remember that God has set the world in our heart, so that there is no good in man (Ecc. 3:11,12). The tongue and the evil heart behind it "sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (v.6). We have commented earlier on this. The tongue will be set on fire of Gehenna- i.e. the destruction of the physical body of the rejected at the judgement will be the destruction of his "tongue", seeing that there is a certain association between our spiritual character and our physical body. The language here implies physical fire may be used to destroy the unworthy saints- an idea supported elsewhere.

3:7 *For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind*- "Mankind" in Greek is from two words- 'Man' and 'kind'. The latter is the same as occurs earlier in the verse, and as well as meaning a genus it fundamentally means 'nature' (see A.V.mg). In the same way as a horse and ship can be "tamed" because we can relatively easily analyse their nature and make them respond in an expected way to a certain stimulus, it seems that some in the ecclesia were thinking that the use of human wisdom could tame our animal human nature. Marshall's Interlinear offers the rendering "every nature of beasts... has been tamed by human nature". The fact animals have increasingly been tamed by man ("is tamed and hath been tamed") perhaps encouraged these believers to think that there could be a gradual progression in the taming of human nature also by human strength. The connection between the animals and our bestial sinful instincts would have been appreciated by these brethren; "every kind" of animals had been increasingly tamed, and thus they thought human strength could also tame human nature.

3:8 *But the tongue no one can tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison*- our pets are more obedient to us than our tongues. The Greek for "mankind" well describes the reasoning ability of our human nature that can apparently tame animal instincts. "Man" alone can imply human, semi-spiritual reasoning- e.g. "I speak (reason) after the manner of men", or "I am speaking in human terms" (N.I.V.) in Rom. 6:19. "Kind" carries the idea of growth by germination.
But rather than being progressively tamed, human nature is in a progressive downward spiral to death if it goes unchecked (1:14,15). The deception of our natural thinking is that to a limited extent it can be spiritually sound: "The Gentiles... do by nature the things contained in the law" (Rom. 2:14), "nature itself" teaches the spiritual principles governing hair length (1 Cor. 11:14). Like James' ecclesia, it is possible to live in the Truth adhering to correct doctrine- "the faith"- and make a half-hearted attempt to develop a spiritual mind to control our actions in our own strength. James argues for a totality of success in our spiritual lives; he is saying that any

striving for spiritual development based on our natural reasoning will fail, ultimately, to develop the high standard of being totally spiritual that James is setting. He holds up Abraham and Rahab as examples of those who did reach a certain point of fullness of faith and subsequent justification with God, showing that such a state is not impossible for us. Jude 10,12 describes the Judaizers speaking "great swelling words...which they know naturally" at the communion service ("feast of charity"). This again suggests that James' warning about using natural wisdom- i.e. from within our own nature- to control the ecclesial body and our own lives is aimed at a group of false teachers within the ecclesia who were controlling the ecclesia and encouraging its members to control themselves by relying on the mental abilities of human nature, rather than on the wisdom from the word filling the mind. "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (v.8).

The likening of "the tongue" to a deadly snake invites comparison with the serpent in Eden, and therefore with the Judaizers, who "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" were enticing Christians away "from the simplicity which is in Christ" by preaching "another Gospel" based on "another Spirit"- i.e. of the human spirit or mind, as opposed to the Holy Spirit which was in the word of the true Gospel (2 Cor. 11:3,4). The serpent in Eden is elsewhere a symbol of the Jewish system. The serpent was to be *destroyed*, not just tamed, by the seed of the woman. The serpent/ devil being in our natural mind, our tongue must be regarded by us as a rampant snake, seeing that it reflects our thoughts. The following verse 9 contains another allusion to early Genesis. By the tongue, the man made in God's similitude is cursed, due to the serpent's tongue. Through the unbridled tongue and also the influence of the Judaist serpent, the new creation of believers could be cursed, as they can be today too. The tongue cannot be tamed by man; the emphasis being on the word "man". Yet in 1:26 we saw that the mark of a true believer influenced by the word is that he *can* bridle his tongue. Thus here James is saying that "no man" in the sense of the natural man, a reliance on human strength, can control the tongue. There must be a connection with the demoniac Legion whom no man could tame (Mk. 5:4)- perhaps in that he also represented the Jewish system. There is also an echo here of Paul's description of how human nature is so impossible for the natural man to control: "The carnal mind... is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be... in my flesh dwelleth no good thing... how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 8:7; 7:18). Thus it is not a question of changing the carnal mind by the strength of the carnal mind; Paul says that is impossible; but of creating a "new man" by a spirit or power of reasoning outside the natural man. If the spirit of man is no use, the only other source of power is God's Holy Spirit. The parallels between the untamable nature of the tongue and that of our evil thinking as described in Romans shows how exactly our words are to be equated with the thinking of our heart. The tongue is "an unruly evil"; Strong defines "unruly" as 'unrestrainable', which fits in with the exposition offered above.

3:9 *With this we bless the Lord and the Father, and with this we curse men, even though they are made after the likeness of God*- James warns his converts of the need to restrain our tongue; and yet he admits that “we”, himself included, use the tongue to bless God and curse men; whereas in other parts of his letter he addresses his readers as “you” when he criticizes their behaviour. But in this matter of the tongue, he holds himself, their teacher, to be afflicted with the same failures as them (James 3:9 cp. 4:15,16).

James himself appeals in his letter for us to bridle the tongue. But here he seems to say that the tongue is uncontrollable, and “we”- he includes himself- use it to both bless God and curse men. And he goes on to say that this shouldn’t be so, because a good tree brings forth good fruit, i.e. words. Inappropriate words from our mouths indicate that there is something fundamentally wrong with our spirituality. What is the reconciliation of this? I suggest that James, despite being a leading brother, is showing a chink in his own armour, and thereby empowering his message all the more. He is saying that he himself has to admit that “we”, including himself, do sometimes say inappropriate things. The tongue can be bridled, it can be as Peter puts it ‘refrained’. But in practice, no man seems able to totally tame the tongue. And this is why James also says in this very context that we shouldn’t be eager to be teachers, because it is almost inevitable that we will use words wrongly and thereby offend our brother, with all the Biblical implications this carries: “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man” (3:2). James, a teacher in the ecclesia, a Master in Israel, says that “we”, himself included, at times offend others; because “the tongue can no man tame”. And yet it *can* be bridled, refrained, tamed, just as a horse can be tamed by use of a bridle. Surely what James is saying is this: ‘This matter of the tongue worries me no end. I know I, and all of us, could tame our tongues. It’s vital we do. But inappropriate words do still come out of me, and you. And it worries me, because a good tree doesn’t bear such bad fruit. It seems no man among us can tame his tongue as he ought. Oh wretched men that we are. Me especially, because I’m your teacher, James the brother of Jesus Himself. Yes, let us strive the more earnestly in this matter of bridling the tongue. But who in the end shall deliver us from this bondage of corruption, this seeming inability to live and speak and do and be as we ought to? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and His saving grace’.

God as creator created man in His own image; and therefore we shouldn't curse men (James 3:9). By reason of the image they bear, we are to act to all men as we would to God Himself; we are not to treat some men as we would animals, who are not in the image of God. Because we are made in God's image, we should therefore not kill other humans (Gen. 9:6). James says the same, in essence, in teaching that because we are in God's image, we shouldn't curse others. To curse a man is to kill him. That's the point of James' allusion to Genesis and to God as creator. Quite simply, respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

The fact that they did use their tongues to praise God tempted James' readers to think that this meant that they had their tongues and therefore their thinking too in control. Again, the warning against semi-spirituality and a 'feel good religion' comes over. We have seen that the rich, proud speaking members of the ecclesia are the target of much of what James is saying. Our previous notes on 2:6,16 have shown that this group were quite aggressive to the lower ranks of believers. The men "made after the similitude of God" may well refer to the creative power of the word making them in God's image. As with Daniel, Nehemiah and other faithful spiritual leaders of the Jews, James totally associates himself with his brethren- *we* curse men, he says. It is noteworthy that as a faithful shepherd James does not disassociate himself from this wayward flock. However, elsewhere in the letter he repeatedly addresses them as "ye"- e.g. v.14 is in the same passage concerning control of the tongue: "*Ye* have bitter envying and strife in your hearts". The only other places where James associates

himself with the readers are in 3:1,2 and 6, again in this same passage about the tongue- it is "among *our* members". There seem two possibilities to explain this. It may be that James personally felt guilty of misusing his tongue- "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man" (3:2). No doubt James had spoken wrongly at some time and was conscious of this, and therefore felt he could not phrase this criticism of them as he does all the others- he could not write 'You both bless God and curse men with your tongue' when he too was guilty. However, James' 'cursing' and thereby offending ("we offend all", 3:2), was no doubt a temporary slip-up, compared to his readers whose generally unbridled tongue was because "*You* (not James) have bitter envying and strife in your hearts" (v.14). This envying and strife within the ecclesia caused the "fightings among you" (4:1), and this again suggests that the cursing of men which they were guilty of related to their words to their brethren. The other possible explanation of why James personally associates himself with the 'cursing' done by the tongue is that "the tongue" may indirectly refer to a certain group within the ecclesial body. They were part of the body of Christ, as was James, therefore the tongue was "among our members" (3:6), and its cursing of men therefore implicated the rest of the ecclesia.

We have seen that James often bases his reasoning on the sermon on the mount. The ideas of blessing, cursing and men in God's similitude are found in Mt. 5:44-48: "Bless them that curse you... that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven (i.e. showing His spiritual characteristics)... be you therefore perfect" (cp. James 3:2 "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man"). This again suggests that the men in the similitude of God who were being cursed were those of the ecclesia who blessed these rich brethren who cursed them, and thus became the children of God due to their being born of the word, which makes a man "perfect". "Similitude" is from a word meaning 'to assimilate', implying a likeness that has been taken on. The "men" like this are those who have developed the likeness of God, "men having become according to likeness of God" (Marshall's Interlinear). The frequent references to Peter's letters also makes an interesting point. The parallel there is in 1 Pet. 3:8-11: "Be ye all of one mind... not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing... refrain (your) tongue from evil... the Lord is against them that do evil". The "evil" spoken of here is therefore that of bitter speaking within the ecclesia which must not be responded to. This type of evil is far harder to resist than being taken to law unfairly, which is how we tend to read this passage. However, the context in Peter is also of physical persecution by the Romans, influenced by Jewish criticism of the Christians. There seems a hint that this group of evil speakers within the ecclesia were associated with the Roman and Jewish authorities.

3:10 *Out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so*- There is possibly a passing allusion here to Moses, the only other person in Scripture to be recorded as having blessing and cursing coming from him. He could justifiably do so, because he had the word of God in him. But these who did not have the word in them were not justified in doing so- i.e. the association of themselves with Moses which was being made by these Judaist-influenced brethren was not valid. For another example of this, see notes on v.15 and also 4:12. Verse 11 implies that this sending out of blessing and cursing was simultaneous- the figure is of a spring gushing out both salt and fresh water from the same place (Greek 'hole'- cp. the mouth) at the same time. If the cursing of the other brethren was being done in the

name of God, then this figure is apt- i.e. along with praise of God there was apparently righteous condemnation of these other brethren, in the same way as Moses simultaneously blessed and cursed the people on God's behalf.

No doubt the withholding of wages from these brethren (5:4) and refusing to materially alleviate their poverty (2:16) was justified by accusing the poor brethren of spiritual weakness that warranted this cursing by God. The close association of material wealth and spiritual pride throughout Israel's history and also here in James must be taken to heart by us in these last days. Just before the Lord returns there will be some who "eat and drink with the drunken" due to their wealth, and this leads them to beat their fellowservants (Mt. 24:45-50). This group will be those who are called to be the rulers of the ecclesia ("his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them their- spiritual- meat in due season"). Those James speaks of were the "masters", "governors" and horse-riders in the ecclesia (3:1-5). The fact that some of our ecclesial leaders are in a position to be rich in this world must mean that all this is a serious warning to them- some will, according to the parable, allow the authority and power they have in their secular life to corrupt them, so that they act like that in the ecclesia. Let us all humbly resolve that our Lord's parable will not be fulfilled in us. Note how that parable formed a footnote to the Olivet prophecy- as if to say that this temptation to have a lack of true love for one's brethren in these last days will really be something to be reckoned with. The blessing and cursing "proceeds" from the mouth. This is the same word used in Mt. 15:18,19: "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart...out of the heart proceed evil thoughts". Again, the mouth is effectively identical with the heart, showing the great emphasis by James on a man's words as being the main form of manifestation of his evil heart, and the need to control them if all other sin is to be avoided. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be". The Greek for "ought" occurs nowhere else and is extremely strong (cp. "my brethren" with the gentle opening gambit of the Lord in His letters to the ecclesias). It is worth noting at this point how well and personally James seems to have known his readership, although they were all "scattered abroad" (1:1) throughout the Roman world. Surely he would not have been so dogmatic in his denunciation of the type of words they spoke unless he knew exactly their situation. The nature of inspiration is such that James could have just sat and wrote as a result of a specific revelation to him of the weaknesses of these people, seeing in vision how they selected comfortable chairs in the meeting room for the rich (2:3), refused welfare to the poor, and spoke such wrong words as described in chapter 3. However, it seems more likely that inspiration worked through a band of dedicated (young?) servants of the ecclesias moving around the scattered pockets of Jewish Christians as they went from city to city (4:13) and reporting back to James. Or maybe James himself moved around visiting them, as a good shepherd; or perhaps he knew them all personally due to them all being in the Jerusalem ecclesia together in happier days.

3:11 *Does the fountain send forth from the same spout both fresh and bitter water?*- We have already made some comment on this in our notes on v.10. The spring gushing out (the idea of "spout") sweet and bitter water corresponds to the mouth having blessing and cursing proceeding from it. The idea of their words gushing from them corresponds to the rebuke that their tongue was unbridled in v.3. Note that both blessing of God and cursing of brethren gushed from them. For our words in regard to God to be unbridled is a sin, as much as to curse a brother without restraint. It is so tempting to feel that our relationship with God is fine, and therefore to assume that our attitude to our brethren is therefore beyond rebuke. These who

blessed God and cursed their brethren fell into this trap. Our praise of God needs to be bridled or restrained by the word. Any ecstatic release of praise to God can therefore only be acceptable if it is within the bridle, or control, of the word- i.e. if its root motivation is in the word rather than human emotion. The word for "bitter" is from a root meaning 'to pierce'; the words of this group in the ecclesia who are being reprimanded must have really pierced the heart of the poor, humble brethren. A spring can either emit sweet or bitter water, depending on the surrounding soil type- cp. the parable of the sower/types of ground. So our words really are an indication of our spiritual status; they will not really alternate between sweet and bitter, although they may appear to in our human self examination. In God's eyes they are either sweet or bitter. There is a significant link with Jer.6:6-8: "Cast a mount against Jerusalem (ecclesia?): this is the city to be visited (AD70 language); she is wholly oppression in the midst of her (cp. James 2:6;5:4 concerning the Jewish believers oppressing their brethren). As a fountain casts out her waters, so she casts out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her (i.e. the waters cast out are paralleled with her words of violence- that is how violence is *heard*)... be instructed (the same idea as "endued with knowledge" in the Greek of James 3:13), O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from you; lest I make you desolate, a land not inhabited"- as happened after AD70. The Jewish believers are thus being likened to apostate Jerusalem-fitting, seeing they were all once members of the Jerusalem ecclesia that had since been "scattered abroad" (James 1:1 cp. Acts 8:1,4; 11:19).

The sending out of sweet and bitter waters must also look back to Marah, where the bitter waters were changed to sweet by the tree cast into the waters (Ex. 15:25), pointing forward to the cross. James' way of changing the bitter water of human nature into sweet waters was by true obedience to the word in our heart. Ex. 15 suggests that this change is due to the cross being applied to the waters. By doing so, "there He proved them" (Ex. 15:25) whether they would believe in the efficacy of the tree or not. Therefore our belief in the cross of Christ and the power he has subsequently made available for the development of 'sweet water' is only shown by our zeal to obey the word. The need to obey the word in order to drink the sweet waters is also stressed in Ex. 15. The people feared they would catch disease from drinking the bitter water, and so immediately after the tree had been thrown into the waters "there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, If you will hearken to the voice of the Lord... I will put none of these diseases upon you...and they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of (sweet) water, and seventy palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (v.25-27). Obedience to the word would lead to the bitter waters being changed to wells of good water, of the spirit, as witnessed by their coming to the prosperous oasis of Elim. Compare the wells of Elim with James' fountain (spring) of sweet waters.

3:12 *My brothers, can a fig tree yield olives or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh*- We have seen that the fountain yielding water represents our heart or tongue yielding our words. The trees bearing fruit therefore must be interpreted as being our hearts bearing the spiritual fruit of our words. Both fig and olive trees are well hacked Old Testament symbols of Israel- as if to imply to these Jews that only by having the real spirit of Israel in their hearts rather than just in their flesh could they bear spiritual fruit. The bearing of fruit by the fig tree is a consistent symbol of the repentance of Israel in the "last days" of AD70 and (hopefully and prayerfully) in the twentieth century. In his usual neat style James is implying that the national repentance of Israel would be imputed to them if the "remnant" of Jewish Christians

bore fruit; but with their present attitude of mind this was impossible. This is the same idea as in 5:7: "The husbandman (God? Christ?) waits for the precious fruit of the earth (the land- of Israel? i.e. from the Jewish believers especially?), and has long patience for it"- a connection with 2 Pet. 3:15, where Peter says that the delay in the second coming to await the development of "all holy conversation and Godliness" (v.11) among Peter's Jewish readers shows "the longsuffering of our Lord" (Christ). It is possible to argue that the exact timing of the second coming is related to the repentance of Israel, and was deferred from AD70 due to lack of Jewish repentance. Thus we can appreciate why James, knowing this as he wrote before AD70, so earnestly begs the Jewish believers to develop true spiritual fruit that would result in the second coming, as opposed to petty bickering and infighting. Peter's plea is just as intense. The same plea, with even greater urgency, has to be made to natural and spiritual Israel in these days. In practice, let us again notice how all spiritual fruit is epitomized by the type of words we speak; the fruit of the olive is parallel with the water from the fountain.

There is a clear link with Mt. 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing (looking like a lamb, appearing to have the gentle, spiritual characteristics of Christ)...you shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?... a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (cp. "so can no fountain... yield")... every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (cp. James 3:6- the tongue will be destroyed in Gehenna fire). Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them". This almost conclusively shows that this group of Jewish believers within the ecclesia whom James is writing about were the Jewish "false prophets"- or those influenced by them- whom the Lord had warned would try to infiltrate the ecclesia. For those who were attune to these connections with other Scripture, it would have been obvious that these brethren were false prophets because their words so clearly gave them away. Note how James has slightly changed Christ's analogy-from grapes and figs growing on thorns and thistles to grapes growing on figs, and figs growing on olives.

Thorns and thistles is used to describe the fruit of the (same?) Jewish false prophets in the ecclesia in Heb. 6:5-8, and they would also recall the curse in Eden to any Jewish mind. This would associate these Jewish false teachers with the serpent who brought thorns and thistles into Eden- a simile repeated in 2 Cor. 11:3 and elsewhere. James is saying that the thorns and thistles had become figs and olives, i.e. they appeared far more acceptable than the false prophets of Christ's parable, but the fact their fruit was not consistent with what they appeared to be was still the litmus test which proved they were false. Again, there is a warning against thinking that semi-spirituality means acceptability with God. As the ecclesia seemed duped into thinking that because they used their tongue to bless God, all their words must be acceptable, so they thought that because these men didn't appear to be thorns and thistles but rather figs and olives, they must be acceptable even if there was some mismatch between the tree and the fruit.

There is a slight change of figure also with v.11: sweet and bitter water becomes "salt water and fresh". The many links with the sermon on the mount suggest a connection with the group of passages that show that the salt in a believer (Mt. 5:13) represents his gracious, "seasoned with salt" way of speaking (Col. 4:6) which leads to peace within the ecclesia (Mk. 9:50). Both salt water and fresh represent positive spiritual ways of speaking; as their parallel figs and olive berries both equally represent

spiritual fruit. The point is thus being made that a spring or tree cannot yield two types of products, and therefore encourages the connection with Mt. 7:15-20. Figs, olives and bitter water recalls Jer. 8:13,14: "There shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree...for the Lord our God has...given us water of gall ('poison'- Dt. 29:18) to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord". The lack of spiritual fruit on Israel is here associated with bitter or poisonous water. If James is referring to this passage, the tongue "full of deadly poison" (3:8) and the corrupt mind it reflected was the cause of the Jews' lack of fruit, and there is even the implication that God had given them the 'bitter water' of their tongues as a curse, as He did to Israel at Marah, in the sense that God confirms the spiritual or unspiritual attributes of a man- e.g. He hardened Pharaoh's already hard heart.

3:13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show his works in his good life, in meekness of wisdom*- A "wise man" is a synonym for a prophet: "I send unto you prophets, and wise men" (Mt. 23:34), the implication being that these brethren thought that they were prophets (i.e. having the Spirit gift of prophecy) and endued with Heavenly knowledge. This follows on nicely from the albeit indirect accusation in the previous verse (through the Mt. 7 allusion) that they were false prophets. Verse 14 lends support to this: "If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth". "Thy word is Truth" (Jn. 17:17), and therefore if they had bitterness in their hearts they were blaspheming against the word which they were inspired to speak. The elders of the early ecclesias (the "presbytery" of 1 Tim. 4:14) probably had the Spirit gifts, especially that of prophecy- i.e. 'forth-telling' inspired words of God to the ecclesia. Our Lord said that many who had the gifts of the Spirit would be condemned at judgment day (Mt. 7:22)- a prophecy hard to apply to anyone other than the Jewish believers and elders of the first century.

Thus it is possible that James is telling these brethren to validate their spiritual position by humbly showing the word at work in their hearts by their way of life ("a good conversation"), rather than thinking that just because they had the gifts this was proof that they were righteous before God. In this case the "blessing" of God (v.9) which they thought justified all their other words would have been blessing or praying to God using the spirit gifts as described in 1 Cor. 14:16 and Jude 20. The fact their mouths uttered the "sweet" water of the inspired word along with their own brash speaking was therefore especially serious. Because they possessed the gift of prophecy they thought it unnecessary to make the personal effort of applying the word in their hearts to control their thoughts and subsequent words. Examples abound in Hebrews, Corinthians and the Lord's letters in Revelation of those possessing the gifts being unacceptable to God, hence His withdrawal of them. There are similarities between this and our possession of the word of Truth. A true response to the word must always produce humility- any Bible study that does not result in this in some way is pointless.
A comparison of verses 13 and 14 shows that "a good conversation" is the same as not having "bitter envying and strife in your hearts". "Conversation" therefore does not simply mean 'way of life' but rather the thinking that is behind that life. "The former conversation" is "the old man...the deceitful lusts" and is replaced by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22,23), showing that "conversation" applies to the state of mind. It is because of this that Timothy's "Conversation" was to be comprised of mental attributes like "charity... faith... purity" (of mind), 1 Tim. 4:12.

As was argued in Chapter 2, "works" are 'shown out' of the state of the mind, and cannot be separated from it. The context being of the tongue, the "works" referred to are probably words, which epitomize all a man's spiritual "works". Words should therefore be humble ("with meekness of wisdom"), and based on a heart saturated by the word, and this will indicate whether a man is a true prophet. By contrast, proudly speaking inspired words to publicly show off the gift of prophecy, and also gushing out the words of an unregenerated heart, were equally unacceptable. Such a person was not a true prophet in God's sight.

The idea of "showing out" goes back to 2:18, where James asks this class of believers to show him how it was possible to have faith without works. There he is arguing that they are indivisible, and here in 3:13 he is effectively saying the same- that the works or words are an inevitable reflection of the heart, "the faith", or "conversation".

3:14 *But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your heart, do not boast about it and deny the truth*- The bitter envying in the heart connects with the bitter water of v.11, representing the bitter words of the brethren- again showing that words and heart are effectively identical. "Envying" is the Greek *zelos* and is the word used to describe zeal for God; it is not the normal word translated "envy". This envying, as we can imagine from what we know already of these brethren, was justified by them with spiritual reasons; similarly Acts 13:45; 17:5 and 1 Cor. 3:3 describe Jews and believers envying each other for supposedly spiritual reasons. Envying and strife within the ecclesia were a (conscious?) product of the work of the Judaizers and other false teachers amongst the brethren. It may well be that they were envious of others in the ecclesia spiritually, being jealous of the true spirituality possessed by the poorer brethren. However, the "wars and fightings" of James 4 seem to be associated with desiring material possessions (4:2), resulting in evil speaking between brethren (4:11). In this case the envying of chapter 3 could just be envying the possessions of other brethren. Yet the spiritual associations of "envying" ('zealousing') suggest that either this envying of possessions was couched in spiritual terms- e.g. 'You shouldn't have that car (which I envy) because you should show more generosity to the Truth'- or that the envying was of the more spiritual members. The envying and strife was clearly within the ecclesia, from what chapter 4 and other mentions of envying and strife imply (1 Cor. 3:3; Phil. 1:15 etc.). But the root cause of this was because this bitterness and envying was "in your hearts". Amazingly, these brethren were glorying (boasting, rejoicing) in this: "glory not". Similarly they rejoiced in their boastings about how they made plans to make business trips without taking account of the working of God's will (4:13-16)- presumably because they thought that as prophets they knew God's will. They were clearly rejoicing in what was wrong and evil, doubtless as a result of taking on board the Judaist-pedalled philosophy that "let us continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1). Romans was written largely to Jews- the first two chapters especially describe how the Jewish ecclesia of the first century were repeating the same errors as that in the wilderness. The Jewish believers were reasoning that because they were Jews they were justified, and Christ being a Jew confirmed the impossibility of sin being held against them. Thus they smugly rejoiced in being able to commit sin and, as they thought, remain justified, thereby spurring their spiritual condemnation of their poorer Gentile brethren.

The basic message of the Gospel was "in the beginning", in John's language, right from Eden and Abraham, and was made flesh in the person of Jesus. God could have left it at just “the word", but to make it powerful and compelling of acceptance it had

to be made flesh in a person. That word must become flesh in us too. This is why James 3:17 speaks of "wisdom" as if it has been made flesh in the believer: "The wisdom that is from above is pure peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy" . Abstract wisdom can't be spoken of in those terms; but wisdom made flesh in a person can be. The "wisdom" of which James speaks is "the truth" (3:14). The true Gospel, the doctrine of Christ, must be lived out in flesh; this is the whole intention. It isn't merely an intellectual test to see who can figure it out, and on that basis a relationship with God is given as a reward. One of the Hebrew words for "wisdom" also means "practical working" - and as so often in the Hebrew language, the Divine perspective is reflected in the language. Wisdom is "manifold in effectual working" (Job 6:11 RV); and compare the AV and RV of Job 12:16: "With him is… wisdom [AV] / effectual working [RV]". The man Christ Jesus was made unto us "wisdom"; in Him wisdom was made flesh.

3:15 *This wisdom is not a wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish-* This is reminding them that such philosophy was not by God's inspiration- that because one is a vehicle for God's inspired word, it does not follow that all ones' thoughts and reasoning are correct. "Sensual" means 'natural', and looks back to v.7 implying that human nature cannot be tamed by the 'natural' reasoning of human nature, or the human mind- it is "devilish", or 'demoniacal'. James 2:19 has associated these Jewish believers and their semi-faith with the healed demoniacs; James is saying that such semi-faith which has enough hope to be healed but does not respond with works subsequently, is not a positive spiritual attribute at all- it is rooted in the natural, earthly mind.

James is pointing a contrast between wisdom- or the word (cp. notes on 1:5)- which comes from above, and that which is of the earth. There is a link here with Heb. 2:2,3, a letter which we have suggested was sent to the same readership as James and may have been known by them already. "If the word spoken by Angels (the Law) was steadfast... how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation... spoken by the Lord". "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth (Moses? The Angel who spake the Law?), much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven" (Heb. 12:25). The wisdom that came from the earth is therefore associated with the Jewish system, and it is this which was resulting in all the human reasoning of these brethren; not the Law itself, but the influence of the Judaizers who advocated it. The wisdom from above mentioned in v.17 is therefore that which comes from the new covenant in Christ as opposed to that of the Law. "Comes down" carries the idea of literal downwards movement, perhaps referring to the Angel physically descending in the cloud to give Moses the words of God by which he was constituted a prophet. If this is the reference, then as we saw in the notes on v.10, this is another rebuke of these brethren who were seeking to parallel themselves with Moses.

3:16 *For where jealousy and division are, there is confusion and every vile deed-* If there is envying and strife in the heart, "there is confusion and every evil work" in the same place. Yet again, the works are said to take place in the heart. The Corinthians are twice rebuked by Paul for having confusion in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 12:20 translated 'tumults'), due to their misuse of the Spirit gifts. This would seem to be relevant to the situation in James' ecclesia; but again, the confusion began in the heart due to the lack of impact the word had made upon it. Another repeated theme is that "every evil work" is paralleled with the uncontrolled tongue,

showing that the tongue is the summation of every potential sin that lies within our heart. The Greek for "evil work" only occurs four times; one of them is in Titus 2:8, which speaks of the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the ecclesia seeking to speak evil of the believers. Whilst on its own this would not be significant, in view of the constant parallels between the Jewish system and his readers which James is making, it appears that he is linking the evil thoughts in their hearts concerning their poor brethren, with the evil speaking about the ecclesia being done by the Jewish 'satan' outside the ecclesia.

3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is most importantly pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy*- The wisdom coming from above is the gift of the word coming down from God, making us "firstfruits of His (spiritual) creatures" (1:17,18). We have suggested that the wisdom from above is the word of Christ as opposed to that of Moses; in Jesus the word became flesh (Jn. 1:14), the whole of God's revelation became associated with the person of Christ, not just the words of the New Testament inspired after His time. Thus this verse describes both the work of the word, and also the character of Christ, the wisdom/word of God from above.

If the word was truly in them , they would have the characteristics of purity as opposed to their double mindedness; they did not have peace in their hearts (cp. v.16), their rejecting of their poor brethren's welfare requests (2:16) and harsh treatment of them (2:6; 5:4) contrasted with the gentleness and ease with which brethren should feel they can entreat us with. The word with it's associated spirit of Christ will develop these attributes within us. Purity of mind (cp. Phil. 4:8) is of "first" importance; if this is achieved, "then" the characteristics which the ecclesia were so sadly lacking in would then naturally follow. The Greek 'proton' occurs again in Mt. 6:33: "Seek *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". This is achieved, according to James, by striving to let the word develop now those righteous attributes which will be revealed so fully and widely in the Kingdom (cp. Rom. 14:17).

"The wisdom that is from above" must also refer to Jn. 3:3-5, which speaks of being born from above, i.e from Heaven by the Spirit. Nicodemus thought that he had already been born from above, seeing that he had a knowledge of the Law. But Christ told him "heavenly things" (Jn. 3:12), which Nicodemus found hard to accept. The word which makes us born again (Jn. 3:5 cp. 1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18) does so because it reveals Heavenly principles to us. This wisdom/word in James was "full of mercy and good fruits". The word develops these fruits (Jn. 15:5-8), as does Christ (Phil. 1:11)- again showing His equation with the word. The language of fruiting goes back to v.12, where the tree that bears fruit is the heart of the believer. Now what bears fruit is the word- because that must be equated with the heart if good fruit is to be produced. Thus we can make the equation: Christ=Spirit=Word=In heart=fruit. These factors may be arranged in any order, showing how Christ dwells in our heart by faith (Eph. 3:17 cp. Col. 3:16; Rom. 10:17). The fullness of spiritual attributes mentioned here may refer back to Ex. 34:5-7 (R.V.), which describes the name of God as being *full* of His attributes of mercy, patience, justice etc. The word of true wisdom produces these characteristics in us, thereby giving us the Name of God. Again, James is setting an ultimate standard- aiming for the fullness of God to be developed in us through the almighty power of the word. It must be theoretically possible for a man to be perfect in God's sight; even though in the past he has failed and thus come short of Christ's standard, he can still be justified by the faith which is developed by the word acting upon him. Our Lord was of our nature, and yet still attained perfection. We are

invited to follow him to perfection, being perfect even as God is. The means by which we achieve this may be slightly different to how he did; yet through the word "now are we the sons of God" (1 Jn. 3:1,2; Jn. 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:23), Spirit-begotten as He was.

This degree of commitment to the word leads to a brother being "without partiality"; something which the ecclesia were guilty of due to their lack of having the word in their hearts (see notes on 2:4). Having their own minds full of strife, division and confusion (v.14-16) would inevitably lead them to be partial or divided in their dealings with other brethren. The word 'affectionately believed' will lead us to be "without hypocrisy"- again inviting a comparison between these brethren without the word truly in them and the Pharisees, who are those invariably described as "hypocrites" in the New Testament. However, the phrase also occurs in the sermon on the mount, and the many allusions to this discourse in James suggest that he may have had Mt. 7:5 in mind: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye". We have seen that the context of James 3 is of a group of brethren criticizing another group, with the inference that their criticism was masked with pseudo-spiritual reasoning. This is exactly the theme of Mt. 7:5. To avoid being a hypocrite, James implies, we need to let the word sink into ourselves- which has the same effect as casting the plank out of our own eye. It is the word which has the power of self-examination; 1 Jn. 1:10 implies that if the word is in us, then we appreciate what sinners we have been. The telling thing about the description of the Spirit gifted eldership as "hypocrites" ('play-actors') is that their make-up and costume was the Truth itself. The fact we are wearing this can lead us to think that we really are the part we are playing- but putting on the clothes and changing our heart to truly identify with what we profess are two different things.

3:18 *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those that make peace- There* are a number of connections here with the Septuagint of Is. 32:16-20: "Righteousness remain in the fruitful field... the work of righteousness shall be peace... quietness and assurance... blessed are you that sow". This is clearly a Kingdom passage, yet it is quoted about our present ecclesial experience. This is one of many examples of where spirituality in this life can give us a foretaste of the Kingdom. The wisdom coming from above in v.17 we have shown to have reference to our birth by the word, to become new creatures. Verse 18 has links with two passages which also contain this theme of spiritual re-birth by the word.
The mention of being "full of good fruits" in v.17 may be looking back to the list of spiritual fruits in the beatitudes in Mt.5- the poor in spirit, the weeping, the meek, the pure in heart, those hungering after righteousness, the peacemakers etc. comprise all the main spiritual fruits; and are also a fair description of the oppressed, spiritually minded underclass in the ecclesias to whom James is writing. Now v.18 makes a definite connection with Mt. 5:9; "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God".

This would indicate that James read the people mentioned in the beatitudes as being within the ecclesia, and "the peacemakers" being the quiet brother who humbly tries to calm the bitter vying for power between the rich, self opinionated leaders. In this case, James is reminding these leaders of the virtues of those they despised; they sowed the fruit of righteousness because the word developed those fruits in them. By doing so, Mt. 5:9 says, they became the children of God. Thus the word led them to develop the spiritual fruits which made them peacemakers, which made them the

children of God. Thus possession of the word does not automatically make us sons of God, but the effect it achieves upon us in giving us the family characteristics of our Father. The other clear connection of v.18 is with Heb. 12:11. Having spoken of the persecution of the Jewish believers being a proof of their sonship to God, "the Father of spirits", Paul encourages them that this chastening "yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". The poor believers in James' ecclesias had also become the spiritual children of God by the word acting on them, making them react to the chastening they were receiving at the hands of the rich brethren by developing peace. Their peaceful sowing of the word, which was the seed sown (Lk. 8:11), was going to lead them to "raise a harvest of righteousness" (N.I.V.) in their own characters. If this line of interpretation is correct, it would appear that the poor, mistreated brethren were humbly responding to the criticisms of them (the cursing of v.9) by quietly quoting the word, in order to try and make peace both between them and the rich brethren, and between the rival factions in the eldership. See notes on 5:7 for more on this. This problem of there being "wars and fightings" amongst this group is continued in 4:1, thus making the chapter division unfortunate.

JAMES CHAPTER 4

4:1 *What causes the wars and fights among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that war within you?*- The way this is phrased implies that the unspiritual brethren were blaming the evident infighting within the ecclesia on others- perhaps the group of poor brethren who they spiritually cursed in 3:9,10. Note how the fightings came out of their lusts- warring in the members suggests an allusion to Rom. 7:23 "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members". The allusions to Romans may be because this letter too was in circulation amongst the dispersed Jewish believers. The "members" of James 4:1 are therefore the parts of the evil human heart. The double mindedness in the hearts of the individual brethren was inevitably reflected in the members of the ecclesial body (cp. 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:25). Another link with 1 Peter clarifies that the warfare within the body was also within their own minds: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). The Greek for "lusts" here in James 4 is not the normal word so translated. The only other times it occurs are in 2 Pet. 2:13 translated "pleasure", where it is associated with the Judaist false teachers; Tit. 3:3, where Paul says these lusts were part of his former Judaist life; and in Lk. 8:14 regarding that which chokes the growth of the word.

Their lusts or pleasures may have warred against each other in the sense that they desired different things which conflicted within their heart, but the idea of war and fighting seems more usually used with reference to the spiritual warfare within the human heart (cp. 1 Pet. 2:11), whereby the spiritual reservoir is under violent attack from the united desires for the various pleasures to be possessed. The Greek for "fightings" occurs in Titus 3:9 and 2 Tim. 2:23,24 concerning arguments within the ecclesia over the interpretation of the Law. It would therefore seem that the justification for gratifying their materialistic desires was based on misapplication of the word. Again we are seeing the classic characteristic of apostasy- a mixture of truth with error until a position of self-justification has been reached. These reasonings over certain passages began as a debate within their own heart ("members"), and then spread to the whole ecclesia. We have pointed out that the break between chapters 3 and 4 is unfortunate. The mention of "wars" in 4:1 and "confusion" in 3:16 only 3

verses earlier suggests a connection with the "wars and commotions" heralding the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:9), seeing that "confusion" and "commotions" are the same Greek word. Is James implying that the crazy political situation in the world that heralded Jerusalem's downfall was going to be reflected in ecclesial life in the last days, resulting in a similar downfall of the scattered Jerusalem ecclesia? The situation within the body in these last days may provide an unfortunate parallel.

4:2 *You want what you don't have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask-* The Greek for "lust" here is the normal word, and a powerful parallel is made between this and asking (praying) in the wrong way. Such prayer is an expression of lust; the very same word is used concerning lusting after a woman in Mt.5:28. Prayer to God for personal pleasures that gushes out without the restraint of the word is truly a serious offence. The idea of killing in 2:11 was interpreted as meaning showing lack of love to your brother, after the pattern of Mt. 5:21,22. The word for "kill" here in James is not the usual Greek word. This one is normally translated "kill" in the phrase "Thou shalt not kill" when quoting the ten commandments. Thus James is making an especial appeal to their Jewish minds by implying that their lack of love really is effective manslaughter. Thus in order to satisfy their carnal desires they were killing or hating their brethren. An obvious fulfilment of this would have been in their withholding of the meagre wages of the poor brethren- effectively killing them by their lack of love- in order to indulge their latest pleasures. What parallels with saving for the holiday home at the expense of struggling ecclesias in the third world? "Desire to have" is a very emotion-loaded word in Greek, implying to be moved to jealousy by something or someone. Such a motivation for prayer is unacceptable. The parallel is with "and cannot obtain", which means literally 'to chance upon'. Their semi-spiritual attitude to life is epitomized by their psychology of prayer- thinking they might chance to get the answer to a prayer, they expressed their emotional, natural desires for the pleasures of this life in prayer, justifying this by misapplying Scripture. They never realized that the love of these pleasures was actually swamping the growth of the real word seed, which was occasionally planted in them by the poor brethren reminding them of the word; so the two references to the sower parable in 3:18 and 4:1 would imply.

4:3 *You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motivation, you want only what will give you pleasure-* Some ask and receive not, because in reality, they don't ask at all. They are playing around with the possible power of prayer for their own benefit. And Old Testament Israel fasted, but only to themselves, not to God (Zech. 7:5,6).

Despite all the commotion within their hearts and the ecclesia, and perhaps also in their strivings in their misdirected prayers, although they asked in prayer, in God's sight such words are not prayer: "You ask not... you ask", because desiring is not praying. Alternatively, this may be looking back to 1:4,5 about asking for wisdom, as if to say 'You don't receive answers to your prayers for material things because you don't pray firstly for the wisdom from the word to be in your heart, which would have made your subsequent prayers powerful'. There is a link here with Mt. 7:7,8: "Ask, and it shall be given you... for every one that asks receives". But "You ask and receive *not*". The reason for such powerful prayer is given in the surrounding context in Mt. 7- if they were not hypocrites in criticizing their brethren, which 3:17 implies they were guilty of, and if they did to men as they would like God to do to them (Mt. 7:2,12). Not surprisingly therefore, the prayers of these brethren were not answered as

Mt. 7 promised. There is probably also a reference to Jn. 15:7: "If...my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you". "Done unto you" possibly implies physical blessing. Because the word was not in them, which is the whole theme of James, this promise was not fulfilled in them.

“With the wrong motivation” is better "Amiss", and is from a word meaning to be sick or diseased, or generally 'evil'. Although it is not the same word translated "sick" in 5:14-16, there may be a connection with the idea there of them being struck with physical sickness because of their sin and being advised to pray for forgiveness and therefore a cure. Here in 4:3 James is saying that their prayers were for human things and therefore they and their prayers were sick. This would explain their 'killing' of their brethren by holding back wages from them (5:4), because they specifically wanted the cash in hand; see notes on 5:3 too.

4:4 *You adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*- As the reference to killing in v.2 looks back to 2:11 in the sense of killing your brother by not loving him, so the command in the Old Covenant not to commit adultery mentioned in 2:11 is here interpreted as meaning not having friendship with the world. James' reasoning seems to be based (yet again) in the sermon on the mount- this time in the passage about not being able to serve two masters, which results in loving the one and hating the other (Mt. 6:24). James is putting things in black and white terms again. By their prayers being based on the human desires of their heart they were loving the world and thereby hating God. "The world" is therefore primarily our evil desires- the world is in our heart (Ecc. 3:11,12), and "The lust of the eyes" etc. is "All that is in the world". The language of adultery invites us to interpret being a "friend" of the world in a sexual context, or to see that mere friendship with the world is of the same intensity as intercourse with it, in God's sight. Serving mammon (the world) in the two masters parable is due to taking thought for human possessions (Mt. 6:25)- i.e. the service of mammon is a mental condition in the heart rather than just physically spending time pursuing these things. This is exactly the context here in James.

"Friendship" (Greek *philia*) is a gentle word, even implying 'fondness'. Being a friend of the world means that, in the light of the two masters parable, they were not being a friend of God. This maybe connects with 2:23, which calls Abraham a friend of God because of his faith and works based on the word of promise taking hold of his heart. Their friendship or sympathy to the world and its desires which were in their heart meant that they had no real faith because the word was not truly influencing their thinking. This friendship with the world is "enmity with God". This takes us immediately to Rom. 8:7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God", thus again connecting the love of the world with the unregenerated mind. James is pounding away about the importance of the mind, and therefore of our attitude to the word which influences it. This enmity is further defined in Eph. 2:15,16: "Having abolished in His (Christ's) flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments... for to make in himself one new man... that He might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby". The phrase "*the* enmity" implies that this is the same enmity as referred to elsewhere, namely in Rom. 8:7. The carnal mind allowed itself to be stimulated by the Law- not that the Law encouraged sin, but man's response to it encouraged carnal thinking, e.g. in the form of self righteousness. This again hints that their "friendship of the world" was justified by their misquoting of the Law. "The

world" which they were so sympathetic towards (so "friendship" implies) may even refer to the Jewish world, both in its doctrine and its materialistic, pleasure-seeking attitude to life.

4:5 *Or do you think that the scripture says in vain: The Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously*- This does not appear to be a verbatim quote from any manuscript- for a comment on the word "scripture" see notes on 2:23. James is effectively rebuking them for their lack of sensitivity to the word- by not recognizing the fundamentally lustful nature of our natural mind, they were effectively saying that the Scriptures' warnings about our evil human nature were "vain". They thought that by reason of possessing the Spirit gifts the evils of the human heart were by-passed an error also made by evangelical theology today. There appears to be a reference back to the descriptions of man at Noah's time in Gen. 6:5 and 8:21 as having a fundamentally wicked heart. 2 Pet. 3, Jude and the Lord in His Olivet prophecy all interpret Noah's world as being a type of the Jewish system heading towards destruction in AD70. So again James is saying that the lustful attitude of mind within these Jewish believers equated them with the rest of the Jewish world, which was about to be destroyed as Noah's world was. The Greek for "vain" is often used about vain Jewish philosophy that affected the ecclesias (Eph.5:6; Col.2:8; 1 Tim.6:20; 2 Tim.2:16; and Acts 4:25); it also looks back to the description of the brethren James is writing to as "vain" in 2:20. This would imply that because of the influence of vain Jewish (Judaist?) reasoning, they had become vain in their minds, and therefore Scripture had also become vain to them. The Greek for "dwelleth" means 'to dwell as an integral part'; the same Greek word for 'dwell' occurs in Rom. 7:17,18,20, describing "sin that dwelleth" within our members; we have seen 4:1 is alluding to this same passage in Rom. 7 concerning the spiritual conflict in our members. The same word is also used in 1 Cor. 3:16 about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the early believers - maybe suggesting that James is reminding the Jewish ecclesial elders that the Spirit gifts dwelling in them did not mean that the evil human spirit of our own nature did not dwell in them.

The very word "spirit" can refer both to this human spirit and also to the spirit of Christ in our minds. Thus they had to have the Spirit truly in their heart by their response to the word as well as tabernacling in them by reason of their possession of the gifts. The effort to apply the word to the human heart is therefore not just something which began after the miraculous gifts were withdrawn, but which also had to be practiced by their early possessors. If even those with the gift of prophecy (i.e. chosen by God to speak forth His word under direct inspiration) had to make this effort; how much more must we? God *yearns* that we might have a spirit like His, that we might be spiritually minded: "He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us" (James 4:5). He so wants us to accept His Spirit. And be sure that He will be ever working in our lives to try to get us to have this focus. The particular aspect of our inherent natural spirit that James draws attention to is its capacity to envy. We have suggested previously that their desire for wealth led these brethren to show a lack of love to the others in the ecclesia, although they justified this by misinterpreting parts of the Law. James is saying that they should not justify these envious feelings so quickly, but remember that Scripture generally warns that these feelings are part of our fallen nature, and they should not misapply odd passages to justify them as acceptable. The Greek for "envy" here is always used elsewhere concerning either the envying of the Jews against the believers, or about the envying generated within the ecclesia by Judaist-stimulated controversies.

ESV gives "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us". The psalms often record man's yearning for God, physically and spiritually (Ps. 84:2 etc.). In this cry and yearning for God, we see the spirit of every believer- wanting a greater spiritual experience than we currently have. And this yearning both physically and spiritually is so necessary, for only those who have it will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. Remember that God yearns for your spirit ["He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us" James 4:5 ESV], and you are yearning for His. There will be a glorious meeting in the Kingdom. In the bigger picture, this is one window onto our physical and spiritual weaknesses and inadequacies this side of eternity.

4:6- see on Mt. 25:35.

But He gives more grace. Wherefore the scripture said: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble- This apparent personality of "the Scripture" was commented on under 2:23. Having quoted Scripture which states the pathetic spiritual condition of man, James quickly reminds us of another Scripture that gives more hope. The context of v.6 is in the earlier verses of the chapter concerning why their prayers were unanswered. "Grace" means 'gift', and can refer to the answer of prayer by God's Spirit. Thus James is saying 'God does actually answer prayer- Prov. 3:34 says he gives grace to the humble, i.e. He answers their prayers, although He resists the requests of the proud'. Note that James is quoting the Septuagint version of Prov. 3:34 here rather than the Hebrew Old Testament. Giving grace in the sense of a gift also recalls 1:17,18 and 3:17 concerning the gift of the word- as if to show that God would hear prayers for the wisdom of the word to be revealed to them (cp.1:5), but not answer a 'wants list' of worldly pleasures. The context of the quote from Proverbs is that the humble man is the one who has wisdom- i.e. who has taken note of the word in his heart. Being humble is paralleled with being submissive to God and resisting our evil nature (v.7) and drawing nigh to God acceptably (v.8); thus humility born of the word is revealed by both our attitude to God's holiness and to our own innate sinfulness. The brash prayers and self justification of these brethren was in sharp contrast to all this. The same verse from Proverbs is also quoted in 1 Pet. 5:5 in the context of the elders showing loving care to the flock, because God "giveth grace to the humble". This context of commands to elders is the same as in James, whose intended readership appears to have been the same group of elders in the Jewish ecclesias. Peter's argument, if it follows that of James, would therefore be that their prayers would be hindered, i.e. grace would not be shown- if the elders proudly oppressed the flock. Note that these same elders are warned not to exact money from the flock as a reward for their shepherding in 1 Pet. 5:2, which we have seen was a problem mentioned by James in the form of them holding back wages from their brethren-employees. This would mean that this was being done under the spiritual pretext of keeping the money back as the wages of the elders, no doubt backed up with some misinterpretations from the Mosaic Law.

The giving of grace is of course not just in material giving; speaking of how this world has an envious, materialistic spirit, James comments that by contrast, God “gives more grace” (James 4:6), i.e. His grace is more than the material ‘giving’. Especially is grace given through forgiveness, especially forgiveness without demanding repentance, being inclusive rather than exclusive, patience, especially patience with others’ immaturities, forbearing one another, basic kindness and thoughtfulness, imagining how others feel or may feel. God *delights* in showing

forgiveness and mercy; He loves doing it (Mic. 7:18). It's "*son métier*" - 'what He's good at, His speciality'.

4:7 *Therefore, be subject to God and resist the Devil, and the Devil will flee from you*- "Submit" means literally to put oneself under- i.e. to keep under these evil human desires, which is the same as resisting the Biblical devil. Bearing in mind the Jewish background of this letter and the other connections with Romans, this idea of submission to God may be referring back to Rom. 10:3: "They (the Jews) being ignorant of *God's* righteousness, (through a lack of open-hearted Bible study), and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God". Thus one of the root causes of their pride and lack of recognition of their own sinfulness was that they were influenced by the Jewish concept of self-righteousness. Note the importance of doctrine in having very practical effects on a man's way of thinking and thereby his standing with God. There is a clear parallel between these verses in James 4 and 1 Pet. 5:2-9. After making the quotation from Prov. 3:34, Peter warns them to "be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour". This primarily refers to the Jewish and Roman authorities seeking occasion to criticize and therefore persecute the Christians. However, the parallel in James 4:7 is "resist the devil", which corresponds with 1 Peter 5:9 "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". The devil of Peter refers to the Jewish/ Roman systems as well as to the flesh. The Greek *pathema* translated "afflictions" means both physical persecution and 'an emotion or influence' (Strong), thus showing that both types of 'devil' are referred to here, although the emphasis in Peter's case is on the devil as a civil power. *Pathema* is used concerning physical persecution by the civil 'devil' in 2 Tim. 3:11; Heb. 10:32; 2 Cor. 1:6; 1 Pet. 5:1; and concerning our evil desires in Rom. 7:5 (the "motions" of sin within us), and the "affections" of the flesh in Col. 3:5; Rom. 1:26; Gal. 5:24. Thus the parallel passage in James 4:7 concerning resisting the devil is about both the Roman/ Jewish system and the evil desires of the flesh, although the latter is the context in James, whilst the former provides the backdrop to Peter's use of the word. Again, we see that the Jewish thinking influencing the ecclesia was encouraging the 'devil' of their evil hearts, whilst a conscious resisting of the Judaizers' inroads and of the fleshly heart would lead to those things fleeing.

4:8 *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you doubleminded sinners, and purify your hearts*- The Greek phrase for "draw near" is used in the Septuagint to describe the priests drawing near to God in the offering of sacrifices and prayers. The elders were being reminded that they were equivalent of priests in the new Israel and therefore had a responsibility to acceptably and reverently draw near to God on behalf of the congregation, as well as to accurately expound the word publicly (Mal. 2:7; Hos. 4:6; see too comments on 2:9). This drawing near to God in prayer was only possible through a pure heart and therefore pure hands or actions. God would only hear their prayers if these things were in order; which is why the feeling we should have that our prayers are heard should give us confidence that spiritually we are going the right way (1 Jn. 5:14). "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you" (Zech.1:3) and "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal. 3:7) must be the basis for these words of James. Both these passages are in the context of Israel's restoration at the time of the second

temple; there are a number of other connections between James and the restoration prophets:

James	Restoration prophets
1:13	Mal.3:15
1:17	Mal.3:6
1:27	Mal.3:5; Zech.7:10
2:1	Mal.1:9
2:4	Mal.2:9
4:3	Mal.2:13
4:4	Mal.2:11
5:3	Mal.4:1
5:4	Mal.3:5
5:17	Hag.1:10,11
5:20	Mal.2:6

As it was the duty of the priests to convert the people of Israel by the word (Mal. 2:6), so it was too for the ecclesial elders of the New Israel (James 5:20). But as the temple was neglected due to bickering, materialism and fleshly living among the priests, so was the ecclesia of the first century. The problems of Malachi's time and also those of James were solved by a coming of the Lord (Mal. 3:1,2). Living on the brink of Christ's return, there must be similarities with the present ecclesial position. All these types highlight the key position of elders in influencing the ecclesia, and therefore the standards required of them. A fair degree of our current ecclesial problems may be traceable in some measure to our inattention to the importance of elders' qualifications.

The idea of drawing near may have feint connections with the day of the Lord in AD70 drawing near; the same Greek phrase is used in Mt. 24:32; Lk. 21:20,28; and see notes on 5:8. The Greek root is 'to squeeze close', which we can do to God by prayer, and which He will therefore do to us. The parallel in 1 Pet. 5:6 says that in response to humbly drawing near to God, He will "exalt you in due time"- i.e. answer your prayers eventually, and especially with a place in the Kingdom (cp. "friend come up higher" at the judgment seat). God's immediate drawing near to us as a result of our drawing near to Him is therefore not necessarily in the immediate answering of prayer, but in the sense of peace with God which we have after acceptably placing our requests before Him- "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds" (Phil. 4:6,7), even before we receive the answers.

The language of physical movement in verses 7 and 8 paints a fascinating picture of a man walking towards God ("drawing near" is often used in the sense of literal walking), thereby resisting the devil, and therefore the devil turning tail and fleeing in the opposite direction. As we walk towards God, he walks towards us- perhaps alluding to the parable of the prodigal son, where the man's walking towards the Father is matched by His running towards him (Lk. 15:20), so eager is our God to

respond to any real spiritual effort on our part. The context here in James 4 is of prayer- the drawing near to God is in prayer.

The idea of cleansing the hands suggests a link with Is.1, which has other connections with James: "When you spread forth your hands (in prayer), I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear (as was happening to these brethren): your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean (cp. "cleanse your hands"); put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes... seek judgment, relieve the oppressed (what the brethren had not done- James 2:14-16; 5:4), judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (cp. James 1:27- what they didn't do)... if you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land (i.e. inherit the Kingdom): but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword" (AD70; Is. 1:15-20). These scattered members of the Jerusalem ecclesia were therefore being equated with the "sinners in Zion" at the time of Sennacherib's Assyrian invasion; it was in their capacity to enable the Kingdom to be established in AD70, but if they continued in sin both they and Jerusalem along with natural Israel would be destroyed. Sadly they chose the latter, and their counterparts in Hezekiah's time made such a shallow reformation that they only succeeded in deferring judgment.

The Greek word is often used for the 'cleansing' of leprosy; the Lord likened the Pharisees to cups that needed cleansing, i.e. the cups were defiled by leprosy and needed purification; His description of Jerusalem's destruction stone by stone recalled the method of destroying a leprous house. The Jewish system was leprous because *inwardly* it was defiled; externally it looked fine (Mt. 23:26). It was their fleshly way of thinking that was the real leprosy, and this is also the context here in James 4:6; the cleansing of actions is parallel to purifying a double-minded heart, because in James the thoughts of the heart and actions, especially words, are treated as identical. Cleansing or purifying ('washing') the heart suggests Jer. 4:14, which is also in the context of the impending destruction of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem (ecclesia!), wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your vain (cp. 2:20 "vain man") thoughts lodge within you?". The parallels between these believers and apostate Israel are unmistakable. "Purify" is often used about Mosaic purification (Jn. 11:55; Acts 21:24 etc.)- cp. the idea of cleansing being associated with the Law's commandments about leprosy. This purification by washing comes from "the wisdom that is from above (that) is... pure" (3:17)- i.e. the word, "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26), which is the new covenant's equivalent to the purification process performed in the laver. For this reason John Thomas translates Titus 3:5 as "the laver of regeneration", cp. "the washing of regeneration...of the Holy Spirit". "Purify your hearts, you double minded" implies that having a mind which was only semi-spiritual was as bad as being totally defiled and needing cleansing. It looks back to the description of those who had only semi-faith in prayer as "double-minded" in 1:8. Here in chapter 4 the context is the same (see notes on 4:1-3). Thus James is saying in 1:6-8 'Ask for wisdom, the spiritual strength from the Spirit, in full faith, not the double-minded prayers you have been making for your pleasures ("lusts", 4:3)'. See notes on 1:8 for more on "double minded".

4:9 *Lament and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom*- This exhortation to weeping and the general theme of making a repentance from the heart recalls Jesus' desperate, 11th hour call to repentance to avoid judgment on Jerusalem. "Turn ye even to me (cp. "draw near to God") with all your heart (cp. "you double minded"), and with fasting, and with weeping, and with

mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments (cp. their hypocrisy- James 3:17)... who knows if He will turn and repent (of the planned judgments on Israel, natural and spiritual)?...let the priests (cp. the ecclesial elders of James)... weep" (Joel 2:12-17). Joel 2 goes on to describe the judgments of AD70 in verses 30-32- according to Peter's quotation of them in Acts 2.

The double emphasis on mourning in this verse suggests reference to Mt. 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". This would mean that James interpreted this group of people as those mourning in repentance for their sins, receiving the comfort (Greek *parakleo*- drawing near) of closeness to God. The idea of God drawing near has been seen in the preceding verse- "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you". Again, the encouragement James' readers got from his words was proportionate to their ability to pick up these definite connections with other passages. To him that has spiritual talents of understanding the word, more will be given. James could have said 'Jesus basically said, "mourn and I will draw near to you", so mourn in repentance and this is how God through Christ will draw near to you, as I have just spoken about in v.8'. But instead we have to be sensitive to the two mentions of mourning here in v.9, recognize this is one of the many references back to the sermon on the mount, and appreciate the similarity of meaning between 'comforted' in Mt. 5:4 and "draw nigh" in v.8. That the connection with Mt. 5:4 is valid is confirmed by the Greek word for "joy" in James 4:9 only occurring elsewhere in Lk. 6:25, which is effectively repeating Mt. 5:4: "Woe unto you that laugh now! For you shall mourn and weep". "Mourn and weep" is repeated in James 4:9.

There seems fair reason to believe that the riotous merry making mentioned here occurred at the Breaking of Bread. 1 Cor.11 rebukes some at the Corinth ecclesia (which included Jews, and was probably in receipt of James' letter, therefore) for getting drunk at the communion service. Similarly Peter and Jude warn of those brethren who 'feasted' at the love feast (Breaking of Bread). The Greek in Jude 12 means to revel or be sumptuous, and describes those guilty as "feeding themselves without fear". This word for "feeding" specifically means to shepherd- as if it were the ecclesial elders or shepherds who were particularly guilty of these abuses. Thus James is saying that they ought to be mourning and weeping in repentance at the Breaking of Bread rather than revelling. If this is what James is meaning, some important practical issues emerge. Firstly, sorrow and an apparently long face are to be expected from many of us who inevitably feel the need for repentance burning keenly as we face the supreme dedication and holiness of Christ on the cross. There seems far too much criticism of those who do "weep and mourn" in their souls with a spirit of heaviness (cp. Is. 61:3; James 4:9) at the memorial service. How can any of us tell another to be more happy or look more cheerful without knowing the nature of their relationship with God in the past few days? For such an intensity of self-knowledge and repentance to occur, there must be a fair period of time for reflection and self-examination- not just the odd minute as we wait for the emblems to reach us. The "feast of charity" referred to in Jude 12 would have been a replica of the last supper- a whole meal of fellowship followed by the specific taking of the bread and wine.

"Afflicted" means 'to realize ones own misery' (Strong) and only occurs elsewhere in Rom. 7:24 and Rev. 3:17. Romans 7 and 8 have been alluded to previously in the letter, and Rom. 7:24 is describing the wretchedness Paul felt due to appreciating how sinful his innate evil desires really were. This marvellously fits the context of James 4, where he is advising them to analyse their own evil hearts more

and appreciate their inherent sinfulness. By doing so they would feel "wretched" or "afflicted". The Laodiceans were perhaps another ecclesia with a Jewish element to whom James was also writing; they certainly had the same problems of materialism and a lukewarm, semi-spirituality. The Lord criticized them for not knowing that they were wretched, i.e. not examining the wretchedness of their own evil desires enough. The idea of wretchedness is similar, although not linguistically connected, to the descriptions of the rejected at the day of judgment, writhing in the pain of self-hate, realizing for the first time the degree of their inherent sinfulness. If we judge ourselves now, i.e. examine ourselves and realize we are worthy of condemnation (judgment- Mt.7:1), then we will not be judged (1 Cor.11:31). They were to "turn" their revelling into sorrow; a word which means basically 'to pervert'- e.g. the Judaizers perverted (same word) the Gospel of Christ (Gal.1:7). This would imply that as they had perverted the Gospel, they were to 'pervert' it back again; they had spiritually justified their laughter and revelling by this perversion.

4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you*- The parallel in 1 Pet. 5:6 indicates that this lifting up is at the judgment seat: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you (same Greek as "lift you up" in James) in due time", i.e. in the future, at the judgment (cp. "come up higher" in the wedding feast parable). Thus if we examine ourselves to the degree of wretchedly feeling that we in our own strength will be only worthy of condemnation, then as we will be lifted up from our grovelling before Christ at the judgment, so He will lift us up now. Luke 21:36 seems to refer to this lifting up at the judgment: "Pray always... to be stood before the Son of man"- by the Angel gently lifting us up from the ground at Christ's feet, as He did to Daniel in his acting out of our experience at the judgment (Dan. 10:8-19). The humbling of self spoken of in verses 6 and 7 was in the context of being humble in prayer. The lifting up which comes as a result of this we have shown to be our exaltation in the Kingdom. Thus by reason of having our prayers heard, especially those for the gift of the understanding of the word (4:6 cp. 1:17,18; 3:17), it is as if we are exalted in prospect into places in the Kingdom. Thus 1 Jn. 5:14 says that the confidence we have of acceptance at the judgment is based on our prayers being answered now. James 1:9 spoke of the humble brother rejoicing in that he is exalted ("lifted up" in 4:10). The context there was of having prayers for wisdom heard (1:5,6). The rich man's wavering prayers (1:6 cp. 4:14) were unheeded compared to those of the poor.

Thus the poor brother being "lifted up" was through his prayers being answered. Now in 4:10 James is again telling the rich elders to humble themselves like the poor brethren so that they too could be lifted up. The emphasis in 1:9 and 4:10 is on God lifting us up (same word as "exalting"). This must look back to the repeated warnings in the Gospels about exalting oneself (Lk. 14:11; 18:14; Mt. 23:12), often referring to the Jews who did this. The man of sin, which must have reference to both Jewish and Roman systems of apostasy, also "exalteth himself" (2 Thess. 2:4). The Jewish characteristic of spiritual self-exaltation was therefore seen in these Jewish brethren. There is a parallel between verses 6 and 10; God "giveth grace unto the humble" (v.6) and lifts them up (v.10). The giving of grace we have interpreted as giving the answer to prayer, and especially in the gift of wisdom from the word; this equates with being lifted up with a place in the Kingdom. Thus to an extent we are in the Kingdom now in prospect through experiencing the gifts of the word and answered prayer.

4:11 *Brothers, do not speak evil against each other. He that speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law. But if you*

judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge- James now speaks specifically of one particular manifestation of their evil desires and the things which militated against their prayers being answered, namely evil speaking and condemning the poor brethren. This is the same thing as noted in 3:9,10, where we saw that they cursed these brethren with the excuse that they were doing it under the inspiration of God. Their evil speaking was due to not letting the word curb their evil desires; they were thus effectively judging the word, saying that their own natural spirit was superior to that holy Spirit provided by a humble response to the word. Similarly they effectively thought that the Scriptures' warning against the natural lust of our heart was "vain" (4:5). Note that speaking evil of the brother and speaking evil of the law are equated, implying that the brethren they were slandering had the word in them.

The parallel passage in 1 Pet.2:1,2 says that the antidote to "evil speakings" was to "desire the sincere milk of the word" as newborn spiritual babes- strong medicine for ecclesial 'elders', who probably had the gift of prophecy. Possession of the miraculous gifts did not force them to desire the true spirit of the word. Speaking evil is equivalent to condemning or spiritually killing a brother, according to James- no doubt basing his reasoning on that of the Lord, that to hate your brother was to kill him (Mt. 5:21,22).

James saw the Mosaic command not to kill your brother as meaning 'do not condemn' under the New Covenant. Therefore to do so was to speak evil of "the law" both of Moses and Christ. The Lord also said that to call your brother a "Fool" was as bad as condemning or killing him. The Greek for "fool" implies someone who has been shut out of a certain knowledge; the word is invariably used in the New Testament regarding someone lacking in the true knowledge of God. There does seem to be a definite reference to Mt. 5:21,22, and therefore James would be implying that the Jewish elders were accusing the others of not having their true knowledge of God (due to their gift of prophecy, they may have argued?) and therefore being condemned by God. By doing so they were speaking evil of the word which the other brethren had received, which was enough to make them spiritually wise ("the wisdom that is from above", 1:17,18 cp. 3:17) and not fools, as the elders accused them of being. The elders were not denying that the others had received part of the word, but were saying that without having the knowledge which they claimed to have, these brethren were fools, i.e. 'judged' or condemned. This spiritual superiority due to supposed additional revelation is a common characteristic of the descriptions of the Judaizers and their followers: Rev. 2:24, "the (pseudo) depths of (the Jewish) satan"; Jude 10; 1 Cor. 1:17-21; 2:1-7; 3:18,19; 2 Cor. 11:19; Rom. 1:22; 12:16. Jude 19 describes these brethren as separating themselves, falsely claiming to have the Spirit, although they still attended the communion service to spread their false ideas (v.12); thus their separating of themselves was not in a physical sense, but an elitism due to their claim to have superior Spirit-given knowledge. Even today it is possible for there to be spiritual elitism from thinking that we have a deep understanding of the Spirit word which others are not yet able to appreciate.

This verse 11 seems to consciously refer back to 2:5-16. Speaking evil of "the law" by evil speaking about the brethren is probably based on 2:8,9: "Respect to persons (breaks)... *the* royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself". The chapter 2 passage mentions the oppression of the poor brethren before the "judgment seats" of the eldership (2:6), and the subsequent turning down of their welfare requests (2:16), as examples of breaking the royal law. That same law was

being broken by the elders falsely accusing and condemning their brother, according to 4:11. Thus these elders were trying to act like Christ in His role as judge, and were bringing false accusation against the brethren and subsequently condemning them, as an excuse not to provide them with their basic needs, and to withhold their legitimate wages (5:4). The judges of Israel under the Mosaic Law were those "to whom the word of God came", and yet they were condemned for judging unjustly, accepting the persons of the wicked (cp. saying to the well dressed man 'sit here', 2:3), not defending the poor and fatherless (the Jewish ecclesial elders also neglected these; 1:27) and not delivering the poor and needy (cp. 2:15,16; 4:5). Despite being inspired with the word of God "they know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" (Jn. 10:34-36; Ps.82:1-5). James is making a very apt comparison between these judges and the Jewish eldership, who had become so obsessed with being the equivalent of these judges in the new Israel that they had come to think that their personal doing of the law was not important. Similarly those today who publicly expound the word can become 'judges' rather than doers. That they judged the law may even imply that they set up their personal ideas as being greater and more inspired than the word of God itself, and maybe even 'judged' or condemned part of the word which conflicted with their personal 'wisdom'. Being a doer of the law must be another allusion to Romans: "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). This is again in the context of Paul's rebuke of the Jewish thinking that by being Jews and having heard the Law they were justified; and this also connects with the argument in James 2:20 that holding "the faith" must be accompanied by works, and being "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (1:22,23).

James could tell others not to speak against their brother (James 4:11 RV) knowing full well he had done the same to Jesus, his brother. Preaching and pastoral work is so often powerfully achieved on the basis of having personally experienced grace.

4:12 *One only is the lawgiver and judge. He who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge your neighbour?*- The stress on *one* lawgiver suggests, in harmony with our previous comments, that the elders were making new laws under the claim of inspiration, and were using these to condemn their brethren. Note how the evil speaking which began as a result of the word not controlling their thoughts led them to condemn others, contrary to the clear law of Christ (Mt. 7:1), and having effectively disregarded the word their next step was to literally add to it. They had already done this in effect by trying to Biblically justify their wrong actions. The phrase "there is one lawgiver" would have rung bells in every Jewish mind concerning Moses the lawgiver. Again their likening of themselves to Moses is being condemned (see notes on 3:10). However, the ultimate lawgiver is God, who is "able to...destroy" soul and body (alluding to Mt. 10:28). The fact that God's ability to save and destroy in Gehenna at the judgment (note the Mt. 10:28 allusion) is chosen out of all His powers, shows that the elders were specifically claiming that they had the power to make the decision of salvation or destruction, and that the judgment panel which they formed to judge the poor brethren was rated by them as an exact equivalent to Christ's judgment seat at the second coming.

The extent of their blasphemy of the word of God which they claimed justified them in all this is hard to comprehend.

This verse has clear reference to Rom. 14:4: "Who art you that judges another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand". We have seen in 4:10 the idea of being lifted up at the day of

judgment. Thus Paul in Romans is also using 'judging' in the sense of spiritually condemning, and is saying that the brethren doing such judgment were usurping Christ's position as the judge, saying *they* were the master of the servants. Therefore Paul says that such condemned brethren will be justified by being lifted up to acceptance at the true judgment seat. The similarity of the situation suggests strongly that Romans and James were written to the same readership, and that their writers expected the readers to make connections between the letters- due to the same spirit inspiring both writers. The context in Rom.14:3 is judging (i.e. condemning) your brother due to his attitude to the Mosaic food laws and the Sabbath. Those who were doing the judging were "him that eats not"- i.e. the Judaizers who wanted a move back to the Jewish laws. The connections between Romans and James are such that we can safely say that the group who were doing the judging in James are identical to the group of Judaizers in Romans.

Thus the group of Jewish elders James writes to were almost definitely either Judaizers or Judaist influenced. The connections with James would explain why Rom. 14:10-13 stresses so much that the judge at the judgment seat is God through Christ, rather than men. The importance of this can be appreciated far more once it is recognized that the Jewish eldership were claiming to have an inspired command from God to set up judgment seats and judge to condemnation on Christ's behalf. The situation is made the more fascinating when we appreciate that the power of the Spirit was available to the apostles and possibly some elders to inflict physical sickness as a punishment- e.g. Peter could strike Ananias and Sapphira dead, Christ would threaten to strike down false teachers (Rev. 2:23; 22:18); Peter could threaten many (unrecorded) physical curses that he could bring upon Simon for his blasphemy (Acts 8:24); Paul could make Elymas blind (Acts 13:9-11). It is probable that the gift of healing was largely used to cure such people after their repentance, and this is the basis of James 5:15 (see note there). It would appear that the Jewish elders were claiming some kind of similar authority.

The omnipotence of God not only inspires faith; it demands even more than that. Because God alone has the power to save and destroy, He alone can ultimately judge; the fact there is only one law giver means there is only one judge (James 4:12 RV). To judge, therefore, is to ‘play God’ in a blasphemous way, arrogating to ourselves the role of lawgiver and judge. Yet apart from God we are powerless, totally and utterly. Our powerlessness needs to be reflected upon more deeply. We simply cannot judge. The omnipotence of God alone precludes it.

4:13 *Come now, you that say that today or the next day we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and make a profit*- The two references to "Come now" or "Go to" in James (here and 5:1) suggest immediately the one other place where this idiom is used- it occurs three times in five verses in Gen.11:3-7 concerning the building of Babel. There is good reason to believe that Babel represented the apostate Jewish system of worship. "A city and a tower" of Gen. 11:4 points forward to Jerusalem and the Jewish system having a tower in the midst of its vineyard (Is. 5:2; Mt. 21:33). All Jewish temples were built with the help of Gentile labour, as Babel was built by all nations collected together in one purpose. Babel and Shinar are the basis of Babylon in Scripture, and the descriptions of Babylon in Revelation have many echoes of the Jewish system. The scattering abroad of Babel all over the earth corresponds to God's Angelic 'coming down' on Jerusalem in AD70 and the subsequent scattering of the Jews world-wide. We have seen previously that James very much has the events of AD70 in mind, and the use of the phrase "go to" would

be another reminder that unless the Jewish believers repented of their materialism and other unspirituality, then both natural and spiritual Jerusalem would be severely punished- as indeed happened to both of them. We have shown earlier that this verse primarily refers to the itinerant Jewish traders within the ecclesia.

2 John 7-11 (also written to a Jewish audience?) also speaks of itinerant preachers who were likely to have serious doctrinal errors. The Jews with whom they mixed in such travelling would not have been wholesome spiritual company. Indeed, it was "Vagabond" (Greek 'strolling') Jews who stirred up trouble for the believers (Acts 19:13). These brethren blatantly, proudly talked of their business plans, glorying in not saying 'God willing' (so v.15,16 implies). This was probably because they believed that they no longer personally had to keep the law (v.11), and that they were justified by reason of knowing the truth and being Jews by birth (2:20 and cp. Romans 6:1).

The sudden switch of subject away from judging brethren to that of crazy materialism calls for an explanation. It seems that the letter of James criticizes the believers for increasingly serious things, with a corresponding increase in punishment from God. The sections can be categorized as follows:
1:1-12 Semi-faith in prayer from lack of attention to the word due to materialism
1:13-27 Falsely blaming God for temptation, hard speaking to brethren, and neglect of the fatherless and widows in the ecclesia due to brief, meaningless self-examination and not being sensitive to the word.
2:1-13 Preference to the rich in the ecclesia, condemning the poor brethren, saying some parts of the word were unimportant.
2:14-26 Saying external works and technical holding of the Truth justified a man, and that lack of real spiritual effort can be Biblically justified.
3:1-4:12 Total unrestraint of the evil heart and its words, saying this was unnecessary for them. Claiming to be inspired with new revelation from God which replaced parts of the Bible and justified them totally.
4:13-5:6 Sinking into total materialism, throwing off all sense of subjection to God, effectively crucifying Christ afresh (5:6).
5:7-20 Subsequently being struck with physical sickness to try to lead them to repentance; final destruction at the Lord's 'coming' in AD70 and the holocaust for natural and spiritual Israel which followed.
If this analysis is correct, then these separate parts of the letter would have been sent at different times- hence 4:13 "Go to *now*". How many of us are in the first category discussed in 1:1-12? If our attention to the word continues to slip, it is only a matter of time before the ecclesia of the last days drops into the categories lower down the list. It has been suggested that the letter of James is a series of exhortations given to or at the Jerusalem ecclesia and then circulated. This would fit in with the pattern deduced here.

4:14 *Whereas you do not know what shall be the next day. What is your life? For you are as a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away*- In view of the Jewish and Christian persecution which the parallel letter of Peter speaks of, they especially could not plan on predicting the future without God's help. Their travelling from city to city trading was probably enforced by the persecution. The Greek for "buy and sell" in v.13 means specifically to trade whilst travelling around, as a pedlar. Thus in their spiritual arrogance they were saying that their travelling around was done by their own spiritually correct decision, which obviated the need to say 'God willing'. They probably showed off their plans to the poor labouring brethren, as if they knew by direct inspiration what would be on the morrow. There must also be

reference back to Christ's commands about not worrying about tomorrow because God would provide- "take therefore no (anxious) thought for the morrow" (Mt. 6:34). If James had this in mind, then he was saying that he knew that in their evil heart they were worrying in a God-forsaking way about tomorrow, which they justified by saying that they had inspired knowledge of the future and the profit they would make, and therefore showed this off with a false air of confidence to the poorer brethren.

Again, these brethren are reminded of the need to remember their true nature: "For what is your life?" (cp. 4:14). The description of life as a vapour appears to be an allusion to Job 7:7: "O remember that my life is wind". Thus James is asking them to learn the lesson of Job, as he does in 5:11; to come to a true understanding of the weakness of human nature through responding in humility to the trials of life, and to the knowledge of God directly provided by Him. Again, as in 2:3 (see notes there) these brethren are being compared to Job, as they are again in chapter 5; as with him, physical trial was brought upon them in order for them to learn humility and the lessons concerning human nature and its relation to a holy God, which previously they had been unwilling to learn.

4:15 *For you ought to say: If the Lord wills it, we shall both live and do this or that*- "To say" implies that there should have been a verbal statement, publicly heard, of their recognition of the Lord's will in their lives. Their need to say that they would live if it was the Lord's will shows the extremely temporary nature of their lives at that time of persecution. Despite such tribulation, their hearts were so hardened against the true influence of the word that they were not made more sensitive to God's hand in their lives, but rather were hardened into thinking that in their own strength and wisdom, which they imagined was God-given, they would weather the present crisis. The Lord's "will" here is the Lord's desires and wishes, not necessarily the pre-determinate "will" of God. The parallel letter of Peter emphasizes that the will of God was what controlled their present persecution (1 Pet. 2:15; 3:17; 4:19), and that they should seek to do God's will by overcoming the natural will of the flesh (1 Pet. 4:2,3) by the word of God, which contains the will of God (1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:21 cp. Jn. 1:13). Putting together these ideas, the message seems to be that it was the same will of God that they needed to get inside their hearts, to overcome the will of the flesh, which was also bringing their tribulations, implying that God was developing their response to the word through their persecutions.

James is therefore saying that they should recognize the will, the desires, the purpose of God behind their persecution from city to city, which was to develop in them a more truly spiritual mind. But by effectively saying that God's will or desires were irrelevant to them, they were denying themselves the opportunity to be spiritually developed by their sufferings. Lack of attention to what God is willing or desiring in our own trials can similarly lead to them being in vain for us too. That they should say "we shall live" if the Lord will suggests that they thought that their lives were protected from harm, or that they had some inherently indestructible element to them; hence the reminder in the previous verse that their life was only a brief vapour, as opposed to the more permanent 'immortal soul' they perhaps almost believed in as a result of the Roman/ Judaist philosophical influence upon them. The amazing thing is that despite these brethren's progressively worse problems in their doctrine and way of life, James continues to patiently reason with them, leading on towards his final appeal for repentance in Chapter 5.

4:16 *But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil*- We have

previously commented on how their blatant rejoicing in their sin was due to their reasoning that it was impossible that they could sin- hence "all such… *is* evil". Similarly the Judaist element at Corinth rejoiced in the fact that there was a division in the ecclesia between the Paul and Apollos factions (1 Cor. 4:6,7), and that they retained in fellowship a brother who had brazenly committed incest for all to see (1 Cor. 5:6); this all shows the same mentality, of openly rejoicing in the freedom that they believed they had from all moral and spiritual constraints. "Rejoice" really means to glory or boast, which means that it had to be done to someone else. To boast that they did not need to say "If the Lord will" about their plans would not have made many eyes turn in the world generally; therefore it is more likely that they were boasting to the poor brethren whom they had spiritually condemned, saying that the superior revelation which they had received enabled them to have freedom from that kind of spiritual requirement which the poor brethren needed to obey.

"Boastings" occurs only three times elsewhere, and each time it is in the context of false Judaist reasoning. Rom. 1:30 describes how Israel in the wilderness, and also the last day Jewish ecclesias, were "boasters". If this means spiritually boastful, then it implies that the rejected generation in the wilderness thought up ways to spiritually justify themselves; hence Rom. 1:30 goes on to describe "inventors of evil things", i.e. the alternative tabernacle system of worship that they created and carried with them, based around their idols (Acts 7:43,44). 2 Tim. 3:2 describes the boastful infiltrators of the ecclesias in the last days (2 Tim.3:6), who had once known the Truth (2 Tim. 3:5 cp. Rom. 2:20; 2 Tim. 1:13) but through their claims to superior knowledge and revelation (2 Tim. 3:7) and giving way to their corrupted natural mind (2 Tim. 3:8) were "reprobate concerning the faith". This very well describes the Judaist brethren to whom James was writing.

"Boasting" also occurs in 1 Jn. 2:16 translated "pride": "All that is in the world (the Jewish world- so the phrase normally means in John's writings), the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride (boasting) of life, is not of the Father (as the Judaists were claiming?), but is of the world. And the world passes away" (in AD70). We have suggested that this boasting of life was a spiritual boasting by the Jews that they were blessed with superior wisdom and justification with God. 1 Jn. 2:16 is looking back to Eve's sin in Eden (Gen. 3:6)- she saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was good for food (the lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes) and to be desired to make one wise (pride of life). The Jews' desire for worldly wisdom was like Eve in Eden. Her motivation for taking the fruit would therefore have been that of spiritual pride, the desire to boast to her husband that she was now under no restrictions at all and had a wisdom equal to that of God. Exactly the same was true of the first century Judaizers.

4:17 *Therefore, to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin*- This indicates that these elders knew what they should be doing but consciously chose not to. In the light of their false claims to inspiration and the despicable doctrine and practice which they followed, it seems incredible that they could still have a knowledge of the real truth within them; and yet such is the deceit of the human heart that such doublemindedness can easily occur. There may be a reference here back to Lk. 12:47: he that "knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes". James 4:15 has spoken about their conscious disregard of their Lord's will. Thus v.17 is saying 'You know God's will and you know that you should show your recognition of it publicly- but you

don't'. Lk. 12:48 goes on to say that knowing the Lord's will is the same as being given much- which the Jewish elders had been by having the miraculous Spirit gifts. The phrasing of "to him that knows... to him it is sin" implies that not all James' readership did have that knowledge- because they had become so hardened in their belief that their attitudes were correct, that they no longer had the knowledge of the truth? "To him it is sin" implies that there were some without knowledge to whom their lack of doing good would not be reckoned as sin- i.e. although all unrighteousness is sin, no matter who commits it, "sin" is reckoned to the person who has the knowledge of what he ought to be doing. This is another of the many indications that an ongoing record is kept of our actions or lack of them, so that our failure to do an action that we know we should is counted as sin to us at a certain moment in time.

JAMES CHAPTER 5

5:1 *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you*- The reference to rich men weeping again suggests a link with the beatitudes: "Woe unto you that are rich... that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep... when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Lk. 6:24-26). The mourning and weeping was what they were advised to do as a mark of their repentance in 4:9- perhaps this was therefore to be as a result of their no longer being rich, i.e. sharing their wealth with their desperately poor brethren. The beatitudes were saying that the rich would mourn and weep at the judgment; James is advising them to do so now, i.e. to judge or condemn themselves by their self-examination in this life, so that they would not experience the weeping and gnashing of teeth then (cp. 1 Cor. 11:31). The weeping and howling were to be when "your miseries...shall come upon you"- i.e. in AD70.

Thus the 'coming' of Christ then was also like the judgment seat at the second coming; the misery of the AD70 judgments and subsequent Jewish persecution was similar to that to be seen at the second coming. There should also be a parallel with the true contrition which we ought to have after repentant self-examination.

There is an allusion here to Zeph. 1:11,12: "Howl, you inhabitants of Maktesh (i.e. the market area near the temple- see N.I.V.)... I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. Therefore your goods shall become a booty". The Jews Zephaniah addressed were facing the coming day of the Lord at the hand of Babylon; the materialism and subsequent money-making from the temple worshippers that they were guilty of, was being repeated in a more subtle form by their counterparts in the Jewish ecclesia in the days before AD70. Zephaniah warned "The great day of the Lord is near, and hastes greatly" (Zeph. 1:14), hoping to motivate them to repent. Similarly James: "The coming of the Lord draws near" (5:8). Ripping off the temple worshippers was paralleled by the financial abuses of the flock by the elders, to be mentioned in v.4. The idea of howling in Israel as a result of the impending day of the Lord due to their sins is common in the Old Testament prophets: Is. 13:6; Jer. 25:34; 47:2; Ez. 21:12; Joel 1:5,8,11,13; Mic. 1:8; Zech. 11:3. Many of these refer to the priests or the prophet howling. Thus James is saying that as well as howling in repentance, these ecclesial elders as counterparts of the priests and prophets under the Mosaic system should be howling out warning to the flock concerning the coming day of judgment.

"Miseries" can also imply spiritual lowness; the rareness of the Greek word and the other allusions to Rom. 7 in James suggest that we are intended to see a connection with Rom. 7:24: "O wretched (same word as "miseries") man that I am!"- an exclamation concerning the intense evil of his natural mind that was called forth by Paul's self examination, maybe implying that if they judged (condemned) themselves now in their self examination, they would avoid the misery and self-realization they were to have in the coming holocaust.

5:2 *Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten*- The similarities between them and the priests is continued by their garments being described as moth eaten; which exactly fits the context of Heb. 8:13, which describes the old covenant as a decaying garment about to vanish away in AD70. Thus the Jewish ecclesial elders were so closely associated with the Law due to their desire to justify their materialism (which the riches and garments must also refer to) that they were to be destroyed along with it. That these rich men were in the ecclesia is confirmed by the reference back to the rich brother in goodly apparel being given a prominent place in the ecclesial meeting place (2:2).

Note the present tenses: "are corrupted... are moth eaten". The unlikelihood that they walked around in literally moth eaten clothes or that their gold was literally corrupted indicates that James meant that they were like this in the sight of God. This provides an interesting key to Mt. 6:19-21, to which there is a clear allusion: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt... but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven... for their will your heart be also". Thus James read the moth and rust corrupting as being in God's sight- if a man's heart is set on earthly things, God looks ahead to the distant day when those possessions have decayed, perhaps after the person's death, and as they are then, so God considers them to be in this present life. The emphasis in Mt.6 is on where the heart is- which precisely agrees with the context of James. Our mind *is* able to see our material possessions in a similar light to how God does.

5:3 *Your gold and your silver are rusted, and their rust shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days*- Their riches were specifically "gold and silver"- which we have identified as the main thing which these brethren were desiring (see notes on 4:3). The idea of corruption of financial wealth is repeated in 2 Cor. 8:15, where Paul likens the Corinthians' giving of their financial blessings in order to make an equality among the brotherhood, to the manna not being left to corrupt by the morning, but instead being gathered and shared out (Ex. 16:18,19). Those who refused to obey this command found their manna was corrupted by morning- teaching that unless we share our manna or money (as 2 Cor. 8:15 interprets it) before the morning of the Lord's coming, we will incur His wrath. This fits beautifully with the situation in James; in our notes on v.1 we saw that there was probably the suggestion that they share their riches with the poorer brethren, so that the curses on the rich and happy in the beatitudes did not come upon them.

The eating of the flesh with fire connects the literal and symbolic use of fire to destroy the Jewish heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:7). Note the equation of the believers with their riches- as rust ate gold and silver, so fire would eat their flesh. Their life ("flesh") *did* consist in the abundance of the things which they possessed (Lk. 12:15). The fire also represents the Gehenna fire of the rejected at judgment; its connection with the rust of

their riches perhaps indicates that the punishment of the rejected at judgment is at the hands of those things which caused their rejection. Alternatively, this language may be similar in idea to "delivering to satan for the destruction of the flesh" in 1 Cor. 5:5; the satan, or evil desires, in this case being their love of riches.

The Greek for "rust" occurs also in 3:8 translated "poison", concerning the nature of the tongue and the evil heart it is associated with. Thus they are being reminded that their gross materialism was rooted in their evil desires, and it is this fact that "shall be a witness (judicially) against you". Again this is the language of judgment, as if they were to be soon at the Lord's judgment seat. The idea of eating flesh at judgment occurs again in Rev. 17:16 and 19:18- prophecies which must have an initial application to the AD70 destruction of Israel. They describe the military forces responsible for the AD70 punishments and subsequent persecutions as eating the flesh; here in James the evil desires behind their riches do the eating, implying that it was because of these that the judgment came, again stressing the ultimate importance of the heart's spiritual condition. Remember that the judgments on Jerusalem in AD70 had repercussions for natural and spiritual Israel throughout the Roman world.

The heaping of treasure together is another allusion to the early chapters of Romans: "Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance (cp. 2 Pet. 3:15 concerning the delay in judgment upon Jerusalem in order to allow natural and spiritual Israel time to repent), but after your hardness and impenitent heart (notice the emphasis on this) you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath" in AD70 (Rom. 2:4,5). The treasures they had heaped up were therefore directly proportionate to the amount of wrath they would receive- perhaps because their wealth was proportionate to the amount of defrauding and subsequent lack of love shown to their brethren (5:4). The Heavens and earth (natural and spiritual Israel?) were "kept in store" (2 Pet. 3:7)- the same Greek phrase for "treasuring up" and heaping treasure together- for judgment by fire in AD70. The fact this fire was to come on individuals (2 Thess. 1:8) invites us to interpret the heavens and earth as referring to the individual people that comprised the Jewish system; and we can conclude that this included both apostate, largely Judaist-influenced Christians, as well as the natural Jews.

This Greek phrase for laying up treasure also occurs in Lk. 12:21 concerning the 'greater barns' man laying up treasure for himself. Note that Lk. 12:15, also in this context, has already been alluded to in James 5:3 (see above). The rich man was a farmer- as were some of the rich brethren amongst James' readership (5:4); he thought he knew the future, as the same class in James' letter thought they did (4:13), and the suddenness of his destruction corresponds with the rich in the ecclesia thinking that spiritually they were in peace and safety, and then the sudden destruction of AD70 coming (1 Thess. 5:2,3) at "the day of the Lord"- note the many links between 1 Thess. 4:15 - 5:9 and the Olivet prophecy concerning the same destruction. Again, James opens up a parable with an interpretation many of us otherwise would not have reached. The emphasis on their time being "the last days" is doubtless because they thought they knew the future- as indicated in 4:13-15 by their lack of saying 'If the Lord will', presumably because they thought the Lord's coming was far distant. Therefore along with their prototype in the rich farmer parable, they thought that they could go on building up their own Kingdom on earth.

Especially in our generation, we hold wealth- any wealth- in the full knowledge that our Lord could return at any moment. James 5:3 brings out the paradox- of

hoarding up wealth for the last days! The Greek for ‘hoarding up’ means ‘to reserve’. And this is just what our flesh tells us to do- reserve ‘our’ wealth for a rainy day, for long term security. It’s as if James foresaw that in our last days, this would be a particular temptation. See on 1 Cor. 7:29.

Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Speaking of the last day Isaiah 33:11 had foretold: "your breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you". Likewise wrongly gained wealth is the fire that will burn those who have it at the last day (James 5:3). James is picking up a figure from Is. 33:11, again concerning the final judgment: "Your breath, as fire, shall devour you". Their breath, their words, were as fire which would in the end be the basis of their condemnation. Nadab and Abihu kindled strange fire, and it was with that fire that God burnt them up, in symbol of His destruction of all the wicked at judgment day (Lev. 10:2). "He that believes not is condemned already" (Jn. 3:18). A heretic is already condemned of himself (Tit. 3:11); our heart can condemn us now (1 Jn. 3:20).

There is an amazing ability in human nature to believe that wealth lasts for ever. That's why we recoil in horror at the idea of forsaking all we have. James 5:3 says well that gold rusts. Yet we know it doesn’t rust. But in the very end, it does in the sense that it doesn’t last in our hands for ever. Especially in the perspective of the soon return of Jesus, materialism is totally inappropriate for the believer awaiting Him. James 5:3 RV says it so clearly: “Ye have laid up your treasures in the last days”. It’s as if it’s self-evidently inappropriate to build up wealth in the last days. Period. The men of Beth-Shemesh were smitten because they looked into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). I suspect this was because they wanted to find any more jewels which the Philistines might have placed there. In the face and presence of the things of the supreme glory of Jehovah of Israel, they scavenged around in a spirit of petty materialism- just as men gambled for the clothes of Jesus at the foot of His cross.

5:4 *Indeed, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth*- We have frequently made reference to this verse previously, showing how this was being done by the rich farm owners in the ecclesia, under the pretext that the poor brethren who were their employees were spiritually unworthy; and it is to this that 2:6 concerning despising the poor refers. This situation could well have occurred within a small household ecclesia, thus putting much more pressure on the labourer brethren.

There is a reference here to Mal.3:5, which is in the context of describing the day of the Lord's sudden coming to the temple in fire in AD70 (v.1-3), and primarily refers to the judgements on the corrupt priesthood: "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against... false swearers, and against those that oppress (mg. 'defraud', cp. James 5:4) the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless (James 1:27), and that turn aside the stranger from his right (James 2:2 cp. 2:6 implies unexpected visiting brethren were refused material help), and fear not Me... return unto Me.. .But you said, Wherein shall we return?... It is vain to serve God... we call the proud happy (cp. glorying in their proud boastings)"- Mal. 3:5,7,14,15. Again, the eldership of the Jewish ecclesias is being likened to the priesthood under the Old Covenant (see notes on 4:8), and the priests' stealing of the offerings matched the elders financially abusing the poor of the flock within the

ecclesias. The materialism and subsequent laxness of Israel's shepherds has uncanny similarities with criticisms which could be levelled at their latter day equivalent.

We have seen in our notes on "consume" in 4:3 and 5:3 that the weakness of these brethren was for hard cash- hence it was "the hire" that was kept back. Passages warning about the dangers of loving money (e.g. 1 Tim. 6:10) can now be interpreted with reference to this class of believers. The cry of these brethren coming up to God connects with Elihu's inspired accusation of Job causing the cry of the poor to rise to God (Job 34:28), thus making Job a type of the rich Jews of the first century ecclesia who had to learn the true ways of God through their sufferings.

A cry entering God's ears recalls he effect of the slaughter of Abel by Cain (Gen.4:10), who as the first human liar and murderer was a prototype of the Jewish devil (Jn. 8:44). His persecution and slaughter of Abel represented the oppression of the poor Christians by these Judaist-influenced brethren. Cain's killing of Abel pointed forward to that of Christ by the Jews, and thus James is saying that by enduring the abuses of these so-called elders in the ecclesia, the poor brethren were fellowshiping the sufferings of Christ on the cross at the hands of the Jewish elders of His 'ecclesia'. Each of our sufferings too can be examined to show echoes of the cross. It appears that Cain's hate of Abel was based on spiritual pride- Gen.4:3 speaks of their review by God "at the end of the day" (AVmg.), and Gen. 4:7 suggests that then a choice was made between them by God as to who should be priest: "If you do well, shall you not have the excellency?... and unto you shall be his desire" AVmg.). This type of hurt pride is easily discernible in the actions of the Jewish elders towards the more spiritual believers, and in the persecution of Jesus by the Jews. Thus the description of the brethren as condemning and killing the just in v.6 applies both to Christ on the cross and to the spiritual condemnation and lack of love ("killing", in terms of the sermon on the mount) which was being shown towards the poor brethren by their reprobate elders. Note how Rom. 12:14 speaks of brethren persecuting each other within the ecclesia.

God's hearing of a sincere cry of affliction also looks back to Israel in bondage to Egypt, whose cry was then answered by Angelic intervention. Similarly the use of the title "Lord of Sabaoth" is the equivalent of the "Lord of hosts" with all its Angelic implications. This emphasis is doubtless due to the fact that Angels brought the punishment of natural and spiritual Israel in the AD70 period (Mt.22:7 cp. Rev. 19:14; Dan. 4:35). The echo of Israel's experience in Egypt is surely intended: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage" (Ex. 2:23). This would associate the rich Jewish believers with the Egyptians in their persecution of God's people. And as natural Israel were delivered at Passover, so these suffering poor believers would be at the second coming, which the Passover deliverance typified.

"Reaped down" is a totally different Greek word to that used in "them which have reaped". The latter means to harvest in the agricultural sense, whilst the former means more 'to gather together', thus linking with the idea of heaping treasure together in the previous verse.

The hard work of the labouring brethren had brought riches to the rich elders, yet still they defrauded them of their wages, showing the degree of their wide-eyed lust for money.

The complaint of the believer-labourers cheated by their masters is paralleled with the

cry of the wages which they were owed. This cry entered into the ears of the Lord of judgment (James 5:4). The situation was counted as the prayer of those brethren against the brethren employing and deceiving them.

5:5 *You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts only for a day of slaughter*- Note the certainty of James' accusations- "You have" occurs four times in as many verses. This shows the certainty of inspiration, either through James having seen how they had lived in Israel before their scattering, the inspired reports of the 'messengers of the churches', or a direct satellite-vision of their present situation given to James. Their living in pleasure on the earth may refer back to the affluent man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, who represented the Jewish priesthood (Lk. 16:19). Compare this with the same class being represented by the rich farmer in the greater barns parable. The mocking of the requests of poor Lazarus would refer to the rich Jewish eldership despising the welfare requests of the poor believers.

The use of the phrase "on the earth" may be reminding them that they were amassing pleasure on earth as opposed to Heaven, as v.3 had also made clear. Alternatively, the past tenses here may refer to James' knowledge of how they had lived "on the earth" or land of Israel. The words for "pleasure" and "wanton" imply glorious feasting; "ye have nourished your hearts" therefore equates their minds with their bodies. This is a theme of James- that our way of thinking and our physical actions and sensations are indivisible. Their glorious feasting was really feeding the evil desires of their hearts which had led them to hold the feasts. Yet in practice they were fattening themselves in readiness for the slaughter to provide meat for another feast- that of God's wrath (cp. the description of the day of the Lord's judgment as a feast with slaughtered beasts in Is. 34:6). The Greek for "nourished" can also mean 'to stiffen', digging at their refusal to let their hearts be changed by the word. "A day of slaughter" suggests reference to Ez. 34:2-4, which condemns the pastors of Israel for killing the spiritually fat of the flock but not spiritually feeding the others; and also to the "day of slaughter" of those in Jer. 12:1-3 whose hearts were far from God because of their prosperity, although they had a show of Godliness. There is probably another link to Jer. 25:34, where the shepherds of the flock were to be killed in the AD70 slaughter (Jer. 25:38=AD70; 25:32=Mt. 24=AD70).

It is the Lord's will that we His people should be ready for Him; the harvest is reaped when it is ripe; His apparent delay in returning is in order to give us time for spiritual development. It seems not coincidental that in these last days there is now unparalleled opportunity for giving up what material wealth we have for the Lord's cause. To heap up possessions (in whatever way) in the last days is absurd; it's like a cow eating just before he's slaughtered (James 5:5), or in Jeremiah's terms, like a bird building up its nest just before it flies off in migration. There are concrete opportunities galore to give to the Lord's work, whether it be a postage stamp per week in one context, or trying to pay one's fares to a Bible School rather than presume on the generosity of others, to a large regular donation of cash in another believer's context. Who we leave 'our' property to (if we have any) is something else we can ponder. We have been given all that we have from the Lord, it is not our own, and He watches our attitude to it carefully. What we have is not ours because we worked for it- although that, I know, is how it feels. It is ours on loan. Surely this of itself ought to mean that each of us leaves our property, if we own any, to the work of the Truth,

or to a brother or sister who we know will use the resulting funds in the Lord's work (after the pattern of how David left all his personal wealth to the work of the temple, rather than to Solomon personally- 1 Chron. 29:3 NIV).

5:6 *You have condemned, you have killed the righteous, even though he does not oppose you*- We have shown in our comments on v.4 that "the just" can refer to both the Lord Jesus Christ and the oppressed underclass of believers. Their sumptuous feasts of v.5 were at the expense of killing fatted animals- who represented the spiritually fat, ideal sacrifices of the Lord and the poor brethren. The idea of killing being equated with lack of love is popular in James- e.g. 4:2; 2:11, based on Mt. 5:22. There seems to be a contrast here with 4:6, where God is said to resist (same word) the prayer of the brethren. Maybe the maximum show of God's displeasure with them was only in not answering their prayers for material things and money. Thus an apparent lack of major signs of displeasure from God should not lull any of us into thinking that this means we are totally acceptable in God's sight.

"The just one" is a title of the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) whom they crucified afresh, and "He doth not resist you" indicates that one particular "just one" is being referred to. However, "the just" can also refer to those justified by their faith, which is how it is used in early Romans (1:17; 2:13), a part of Scripture which James' readers seem to have been familiar with in view of the number of references made to it. By being justified by their faith these believers were not relying on the Mosaic law- for which they seem to have been condemned by their elders. Yet they did not resist the abuses made of them, but followed Christ's example on the cross. Thus we have the impression of this group of brethren being condemned by pompous, materialistic elders claiming to have some new revelation from God, who used this as an excuse to withhold their wages and publicly humiliate them at the communion service (2:2); and in the face of all this, they did not actively resist but took the sad state of the ecclesia to God in prayer- cp. the faithful servants sorrowfully telling their Lord about the abuses of one of their number by the much-forgiven ecclesial elder (Mt. 18:31). The cry of those servants and their fellow brethren whom James is referring to "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"- and He heard.

5:7 *Therefore brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain*- This final section of the letter appears to be addressed to the whole ecclesia, with a bias towards those who were being persecuted by the rich brethren. Its theme is an appeal for positive co-operation in order to help each other repent and thus be ready for the imminent coming of the Lord. It is therefore intensely relevant to the Lord's people of today. Note that James appears to have expected the second coming in his time: "Unto the coming of the Lord". "Patient" means literally to be 'long-spirited', again showing the fundamental importance of the control of the mind. It can also imply to suffer patiently, as if encouraging the abused brethren to continue to use their spiritual minds to spiritually endure the trials the others were giving them. Their patience is equated with that of God, as a husbandman waiting for spiritual fruit to develop. This shows James' urging of them to continue their non-resistance to these brethren so that they would bear spiritual fruit, and maybe also the suggestion that they were to be patient with the misguided elders until they too bore spiritual fruit. James 5 goes on to speak of the patience of the prophets in continuing to speak the word- as if to encourage these

brethren to keep using the word to help the others to bear spiritual fruit- cp. notes on 3:18.

"The coming of the Lord" is paralleled with receiving the early and latter rain, which must be referring back to Joel 2:23 and Dt. 11:13,14 concerning the blessings of the Kingdom which would be experienced once Israel repented. Note that there is a dearth of direct Biblical evidence to support the idea that the early and latter rains refer to the outpourings of the Spirit in the first century and the Kingdom- although humanly speaking the idea fits nicely. Biblically they seem to refer to the physical blessings of the land as a result of Israel's obedience. Thus again there is the inference that James looked for the literal second coming and establishment of the Kingdom being in AD70, conditional on Israel's repentance.

The precious spiritual fruit of the ecclesia would only be fully harvested by the Lord then- maybe indicating that the attitude of mind we develop now will be fully manifested in terms of spiritual fruit by our reaction to that great moment of absolute truth at the judgment. "Precious fruit" carries the specific idea of great financial value in Greek- as if to encourage them that the spiritual fruit being developed by their poverty was the true riches, thus again connecting with the allusion in v.3 to the Lord's words about treasure in Heaven rather than on earth.

The long patience of God for spiritual development until the coming of the Lord is clearly parallel with 2 Pet. 3:7-15, which says that the apparent delay in the Lord's coming was in order to give them the opportunity of developing spiritual fruit. "As workers together with God" for their spiritual growth and subsequent acceptance at judgement, they were to be patient under the trials God was bringing- as God too was patient in watching their gradual development of fruit. The husbandman receiving the rains connects with Dt. 11:13,14 describing a repentant, obedient to the word Israel being given the rains- again showing the Jewish audience of the letter, and stressing the need for the whole ecclesia to repent.

5:8 *Be you also patient. Establish your hearts. For the coming of the Lord is at hand!*- Again, James throws down an ultimate challenge- to show the same supreme patience to our stumbling spiritual development and blatant faults which God shows to us, to both the trials which help us develop and also to our weak brethren.

"Establish" means both to set fast/ confirm, and also to turn resolutely- which neatly makes it relevant to both groups in the readership, the one who needed to continue to develop their already spiritual mind, and the other who needed to resolutely turn their hearts around in repentance. The word occurs relatively frequently in Thessalonians, also in the context of preparing for the Lord's coming- showing that the main way of preparing for the second coming is by a conscious development of our way of thinking, which can only be achieved through true commitment to the word. Very often the Greek word for "stablish" is used about God stablishing our heart- showing that God will work on our hearts in accord with our personal effort. 1 Thess. 3:12,13 even suggests that this stablishing or confirming of the mind which we have personally developed will be done for us at the judgment seat, where self-doubt as to whether we have had a truly spiritual mind will loom large: "Abound in love one toward another... to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Notice this stablishing is dependent on loving each other now- very relevant in the James context.

The coming of the Lord was drawing nearer on behalf of their patience. The exhortation to patience was not just because they needed to patiently endure in their spirituality, but also because James was probably aware that the second coming of the Lord which he expected in the first century was quite likely to be delayed, due to the lack of Israel's repentance. Both James and the parallel Peter (2 Pet. 3:11,15) are saying: 'Be patient for the second coming and continue your spiritual patience so that it will come quicker and you won't have to be patient for so long'. Thus Peter's parallel to this v.8 is "The end of all things is at hands: be therefore sober (self-controlled- by having a stablished mind), and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves" (1 Pet. 4:7,8). They were to continue their effective love to those brethren who so abused them, praying earnestly for the second coming. This would only be achieved by their continued attention to stablishing their thinking, so that it was consistently controlled by the word rather than just being partially controlled- which was the root cause of the semi-faith and lukewarm commitment to true spirituality that had been the downfall of the other brethren.

"Draws near" literally means 'is made near'- the more spiritually aware, especially those who had heard of Peter's reasoning in 2 Pet.3, would have seen in this the implication that a stablishing of the mind would draw near the Lord's coming. The same Greek phrase occurs in 4:8 "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you"- and we have seen that this refers to praying to God acceptably from a heart influenced by the word. Such prayer would hasten the second coming- a basic principle taught in the Lord's prayer, seeing there is no point in praying "Thy Kingdom come" unless we believe those prayers will result in the days being shortened to that day.

James 5:8 cp. v.11 seems to connect "the coming of the Lord" and "the end of the Lord" with Job in Job 42. The fact that the Lord was "very pitiful, and of tender mercy" with Job thus reminds us of how He will be in our day of judgement.

"Salvation near to come" in Is. 56:1 is the same idea as discussed on Is. 46:13; 51:5: "I bring near My righteousness, it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not wait; and I will place salvation in Zion... My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth". The idea was that the restoration of God's Kingdom, "salvation", had come near to the Jews in exile- and all they had to do was accept it, leave Babylon and go to Zion in faith and live it. But they refused, and most didn't even leave Babylon at that time. But God's word [of this restored Kingdom] didn't return to Him without having achieved its end- because this amazing good news was and is offered to the whole world, of whatever ethnicity, Jew or Gentile. And so the language is taken up in the New Testament- the Kingdom of God 'came near' again in the first century (Mt. 3:2; 10:7 "the kingdom is at hand"; Lk. 10:9,11; 21:31; James 5:8). The Kingdom coming near doesn't therefore have to mean that it was inevitably about to come. "Near", in the context of the Isaiah passages, meant that the possibility of it coming was indeed "near" at that time. But if it wasn't accepted, then the possibility would recede and be reapplied to others. It came near to the exiles in Babylon, it came near to first century Israel- but both times they rejected it. And so it has come near to us, especially in these last days.

5:9- see on Lk. 12:2.

Brothers, do not complain about each other, so that you are not judged. Behold! The judge stands at the door!- In view of the gross abuses going on, it must have been a

sore temptation for the poor brethren to grudge against their elders- not least when they turned them away empty handed at pay day (v.4). James is pleading with them to keep up their excellent attitude of not resisting (v.6)- because at any moment the true judge would come. And note too that if they did resist by grudging, they also would be condemned at the Lord's coming- for taking the judgment of these renegade servants of the Lord into their own hands. How much less have we any right to judge our fellow servants of today! James' reasoning implied that the verdict of condemnation pronounced on them by the other brethren (v.6) was not valid- but they would only be condemned if they grudged against such treatment.

The Greek for "grudge" is normally used concerning the groaning of sincere prayer, often in silence, brought about by suffering- e.g. Mk. 7:34; Acts 7:34; Rom. 8:23,26; 2 Cor. 5:2,4- although it also carries the idea of complaining. Thus instead of making their complaints to each other, they were to quietly make them to God- and the Lord Jesus, with "groanings (same word as "grudge") which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26) would make powerful intercession for them. Peter's equivalent for them being condemned is in his warning that Sodom and Gomorrha were "condemned with an overthrow", making them an ensample unto those that after should live unGodly" (2 Pet. 2:6). If this is a valid connection, James is saying that vicious bitterness against brethren who are wrongly abusing you, leading you to condemn them, is the same magnitude of sin as living the reprobate life of the Sodomites. Similarly "the judge stands before the door" is clearly matched by 1 Pet. 4:4,5, which says that some - the same group of Judaizers within the ecclesia?- "think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (this is the sort of accusation often made by the Judaist infiltrators- cp. their smear campaign on Paul): who shall give account to him that is ready (cp. "before the door") to judge the quick and the dead".

Thus a life of "excess of riot" is the same as giving way to bitterness in the heart that leads to condemnation of the brethren. This connection between 5:9 and 1 Pet. 4:5 parallels the coming of the Lord in judgment with the resurrection- the judging of living and dead. Thus James and Peter did not think of the Lord's coming in any sense other than how we think of the second coming- to raise and judge the dead, and establish the Kingdom on earth (see notes on 5:7). Thus Paul, probably writing to the same group of Jewish believers: "Wherefore we receiving (i.e. being so near to receiving it we are practically receiving it now) a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear" (Heb. 12:28)- i.e. in the development of truly spiritual characteristics in our heart. Such acute awareness of the imminence of the Lord's coming should surely be matched by us, as we live on the very edge of time and human experience as we know it, when "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7).

This likening of the second coming to Christ standing at the door must surely connect with Rev. 3:20: "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him". Having a formal meal ("sup") with the believer must connect with the Lord's parable of the marriage supper representing the Kingdom. These letters having been written before AD70, Christ is maybe saying that if only there was a true response to His word on an individual basis ("If any man..."), then he would fully come in the glory of His Kingdom in AD70. The principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture- in this case Rev. 3:20 by James 5:9- surely has violence done to it if the Lord's standing, knocking at the door is not understood with some reference to the second coming. James 5:9

pleads with believers not to grudge / groan / sigh (Gk.) against each other *on the very eve of the Lord's coming*.

5:10 *Brothers, take for an example the suffering and patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord-* We have suggested in our notes on v.7 that the example of the prophets patiently speaking forth the word of God amidst opposition from others in their ecclesia, was an example of the patience the wrongly denigrated brethren needed in continuing to gently rebuke the erring brethren with the word; and to continue patiently letting the word dwell in their minds so that they did not let bitterness develop. This appears to be another allusion to the beatitudes- this time to Mt. 5:11,12: "Blessed are you, when men (even in the ecclesia, in their case) shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely... rejoice, and be exceeding glad (cp. James 1:2)... for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you". This enduring physical suffering not only associated them with the Lord Jesus, but also with a whole band of men who had faithfully spoken forth the word in the past. The fact the prophets had suffered for speaking forth the word to an apostate Israel indicates that the persecution of the brethren was due to their Biblically hitting the rest of the ecclesia below the belt.

The Greek for "suffering [affliction]" really means 'hardship', referring to the obvious domestic hardship brought about by the holding back of the wages by the criticized brethren. We have suggested that the eldership in the Jewish ecclesias probably had the gift of prophecy, and even if they did not, these to whom James was writing certainly thought they did. Thus James is pointing out from much Biblical precedent that being a prophet was associated with experiencing hardship as a result of persecution and unfair treatment by those who claimed to be brethren (so the Mt. 5:12 allusion intimates); and also with being patient with many opposers. Such reasoning would have been very telling on these elders. It is hard to see why the reminder should be given that the prophets spoke in the name of the Lord. Maybe it was because the poor brethren's Scriptural protests were being ridiculed as not being spoken in the name of the Lord. In this case James would be encouraging them that by reason of their being persecuted for their message, they were proving their association with those who were truly inspired to speak in the Lord's name. Speaking forth the word is often associated with carrying the name of God; not only in the sense that prophets spoke God's word in the Lord's name, but that the word develops the attributes of the Name (Ex. 34:4-7) in a man's character, thus leading him to carry God's Name if he shows forth the truth, mercy and patience of the Lord. By their correct response to the word these believers were similar to the prophets in that they spoke in the name of the Lord.

5:11 *Behold, we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the Lord is full of pity and is merciful-*

Job was "perfect" when his trials began. But at the end of the dialogues, Elihu and God condemn him and he repents. He then is restored to his "perfect" status. His period of endurance ["patience"] therefore included failure. As discussed on Job 6:11; 7:16, Job specifically says he is not patient and sees no point in endurance. And the LXX of those verses is clearly alluded to be James. His speeches hardly show patience / endurance- he wanted to commit suicide but didn't find a way. But the fact he retained faith in God, and had flashes of spiritual brilliance despite his cursing of God, is counted as "patience". "The result that the Lord intended" is a theme of James;

the word is used for the goal or intenion throughout the letter: James 1:4, 15, 17, 25; 2:8, 22; 3:2. Job's sufferings were "without cause" (Job 2:3). But still there was 'intention'. Although the way that was achieved is not discernible in terms of attaching meaning to event. James 1:3 begins the letter by saying that "The testing of your faith produces endurance", and now the letter ends with the same theme. We could say that the "endurance" was not so much what Job showed throughout his period of trial, but the result at the end. And it was the "result that the Lord intended". It is the word used in James 2:22 for how faith is "perfected".

The concluding theme of this letter is that despite their faults, all the ecclesia should pray for God's forgiveness for the others, especially bearing in mind the physical affliction that had been brought on some of them because of the grossness of their sins (see notes on 4:12). Job was a prophet (Job 29:4), one of those referred to in the preceding verse, and his example seems to be behind much of what James says in this chapter. "Happy" being the same word translated "Blessed" in the beatitudes encourages us to see an allusion here back to Mt. 5:10-12, which v.10 has already referred to: blessed are those who endure tribulation for speaking the word. The Jews ("we") counted the prophets as blessed people because of their sufferings (Mt. 23:29; Acts 13:15,27). Indeed, the Greek for "count" means 'to beautify', and is from the word for "happy/ blessed". The suffering which Job endured was not just physical but more especially from the mental trauma created in him by the criticisms of him by his friends with their (false?) claims to be inspired prophets, saying that his sufferings were due to gross spiritual weakness. This was probably the elders' reason for not supporting the poor brethren- they would have reasoned that their hardships were a sign of God's displeasure because of their lack of spirituality. We have discussed the problem of Job being credited with "patience" despite his mistakes elsewhere; his patience seem to have been in continuing to speak forth the true word of God, and in having the humility at the end to accept his failures. That Job did have failures is indicated by James saying that in "the end of the Lord" He showed great mercy and pity, which would imply forgiveness. The same word is used in Heb. 10:28 concerning the man dying without mercy, i.e. forgiveness, under the Law as a punishment for sin.

"Full of pity" is very intense in Greek- elsewhere it is translated "bowels", "inward affection". Thus the position of Job touched the Lord's heart in a way few other human experiences are said to in the word. We have elsewhere shown Job to have been a man who allowed himself to be too far influenced by the Judaist-type philosophy of the friends, the 'elders' of his ecclesia, and yet to have kept doggedly reflecting on and believing God's basic principles so that he eventually came to an appreciation of human nature and God's greatness which few others have done. The poor brethren in the Jewish ecclesias were in a similar position- being worn down by the spiritually cocksure reasoning of their elders, feeling increasingly spiritually desperate because of their words, as Job did, and therefore needing every encouragement to patiently continue rather than give way in bitterness, so that they might come to the same end as Job. The tremendous pity which God showed for Job would also be shown to them if they fully fellowshiped his example by their patient endurance.

It is not only so that we can limit God by our prayers. It is also true that prayer and spirituality can to some degree change the stated intentions of God, such is His openness to it. That God has intentions proves of itself that there can be a degree to

which what He intends to do is governed by human response. James reasons that because we have seen “the end intended by the Lord” (James 5:11 NKJ) we ought therefore to do the maximum of *our* ability. Thus Amos pronounced what the Lord had shown him: that the land would be destroyed by grasshoppers, and then by fire. But each time he begged Yahweh to relent. And “the Lord repented for this: It shall not be, says the Lord” (Am. 7:1-7).

5:12- see on Mt. 23:28.

But above all things, my brothers, do not make oaths. Neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yes, mean yes, and your no, mean no, so that you will not fall under judgment- This may well be referring to Job again, in his over-dogmatism brought about by the intensity of his sufferings; e.g. his cursing of the day he was born, and his swearing that he will never confess to being a sinner or admit that his sufferings were justified because of his sinfulness (see Job 27:5 and context). This was the type of statement which he repented of at the end. Similarly, James wants the brethren not to let the emotionally charged nature of their situation lead them to make any other response apart from a humble response governed by the word. Hence v.13 and 14 go on to say that the response to affliction, sickness or falling away should always be expressed in the form of prayer, rather than in self-generated oaths. The stress of "above all things" is hard to understand until the passage in the sermon on the mount which this verse is based on is properly appreciated.

Mt. 5:33 quotes Lev. 19:12 concerning swearing, which warns that oaths by the Lord's name should not be made lightly but had to be fulfilled, otherwise the name of the Lord would be blasphemed. Therefore the Lord quotes this as saying "You shall not forswear thyself (i.e. swear falsely), but shall perform (His emphasis being on that word) unto the Lord your oaths" (i.e. oaths made in His name). But because Christ so appreciated the extreme proneness to failure which we have by nature, He correctly declared that whatever men claimed they would do 'by the Lord's name' was likely to be "of the evil one", i.e. the devil of their own heart (Mt. 5:37), and therefore plans to do the Lord's work should be expressed in straightforward, unassuming language. Even with the best intention in the world, the Lord knew that oaths could so easily go unperformed. Christ concluded His advice with His reason for it: "For whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one" (AVmg.). The phrasing of James 5:12 is similar, and matches this with "Lest you fall into condemnation"- which connects with the theme of the whole letter, that "above all things" the believer must not give way to his innate evil desires because doing so will lead to rejection at the judgment. And again, he singles out the expression of those desires through the tongue ("swear not") as being the most likely form of failure.

The Greek word used for 'falling' here does not carry the idea of falling headlong, as in "Fall from your own steadfastness" in 2 Pet. 3:17, but rather of a more gradual stepping down from their high spiritual position- as if to say that whether they dramatically fell by renouncing their faith or apparently just stepped down a little by responding to the trials given by these false brethren, the result was the same-condemnation at the judgment which James believed was so imminent. "Condemnation" is also translated "hypocrisy"- i.e. they could step down into a semi-spirituality, which was tantamount to being condemned.

Those who speak strong words with Divine oaths will 'fall under judgment' for those

words (James 5:12 RV); if they don't use them, they won't have to have them considered at the judgment. And thus "He that keeps his mouth keepeth his life; but he that opens wide his lips [in this life] shall have destruction" at judgment day (Prov. 13:3). The children of Edom will have their words against Zion remembered against them at judgment: "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom The day of Jerusalem; Who said, Rase it, rase it" (Ps. 137:7 RV). The link between the final verdict and the words we use today is that clear.

5:13 *Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise*- The previous verse has been emphasizing the importance of not letting our words run away with us- and therefore James now tells us to channel all our words through prayer, rather than indulge in the circular talking of Job and the friends which was the exact opposite of "Yes, yes... no, no". "Afflicted" is the same word translated "affliction" in v.10 concerning Job's hardships.

"Cheerful" really means 'To be cheered up' after hardship, and is only used elsewhere in the record of Paul's shipwreck concerning the company being of "good cheer" after Paul's stirring exhortation on the deck- surely one of the most dynamic and powerful appeals for faith ever heard (Acts 27:22,36). It may be that some of them had found legitimate release from their sufferings, perhaps by contributions from other ecclesias. Alternatively, James may be talking hypothetically: 'Even if any of you find relief, then express your joy in the words of the psalms rather than giving reign to your own natural inclinations to make a rash oath to God in gratitude'. Those who had been 'cheered up' may refer to the rich brethren- instead of expressing their joy in rowdy parties dressed up with spiritual excuses (Jude 12; 1 Cor. 11:21; James 2:2), they should express it in the words of psalms.

"Sing" here is also translated "making melody" in Eph. 5:19, where Paul speaks of doing so in the heart by singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". It is perhaps significant that Paul advises them to do this as an antidote to being drunk (Eph. 5:18)- and if James is speaking about the need to sing psalms instead of indulging in drunken revelry at the communion service, then he would be saying the same thing as Paul. Drunkenness at the breaking of bread must have been a regular occurrence at Corinth at least, from how Paul writes (e.g. "Another is drunken... when(ever) you come together... this is not to eat the Lord's supper", 1 Cor. 11:20,21). Singing psalms would have been done at the breaking of bread service to imitate the singing of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) at the last supper (Mt. 26:30); and the reference to Psalm singing in 1 Cor. 14:26 also seems to be in the communion service context. Thus it may be that v.13-16 are describing what should have been happening at the memorial feast- there should have been prayer rather than complaining by the suffering, psalm singing rather than drunkenness by the joyful, the time given over to conversation- which would have been considerable, if the service was based on that of the Jewish Sabbath or Passover- should have been spent confessing faults rather than bragging, condemning and spreading false doctrine (Jude 10-12 cp. 2 Pet. 2:18,19), and this should have given way to loving prayer for those who had been struck sick because of committing such sins.

5:14 *Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord*- There are two different words translated "sick" in :14 and :15 The first implies more 'weariness of mind', as if spiritual weakness is being referred to. The references to "save a soul from death

and... hide a multitude of sins" in v.20 is in the same context of spiritual sickness. In any case, it is unlikely that James would be saying that any physical sickness could be cured, bearing in mind Paul's thorn in the flesh.

"The elders of the church" may be those of the Jerusalem ecclesia, as that is whom "the elders" often refers to in the New Testament. However, it is just as likely that they refer to the Spirit-gifted eldership of the individual ecclesias to whom this letter was sent- their anointing with oil shows their control of the use of the Spirit. This pouring out of oil not only recalls the use of the Spirit to heal the physically sick by the disciples (Mk. 6:13), but also the outpouring of the Spirit in the gift of forgiveness in Acts 2:37,38. In this case James would be emphasizing the need to respect the eldership because of their possession of the Spirit, which made them God's representatives regardless of their personal spirituality. Compare this with David's respect for apostate, Spirit-gifted Saul, and the respect Israel had to give their reprobate judges (Ps. 82:1-5). Notice that it was possible for "the prayer of faith" by these elders to "save the sick" despite their unspirituality. Similarly Paul warned an identical group at Corinth that although they had faith to move mountains through the Spirit- e.g. curing the sick- their lack of love would deprive them of salvation personally (1 Cor. 13:2). Spiritual success in any form- be it in preaching or the triumph of faith in a particular problem- can so easily tempt us to feel that therefore in all other areas our life must be acceptable with God. But not necessarily so.

5:15 *And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him*- "The sick" in v.15 does refer to physical sickness, although "raise him up" is also used concerning a spiritual revival (Rom. 13:11 cp. Eph. 5:14). This confusion between physical and spiritual sickness is understandable once it is appreciated that physical sickness was brought upon weak members of the first century ecclesia in order to lead them to repentance (see notes on 4:12). Therefore v.16 tells them to confess their faults to each other so that they could pray for forgiveness and subsequent healing for their brethren.

5:16 *Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working*- Note the parallel effect of the prayer of a friendly brother and that of the eldership in v.14,15- again indicating that in ultimate terms an elder had no spiritual power that was not possessed by any brother who had a humble faith. The Job allusions continue, this time to his prayer for the forgiveness of his friends (Job 42:8). Job himself was ill at the time he prayed for the friends- his "captivity" was ended "when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). That James too was counselling the sick to pray for the sick is implied by "pray one for another, that you may be healed". The sickness being brought on as a result of their sins in holding false, Judaist doctrine confirms that James read Job, under inspiration, as a type of those influenced by Judaist thinking. Based on Job's example, James is probably advising them to concentrate on forgiving and loving one another, as this would lead to their personal repentance and thus their cure too. This would imply that the fundamental sin that was causing their sickness was their gross lack of love and spiritual concern for each other.

As these sick brethren were to call for the elders of the ecclesia to pray for them, it may be that the rich, spiritually proud brethren whom James has been reprimanding in his letter may not have been the true eldership, although they fancied themselves as such. However, it appears that the problem of spiritual and subsequent physical sickness was widespread in all groups of the ecclesia, including the eldership. There seems, at first glance, two types of prayer spoken of in v.15 and 16; a calling of the

elders to pray for the sick person, and the afflicted ones confessing their sins to each other in order to effect a cure. Yet in view of what we know of the corruption of the eldership, it would seem better to treat these two descriptions as parallel- the elder who had been struck seriously sick was to call the others to him, and at the pathetic bedside of the once arrogant rich farmer they, too, were to confess their sins, so that not only would he be cured, but their less serious sicknesses would also be lifted. To be successful this kind of prayer had to be "effectual". The Greek *energeo* gives the idea of dynamic expenditure of energy. Such effort in prayer for the spiritual welfare of others can only come from a truly selfless spirit. The prayer of our Lord for us and the disciples in Gethsemane springs to mind. The connection is strengthened by "fervent" being the same word translated "earnestly" in Lk. 22:44 concerning the Lord's praying more earnestly with huge tears. This would suggest that James understood Christ's prayer in Gethsemane not just to have been for personal strength but also for our forgiveness and salvation. Thus in Lk. 22:46 He could encourage the sleepy disciples to rise and pray *also*- i.e. as well as him praying for them- that they did not fall into temptation. Note how "watch" in Mt. 26:38 is elsewhere used about spiritual watching rather than being on the look out for people approaching. Heb. 5:6,7 lends support by saying that Christ's agonizing prayer in the garden that God would save Him from death was fulfilling the type of Melchizedek, who prayed to God for other people, not just himself. The only way of reconciling all this is to see Christ's prayer for salvation from death as being motivated by His desire for our salvation from death. No wonder James refers to this as the supreme example of showing spiritual love for our brethren in our prayer life.

"Avails" means literally to 'in-work'- as if prayer for others will help us personally by our offering it. This idea seems to be picked up in the next verse.

James 5:16 speaks of the need to pray for one another, that we may be healed. This is an undoubted allusion back to mighty Moses praying for smitten Miriam, and to Aaron staying the plague by his offering of incense / prayer (Num. 16:47). Surely James is saying that every one of us can rise up to the level of High Priest in this sense.

Elijah could be so sure his prayer would be heard because he knew that he was genuinely motivated. His reason for withholding the rain and dew was so that Israel would come to repentance (James 5:16-18)- perhaps through them perceiving that lack of rain was a sign that they had broken the covenant. In this case, Elijah was somewhat harsher than God Himself, who had not yet withdrawn rain from His people. Elijah “shut the heavens", even though Israel rejected him at that time (Lk. 4:25,26). Their rejection of him is unrecorded in the Kings record, but we are left to reflect upon the wonder of the fact that Elijah’s response to rejection was not to merely hurt back, but to earnestly seek their restoration to God. He “prayed in his prayer” (James 5:17 Gk.)- there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words- the prayer of the very inner soul. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36).

The whole of James 5:10-16 appears to be based on the example of Job: v.12= Job 3:1; v.13,14 cp. Job's afflictions; v.11= Job 42:10; God's mercy to Job is used by

James as an encouragement to the sinners in the ecclesia to repent; v.16= Job 42:8. Job is held up in v.11-13 as an example of a prophet being afflicted, but then James goes on to speak of praying for the sick who had sinned- i.e. those who had been struck with physical illness as a result of their wickedness. The sick were to "pray for one another, that you may be healed", knowing that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much". This may be alluding to Job's prayer for the friends in Job 42:8 while still sick himself. The word for "fervent" is the same translated "earnest" in the record of the Lord's fervent prayer in the garden in Lk. 22:44-46. Job's prayer for the spiritual welfare of the friends points forward to Christ's prayer in the garden. His prayer was for his salvation from death- which was tantamount to praying for our salvation, and that was certainly the motive behind it rather than of selfish self-preservation. Only through His resurrection could we be saved. Thus the motivation for Christ's earnest prayers for salvation was His desire to gain us salvation.

5:17 *Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months-*

Elijah's prayer exemplifies how intensely we should pray for the spiritual benefit of others, and how that in itself helped him spiritually. In view of the exalted status of Elijah in Jewish theology, James stresses how he was of "like passions" to us (cp. Acts 14:15)- i.e. he too, because of his inherent human nature, did not find intense prayer easy. Elijah's fervent prayer was that it might not rain, and in the context of James his prayer was for the spiritual good of Ahab and apostate Israel. In the same way as apostles like Paul and Peter could pray for physical sickness to come upon men to lead them to repentance, so Elijah prayed for the famine to come upon Israel to make them realize their sin. James is saying that if the sick brethren and indeed the whole ecclesia prayed for forgiveness with the same intensity that the apostles and Elijah had prayed for such physical problems to come upon the spiritually weak, then those problems could be lifted. But it was only those who were sensitive to the true spirit of the word, in this case in the Elijah record, who would have grasped this. The intensity of Elijah's prayer needs some thought to appreciate, as superficially it appears that it is hardly recorded that he prayed for the drought. However, it must have been as a result of his prayer that he could say "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word". This is because of a principle outlined by Eliphaz in Job 22:27,28; he said that one of the blessings of living in good conscience with God was that one's prayers were powerful, and therefore "You shall make your prayer unto (God), and He shall hear you... you shall also decree a thing (i.e. in prayer), and it shall be established unto you". Thus the power of prayer is such that effectively requests became decrees, so sure can we be of their being answered. So many of the great prayers of Scripture are not littered with "If it be your will"- instead, because those who prayed were saturated with knowledge of God's will through their familiarity with the word which contains God's will (Jn. 1:13 cp. 1 Pet. 1:23), they could pray whatever *they* willed, and could be confident of being heard because the word was in them. And our Lord had said that nothing less was possible for His people now- Jn. 15:7. Therefore if a man of our passions like Elijah could pray so powerfully for the weak in his ecclesia, the same was possible for that of the first century.

One way of realising the seriousness of our sin is to recognise that each sin we

commit, we could have avoided. We must hang our heads, time and again. In the very end, we can blame neither our circumstances nor our natures, even though these are factors in the committal of each sin. We must each bear total personal responsibility for every sin, both of commission and omission. We must hang our heads. James, as he often does, foresees how in practice we may reason that fervent prayer isn't possible, because…we are angry, low, tired, don't feel like it. So we tell ourselves. But James cuts across all this: "Elijah was a man subject to like passions [RVmg "nature"] as we"- and yet *he* prayed earnestly (James 5:17). We can't excuse our lack of prayer by blaming it on the "passions" of our natures. Men like Elijah had the same nature as we do, prone to the same depression and mediocrity, and yet they prayed fervently.

We are intended to connect Elijah's 3.5 year ministry (James 5:17) with the 1260 days/42 months (i.e. 3.5 years) of the tribulation of God's people spoken of in Daniel and Revelation. The description of the whore of Babylon in Revelation is based upon Jezebel as a prototype. As she ruled over Israel through her puppet Ahab during Elijah's ministry, so latter day Babylon (through a puppet Israeli leader?) will dominate Israel during Elijah's future ministry. Whilst it is quite possible that Israel's holocaust will last for a literal 3.5 years, during which time 'Elijah' will be among them, it may be that the similarity of the time periods is just to indicate that the work of the latter-day Elijah will coincide with the holocaust period.

Prayer is perhaps the area where it is easiest to have only a surface level of spirituality, without getting down to real faith, real perseverance in prayer, real wrestling with God. Elijah "prayed in his prayer" (James 5:17 AVmg.) reflects the Spirit's recognition that there is prayer, and real prayer. "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer" (Ps. 64:1) seems to say the same: there is our true, pleading voice: and the outward form of prayer. The form of words we use, the outward form, conceals the *real* thing; the real groaning of spirit which is counted by God as the real prayer.

5:18 *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit*- Again we are left to imagine when, where and how Elijah made this prayer, seeing that it is unrecorded. After his glorious triumph of faith on Carmel in the sight of all Israel, there appeared at last to be a significant repentance: "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, He is the God", and promptly proceeded to massacre the priests of Baal. No doubt finding the four barrels of water to put on the sacrifice as the ritual required had involved considerable effort- making them reflect on the God whom they knew in their hearts provided rain. Elijah then went up to the solitude of the crags of Carmel, "cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees (in fervent prayer), and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea" for rain. This command was repeated seven times. Being a man of like passions as us, it took seven repeated prayers, a widow continually coming and not taking no for an answer, for there to be even an indication of a response. Thus Elijah's 'praying again' was for a lifting of the physical curse on the land because of their repentance. Note his running before Ahab's chariot as the rain started to come down, symbolic of his belief that by his repentance Ahab was the righteous king that he had come to herald (1 Kings 18:39,33,42-46). This same calibre of head-between-the-knees, up-in-the-mountain prayer, consistently repeated, would lead to the lifting of the sickness placed on the first century ecclesia.

The heaven giving rain is associated with the earth bringing forth her fruit- miraculously, seeing that it is unlikely that anything had been planted in the previous three and a half years of total drought. Similarly God would act over and above their personal ability to develop spiritual fruit in them, given this basic prerequisite of total faith in prayer, based on the word truly dwelling in them as it did in Elijah. Similar victories of faith and repentance are just as possible for us, especially during the three and a half year period of tribulation which may well come upon us in the last days. James' specific, inspired mention of the three and a half year period of drought must be significant, as the duration of the drought is not mentioned in the Old Testament record. It is possible to historically demonstrate that there was a three and a half year period of especial difficulty in the land and among the Jews empire-wide before the final cataclysm of AD70; during this period the Jewish ecclesias would have had special opportunity to repent. The situation of AD70 is more than likely to be replicated in our last days. The way to ensure that we will stand up to that test is by each showing unlimited love and concern for the true spiritual welfare of our brother. The final two verses sum this up, and thereby the whole theme of the epistle.

5:19 *My brothers. If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back*- Erring from the truth in the terms of James' letter is not only limited to doctrinal deviance in the sense of 'first principles', but in showing a lack of love of each other and of the word, having a selfish materialism rather than a truly spiritual mind, and having a heart uninfluenced by the word, resulting in uncontrolled words and a lack of true compassion towards the Lord's brethren. In the context of the previous verses, James is giving extra incentive to pray for each other's repentance and forgiveness- such prayer as well as personal discussion and example really can "convert him". This shows that to some degree our prayers can influence the spiritual state of another brother over and above his personal level of spirituality- given certain prerequisites. If this is not so, and we each totally determine our own spiritual destiny regardless of the effort of others, then these closing exhortations of James 5 are without purpose.

5:20 *Let him know, that he who turns back a sinner from the error of his way, he shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins*- "Convert" here means literally 'to revert'. It is used in the New Testament particularly of the conversion of the Jews- i.e. a reverting of their hearts to the true spirit of their father Abraham (cp. Lk.1:17). Interestingly, Is.6:10 and Acts 28:27 talk of the Jews refusing to be sensitive to the word preached in the first century, and therefore not being healed- both physically and spiritually. This background of the word 'convert' nicely fits the context of James in its associating the ecclesia with the apostate Jewish world by which they were influenced, and warning that unless they were more sensitive to the word they would not be healed. By the same token those who did speak forth the word to try to convert their brethren were being classified along with Christ and the apostles, who also spoke the word to try to convert the Jews.

"If... one convert him, let him know..." sounds as if the brethren were not consciously trying to win converts- yet James encourages them that their conscious 'preaching' of the word to their wayward brethren and praying for them were all to the same effect as preaching, seeing that these brethren were spiritually dead anyway. By re-awakening them to a truly spiritual life they were saving their soul from death. The 'soul' here may mean the body or life, in the sense that ultimately acceptance at the judgment seat would mean that their "soul" or life would not die; however, it is more likely that the soul here refers to the spiritual record of the believer. The language of

preaching- i.e. conversion and saving souls- is being used here about the upbuilding of brethren. The same style is found in Dan. 12:3: "They that be wise (Heb. 'teachers', i.e. prudent guides) shall shine as the (stars)... and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars". 1 Thess. 1:8 similarly speaks of the word of the Lord sounding out from the Thessalonian ecclesia- in the sense that all the ecclesias near and far were inspired by their evident faith. Thus it was their spiritual example to others that was their sounding out of the word. Another example is Phil. 2:15 speaking of the ecclesia witnessing as lights in the world to "a crooked and perverse nation". A closer examination of this passage shows that this was through their holding forth the true word of life to the Judaizers amongst them. The specific nation referred to cannot be the Roman world in general, but rather the Jews. This suggestion is clinched by the fact that Paul is here quoting Dt. 32:5, which is describing the apostate among the ecclesia in the wilderness as "a perverse and crooked generation".

Thus Paul like James is using the language of preaching, to describe how they should work through the word and prayer to build up the apostate amongst the new Israel during their wilderness walk to the Kingdom. Likewise Acts 20:7 speaks of Paul "preaching unto" the Troas ecclesia in his breaking of bread exhortation. The language of preaching being used in upbuilding existing believers may help explain why Paul sometimes speaks to believers as if he is imparting basic doctrine to them; thus "Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51) was written to believers. Writing to the same ecclesia a while later there is more of the same: "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

The exact parallel of these verses in James is found in 1Pet. 4:7,8: "The end of all things is at hand: be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (for each other, we may imply from the James parallel). And above all things have fervent love (cp. fervent prayer, James 5:16- through which true love can be expressed) among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins". This parallel shows that fervent prayer for each other spiritually is the way fervent love is shown. Converting the erring brother will "hide a multitude of sins", alluding to Prov. 10:12: "Love covers all sins". True love is therefore shown by loving rebuke, rather than turning a blind eye. Truly "the end of all things is at hand" for us, as never before. There is a special need in our last days to show these qualities of true love to each other. We have to seriously ask ourselves personally whether we have that degree of selfless concern for the spiritual welfare of each other that we would climb mountains to find the solace conducive to prayer; to have our face between our knees in the intensity of our pleading with God, for the sake of our brother's spiritual growth.

Elijah and the brethren of the first century did this for men who were far gone in their declension; how much more motivated should we be for our far less errant brethren? Many of us do not have the fear of sin, both in ourselves and in our brethren, which leads us to such intensity of effort either for others or for ourselves in our own weaknesses. Surely each of us needs to assimilate more the idea of striving for God's glory in the conquest of the flesh. But this is the high challenge of the letter of James- to drive ourselves onwards to an altogether higher and fuller spirituality, which by its very nature concerns itself with the triumph of others in the day of judgment to the same extent as we care for our own.

Our ‘conversion’ of people doesn’t just mean that we teach them true doctrine and see them baptized; the priests were to ‘turn’ [s.w. ‘convert’] believers away from the life of sin and behind the way of God (Mal. 2:6 LXX, applied to all of us in James 5:19).

The book of Malachi stresses what the priesthood *should* have been like, compared to what it actually was. Indeed, many of the Old Testament prophecies against Israel are specifically aimed at the priests. The priests should have followed the example of the early descendants of Levi: "The law of truth (God's word- Jn. 17:17) was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:5,6). These words are alluded to in James 5:20 concerning how we, as the new "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9) should turn our brethren from the error of their ways. This covenant was given on account of Eleazar's going in among the people to slay them, and thereby turning many others away from iniquity. He was not just showing an iron fist to those who were being disobedient; his real role was to turn men away from sin. As the future priests, our role will also be to execute the judgments written; but it will be to the end of bringing men to appreciate the seriousness of sin, and to turn them away from it. To this end, "the priests lips should *keep* knowledge (i.e. they shouldn't apostatize from it), and they should seek the (meaning of the) law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 2:7) by reason of accurately speaking forth His word. The priests were to use their knowledge of God's word to turn the people away from sin. If we have a real hate of sin and a true love of God's righteousness, we ought to have a burning wish to take the Gospel to the kids in the tower blocks, to the call girls and drug addicts. Yet we are frustrated by the knowledge that somehow they are deaf to God's word. The joy of the Kingdom is that we will be able to speak forth the word with convicting power within the community we rule over, and to see its very real effect.

The Lord spared Aaron because of Moses' intercession for him (Dt. 9:20); and this is perhaps the basis for James' appeal to pray for one another, that we may be healed, knowing that through our prayer and pastoral work for others, we can save a man from his multitude of sins and his soul from death (James 5:20). The very ability we have to do this for each other should register deeply with us. And in response, we should live lives dedicated to the spiritual welfare and salvation of our brethren.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 1 PETER

1 PETER

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

1 PETER CHAPTER 1

Like James, Peter in both his letters is emphasizing the need to develop spiritual attributes in the light of the imminence of the Lord's coming; and he warns that false teachers would sidetrack them from the pursuit of real spirituality, which is a major theme of James.

1:1 *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*- As Peter matured by the time of 2 Pet. 1:1, he adds "a servant and an apostle". Progressive humility, an ever deeper sense of servanthood, is part of our spiritual growth. Phil. 2:5-8 speaks of the Lord's progressive humility as being our pattern.

To the chosen ones who are temporary dwellers of the dispersion- The reference to the dispersion suggests Peter was writing to Jews; the similarities noted above with the letter of James confirm that the same Jewish audience is in view. James too was addressed to the twelve tribes of the dispersion (James 1:1). Perhaps these were those whom Peter had baptized on the day of Pentecost, who had scattered when the Jerusalem church was persecuted, and were now in the provinces of what is now Turkey. All the NT letters are written to those whom the writer has converted, as further pastoral support. It was on this basis that they had authority to tell their converts how

they ought to be behaving and believing. But "temporary dwellers" is the word for a pilgrim or foreigner, and is used in a spiritual sense in 2:11 and Heb. 11:13. By status they were to always be 'passers through' and were to remember that. Any refugee yearns for stability, to settle down again permanently. But they were being reminded that they were always on the move. In their cases, they had come from their birthplaces to live at Jerusalem, had accepted Christ, and were now refugees in Turkey. This would make many of those whom Peter was addressing somewhat advanced in years. But even in middle and old age they were to remember that in the spiritual life, we are always moving on. We too may long for stability, and bend all our efforts to try to achieve it; the solid relationship, home, career, family life etc., but we are on a journey and that present instability is for our eternal good. For thereby we are taught that this world is not now the Kingdom of God. Jews within the land of Israel used these terms to denote Gentiles visiting Palestine; and now in Christ, these once orthodox Jews were realizing how those Gentiles felt.

In Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia- The order of the provinces listed is the route a messenger would take, going around the provinces en route further West, perhaps to Rome.

1:2 *Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*- Paul speaks of these ideas in Romans [where perhaps Peter had been if Babylon in 5:13 refers to Rome]. He cites them as an example of how the work of the Spirit is by grace- and therefore not by works of the law. And Peter repeats this reasoning, going on now to speak of the Spirit's work.

In sanctification of the Spirit- GNB "made a holy people by his Spirit". Just as we could not call ourselves nor place ourselves in God's foreknowledge, so we cannot make ourselves holy. This is all the work of the Spirit.

To be obedient and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ- Although so much has been done for us, we must still respond. The reference to obedience to Jesus and being sprinkled / purified by His blood may well refer to baptism. It is by that act that we respond to what has been potentially planned for us.

Grace to you and peace be multiplied- Grace means 'gift'. He wished that the gift of the Spirit be multiplied to them each one.

1:3- see on 1 Thess. 1:2.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead- We are born again by the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). This would then be another reference to baptism (see on :2 *To obey…*). Peter had baptized his audience quite some time ago, and he wanted

to remind them of the significance of their baptisms. Because of Christ's resurrection, we too have a living hope, a hope of living [again]. And the connection between His resurrection and ours is made by baptism. We are born again and become living because the Lord rose from the dead, and thereby shed forth the power of His living, His spirit, in our lives.

There are a series of allusions to Daniel which show him to be representative of all those in Christ. The purpose of the allusion is because Daniel also was a faithful Jew holding on to his faith in a Gentile world, unable to worship at the temple, which was then in ruins:

1 Peter 1 (re. the saints)	Daniel
"An inheritance... reserved... for you" (v.4)	"Thou shalt... stand in thy lot (inheritance) at the end of the days" (12:13)
In heaviness of spirit (v.6)	Daniel's heaviness of spirit
"The proof of your faith... is proved by fire... unto praise and honour and glory" (v.7 RV)	The experience of Daniel's friends Daniel praised, honoured and glorified (2:6 cp. 4:37)
"Whom having not seen ye love... now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice" (v.8)	The spirit of Daniel?
"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (v.9)	Cp. Daniel's assurance of salvation (12:13)
"The prophets have enquired and searched diligently... searching what manner of time the spirit... did signify" (v.10,11)	Peter was certainly writing here with his eye on Daniel's enquiring and diligent searching "what manner of time" his prophecies referred to (8:15,27; 9:2; 12:8)
"Unto whom it was revealed (in response to their enquiries) that not unto themselves, but unto us they did	This is definitely alluding to Dan. 12:4, where Daniel is told that he cannot understand his own

minister...
... which things the Angels desire to look into" (v.12)

prophecies, but they will be understood by latter day believers to whom they will be relevant. Angelic interest in prophecy is mainly demonstrated in Daniel.

1:4 *To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away*- The same word is used in the parallel James 1:11 about the wealthy shall "fade away". The sustained references to the unfading, eternal inheritance are therefore in contrast with the fading things of material inheritance now. This was particularly relevant to the refugees; whatever they managed to accumulate for themselves would fade away. It probably deeply grieved these older folks (see on 1:1 *Temporary dwellers*) that as refugees they had lost all and had nothing to leave as an inheritance. But they were to focus upon the eternal inheritance.

Reserved in heaven for you- The "inheritance" is therefore not simply the land inheritance to Abraham to which we become heirs by identity with Christ, the seed of Abraham. It is already prepared for us, and is safely kept in Heaven. Our reward, the nature of our eternal being, is prepared uniquely and individually for us. It is prepared and present now in Heaven, and only our own wilful fighting against God's will can stop us being given it at the Lord's return.

1:5 *You who by the power of God are guarded*- The power / Spirit of God guards, preserves us, unto salvation at the last day. This continues the theme of :2. But some who start the race shall not finish it. They will therefore have resisted the Holy Spirit, consciously tried not to be saved, wilfully going against His will. There is a power in our lives preserving us unto salvation. Strength is given us even in our weakness; temptations removed or overcome... But God will not force us into His Kingdom. This power operates through faith in it. If on a theological level we deny this power, then we cannot have faith in it- and are left trusting solely on our own strength.

Through faith- The fact that God so loves us is itself a limitation to Him. Because in any relationship, one person usually loves more than the other. And the one who loves the most- which is unquestionably God- has the least power. This is why He, the more powerful in physical terms, changes His mind to accommodate us. But the Almighty also allows His infinite power to become limited by our degrees of spirituality. We are kept “by the power of God through faith...” (1 Pet. 1:5); His power in practice is in some sense paralleled with and in that sense controlled by our faith.

Whatever else it referred to in its local context, the gift of the Spirit promised after

baptism in Acts 2 was related to forgiveness and the subsequent hope of salvation. At baptism we rise in prospect as Christ rose, to total victory over sin. In prospect, all our sins were forgiven. As forgiveness is a spiritual gift, or gift of the Spirit, it follows that in some way we receive this at baptism. The continuation of this gift is conditional upon our using faith to keep it active on our behalf. We are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (alluding to our baptism), to an inheritance (a place in the future Kingdom)... reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power (spirit) of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

To a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time- This is the reserved inheritance (see on :4). It is "a salvation" because salvation will be unique to each of us; whilst we shall all be immortalized, the nature of our eternity will be tailored to each of us individually. The different types of salvation hinted at in "a salvation" could be reference to the fact that we are in a sense "saved" now, as he says in :9; but the final salvation will be revealed at the Lord's return.

1:6 *Wherein you greatly rejoice*- As in :8. Knowing we shall be saved if the Lord returns now is the basis for great joy. If we are not certain of this... then Christianity is hardly the source of all joy and peace, but rather a fearful looking ahead to judgment day. They were not rejoicing... but Peter writes as if they are. He writes to them and talks to them according to their status, rather than how they actually were in present reality.

Though now, for a little while, if need be, you have suffered many trials- The idea is as in GNB "even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer". Rejoicing and sadness therefore go together in the Christian life. The joy experienced is something far deeper than surface level emotion; for on that level we may well be sad. This is how the Lord before His death could talk of sharing His joy with His followers; even though He Himself was sorrowful unto death.

1:7- see on 1 Pet. 3:15.

So that the proof of your faith- To whom is our faith proven through trials? God knows the end from the beginning. Recall how He commented that He knew that Abraham would be faithful: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD" (Gen. 18:19). The proof is surely to ourselves. The purpose of testing is that we may know ourselves. The initial application of Peter's words here is surely to the "fiery trial" of Nero's persecution, from which he hoped the believers would emerge spiritually intact and then be immediately glorified by the Lord's return; see on 4:12 *The fiery trial*.

(More precious than gold that perishes though it is proved by fire)- Another parallel with James, who writes of gold that rusts. The idea is that gold doesn't rust and doesn't perish; but it does at infinity. And we are to live as if we are there, at infinity. The Jewish

refugees in Turkey needed that assurance, with money a daily worry, especially since they had no land, no property, and no assurance they could work towards getting it. The supreme value of their faith is therefore emphasized.

May be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ- But in this life, choosing the life of faith as opposed to the legalism of neo-Judaism will also result in "the praise of God" (Jn. 12:43). Likewise Rom. 2:29 speaks of receiving praise of God for choosing to circumcise our heart rather than resting content with being a Jew outwardly. Being praised at the last day recalls the parable about the faithful being praised for using their talents, or for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked etc. Such praise is because of the righteousness imputed to us. But it is also because our faith in this life is so deeply significant to Him; it is indeed more precious than gold.

1:8 *Whom you love though you have not seen him*- Peter almost implies that His very invisibility is what makes us love Him, through His revelation to us in Scripture, in the way He seeks us to. We believe in Him because He is presently invisible to us; for faith is belief in what cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1-3). Yet Peter surely had his mind on the Lord's words of Jn. 20:29: "Blessed are they that have not seen yet have believed". Here Peter parallels believing in Jesus with loving Him. Belief in Him therefore involves far more than accepting His historical existence. It involves emotion and relationship which arise from that.

On whom you believe, though now you do not see him- The language of first faith and conversion, alluding to the Lord's promise of blessing for those who had not seen but had believed. Remember that Peter had baptized his audience at Pentecost. But believing on or into Jesus is an ongoing process. Again we note Peter's humility. John records that Peter saw and believed. And then the Lord uttered His blessing upon those who have not seen yet believe. Peter is suggesting that their faith was greater than his. He had needed to see the risen Lord to believe. His converts had not seen yet had believed.

And rejoice greatly with joy inexpressible and full of glory- This joy was far deeper than emotion; see on :6. They were saddened and distressed as refugees; but they were inexpressibly happy. But inexpressible joy *and fullness of glory* suggests the joy of final acceptance at the last day. The awesome message is that we can experience that right now.

1:9 *Receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls*- The joy of :8 and present fulness of glory can only be because of the fact that we are right now in process of receiving eternity; as John's Gospel puts it, we have eternal life, in that we are living

now the kind of life we shall eternally live. We have the hope of life now (:3); and *elpis* doesn't mean a mere possibility, but a stable, certain future event. See on 1 Pet. 3:15.

1:10 *Concerning this salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you-* AV "Of which salvation...". They searched for information about this kind of salvation, the salvation that can now be experienced... and perceived that it was for us who believe in Christ. They didn't fully experience it themselves because Christ had not then died and resurrected. They prophesied about the grace that should come to *us* and was not then revealed in reality.

1:11- see on Mk. 14:35.

Searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to- The Spirit of God is that of His Son, for they are of the same mind / Spirit. There is ultimately only one Spirit, God's, which is in His Son and in us. The Spirit which was about Christ was in them, so that they prophesied about Him. But they wanted of course to know *when* this time would be. And it's now, Peter is saying.

When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow them- We now are "full of glory" (:8). The glories enabled by His sufferings refer to the spiritual blessings we now have, the outpouring of the Spirit as a result of His glorification, which Peter has recounted; the possibility of being certain of future salvation, the transforming Spirit of God sanctifying us and preserving our path to eternity, and living the eternal life right now.

1:12 *It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven-* The things which were not then possible; the Holy Spirit had not been given into the hearts of believers as Christ had not then been glorified; the "things" are the "glories" of :11 [see note there].

Which things the Angels desire to look into- A clear equation of prophets and Angels is found by comparing 1 Pet. 1:10 and 12: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently. . . which things the Angels (also) desire to look into", referring to the Cherubim Angels peering down intently into the blood on the mercy seat, the "salvation" which the prophets searched after. In the parable of redemption contained in getting a wife for Isaac, the servant went to seek out Rebecca, representing the prophets going to take us out of the world to begin a wilderness journey to our new husband. He must surely represent the word taking us out of the world; yet he was led by an Angel (Gen. 24:7), suggesting the Angels work through the word they inspire to bring us out of the world. Other passages relevant to this theme of Angels giving the Word of God are Ex. 23:22; Num. 22:35; 23:17; 24:1,2; Heb. 2:2. See on 2 Sam. 23:1-3.

1:13 *Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*- Peter says that we are to "set your hope completely" on the great salvation to be given us when the Lord returns (1 Pet. 1:13). Nothing else should be our hope, we should not set our hopes on anything else- be it material wealth, relationships, houses or whatever. Paul expresses the same idea when he speaks of how there is only "one hope" (Eph. 4:4). His idea is not so much that there are various wrong hopes in a doctrinal sense. Rather is he saying like Peter that our hope is to be singularly and completely upon the grace of salvation to be brought to us at the Lord's return.

Peter's letters are full of reference to the cross and various physical aspects of the trial and mocking of the Lord which he witnessed first-hand (5:1). "Girding ourselves" with humility is a reference to what the Lord did at the last supper (s.w. Jn. 13:5), although then, Peter had so misunderstood what He had done. Other examples in 1:19; 2:20; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24; 3:18; 4:1; 5:3. Well does the NCV translate Prov. 4:23: "Be careful what you think because your thoughts run your life". We are to gather together "the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13), make a conscious effort to analyse our thinking, get a grip on it and gather it together into Christ.

The eating of the meal with girded loins (Ex. 12:11,13) is seen by Peter as meaning we should have our *minds* girded, gathered up, in place and order (1 Pet. 1:13). Note how 1 Peter is replete with Passover allusions (1:17 cp. sojourning with fear in Egypt; 1:18 silver and gold taken from Egypt; 1:19 the Passover lamb; 1:23 corruptible seed= leaven; 2:9,10 cp. leaving Egypt at night, led from darkness to the glory of Sinai, where they became a nation. The Passover night is alluded to in the New Testament as being typical of the spirit which we ought to have in daily life as we await the Lord's return. They were to eat it with their clothes girded together ready to up and go, huddled together in their family / ecclesial units, focused upon the slain Passover lamb in their midst which was to be their salvation. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind... and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ... forasmuch as ye know that ye were [redeemed] with... the precious blood of Christ, as of a [Passover] lamb without blemish" (1 Pet. 1:13,18,21). "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return... that they may open unto him immediately" (Lk. 12:35,36). In order to be ready to quit this life at any moment, with no looking back after the pattern of Lot's wife, we need to live in a daily spirit of urgent awareness of our position, living as we do in Egyptian darkness. 1 Peter 1 is packed with Passover and exodus allusions; v. 13 interprets the girding of loins: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you". The sober minds of those families on that night, their thoughts like their garments pulled together and tightly bound, should resemble the type of mind control which we exercise in the face of our Lord's return.

Those refugees, so concerned at their lack of future security, worried about mid to long term financial issues (just like so many today) were to set their *elpis*, their confident expectation, on the fact they would be saved by grace at the last day. The operation of the grace / Spirit mentioned earlier was the guarantee that the final grace of personal salvation would be brought to them at the last day. "Brought to you" is a mild translation of a term used for rushing, a ship being driven by the wind; salvation is rushing to meet us.

1:14 *As children of obedience, do not be conformed to the lusts*- AV "conforming yourselves". The contrast is between children who are raised with principles which they are obedient to; and children who raise themselves, conforming themselves to whatever takes their fancy. This is how we shall 'turn out' unless we accept God's word as the final authority.

You had in your former ignorance- If my reconstruction is correct, Peter is writing to once very committed Orthodox Jews whom he had baptized in Jerusalem. But the life of legalism is in fact of living in lusts; Paul says this about his own life in Romans 7, and specifically states that he at that stage lived in lust (Tit. 3:3). Only grace can lead us out of that.

1:15 *But like He who called you is holy, be you yourselves holy in all manner of living*- This connects back to :2, which says that they had been called by God's gracious plan from the beginning, and His Spirit was at work to sanctify or make them holy. He is Holy, and His plan is to raise "children of obedience" (:14) like Him. Orthodox Jews such as they once were would have been obsessed with holiness in the sense of ritual separation. But this was to be extended to "all manner of living". By being holy / separate over a few things, they were tempted to think that vast areas of life in other areas could be lived as they wished. This was and is the problem with legalistic obedience. Hence the focus on *all* manner of living.

1:16 *Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy*- This is quoting from the Levitical code of conduct for priests (Lev. 11:44,45). But those same words were spoke to all the congregation (Lev. 19:2)- for it was God's intention that all Israel should develop into a nation of priests. And this very idea is applied by Peter to the entire church (2:5,9). We likewise cannot assume that others shall take care of our spirituality; we are in fact called to be Levites for others. All of us have this calling.

1:17 *And if you call on Him as Father*- Perhaps a reference to the way early Christians used the Lord's prayer, beginning "Our Father...". If God was their Father, the first word of the prayer ["our"] demands that we accept we are not His only children. And He will judge all His children the same, and that included the Gentile converts with whom perhaps these Jewish converts were finding it hard to get along.

Who without partiality judges- The trial of our faith is going on now; the judgment will simply formally reveal the verdict which is now being arrived at. The Father judges now "according to every man's work" (1 Pet. 1:17), as He did in OT times: "Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. 62:12). Yet when His Son returns, He will give every man "according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). It couldn't be clearer: the judgment is going on now, and the Lord Jesus returns to give us the reward which has been 'judged' appropriate for us. With this background, Peter drives home the almost inevitable practical lesson: "... [therefore] pass the time of your sojourning here in fear". *Now* Yahweh's eyes judge and examine the righteous, as He sits enthroned; and He *will*, at the future day of judgment, rain sulphur upon the head of the wicked and chase them away with His brining wind (Ps. 11:4-6 RV- reference to the Angel of the Lord chasing the rejected away?).

God will judge every man's work "forasmuch as ye know that ye were... redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb slain..." (1 Pet. 1:17-19). The link between our judgment and Christ's death needs to be reflected upon here. Our appreciation ("forasmuch...") of the cross is related to how we will be judged. The Lord's death should influence our works and therefore it is intimately related to our final judgment. We will be judged in accordance with how far we have let the cross influence our daily works. Baptism can never be undone; as a result of that covenant statement before God, we for evermore live our lives with a sense of responsibility to Him. "If ye call [upon yourselves] on the [name of] the Father [an allusion to baptism into the Father's Name]... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: *forasmuch* as ye know [i.e. the more you realize this, the more you will live in fear / reverence] that ye... were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ".

According to each man's work- Peter had found it hard to accept that truly "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:37). And, as was well known, there had come a time when he had slipped back into the old mindset, and had once again respected persons by refusing to break bread with Gentiles. And yet he reminds his Jewish readers that their prayers ascend to a Father "who without respect of persons judgeth according to *every* man's work" (i.e. Jew or Gentile). He was asking them to learn what he had so slowly and falteringly come to accept as the articulation of the very same grace to the Gentiles which had been his salvation too.

Pass the time of your sojourning in fear- Or, "exile". The Jewish Christians had been driven out of Jerusalem by the Orthodox Jews, thus making a parallel between the Orthodox and Babylon, who had likewise driven Judah into exile. And "Babylon" may be a title for Jerusalem in 5:13 and in Revelation. It has been demonstrated that the record of the exile from the land is framed in terms of the exile from Eden; the offer of return to the land is therefore an offer of paradise restored, fellowship with God renewed- for

those who wanted it. Let's remember that the exiles were symbols of us. We in this life are passing through "the time of our exile" (1 Pet. 1:17 RSV).

1:18- see on Lk. 24:21.

Knowing you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold- Gold only corrupts at infinity, and that is where we are. The connection is with the reference in :4 to the transitory nature of wealth (see notes there); and how our relation to the Lord's blood, which has *eternal* effects, ought to make us not materialistic. All wealth can buy is temporary; but we stand related to the eternal wealth.

From your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers- The Orthodox Jewish life of legal obedience was in fact "vain". And they were redeemed from it. And the Lord's death redeems us likewise from whatever was our spiritual and psychological inheritance. Do we feel that life is just pointless, an endless round of childcare, working all day doing in essence the same job for 30 years, a trudging through an endless tunnel until our mortality catches up on us? We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from the "vain way of life handed down from the fathers" (1 Pet. 1:18), from the frustration of this present life. The word used for "vain" is that used by the LXX for the 'vanity' of life as described in Ecclesiastes, and for idol worship in Lev. 17:7 and Jer. 8:19. We have been redeemed from it all! Not for us the life of endlessly chasing the rainbow's end, slavishly worshipping the idols of ever bigger homes, smarter technology... we were redeemed from the vanity of life "under the sun" by the precious blood of Christ. We were bought out of this slavery, even if in the flesh we go through its motions. Knowing this, we the redeemed, the bought out from vanity, shouldn't spend our hours in front of the television or doing endless crosswords, or frittering away the time of life as the world does. James foresaw that a man could appear to be religious, and yet have a religion that was "vain" (James 1:26)- because he didn't appreciate that the cross has bought him out of vanity.

New life is always needed. This is why in our daily reading and fellowship with our Lord, as we enter ever more deeply into His character, we are challenged afresh daily. We aren't professionals, committee members, in this drive for spirituality. We are amateurs at heart, children, wide eyed with wonder at what we are being shown, ever moving on to some fresh endeavour. Our spiritual new life need never become a mere routine, a burden, a duty to be performed, a habit. For "[in the heart] where the spirit of the Lord [Jesus] is, there the heart is free" (2 Cor. 3:17); we were brought out from the pointless, repetitive bondage of Egypt by the blood of Christ. What this means is not that red liquid somehow did something for us; His example of death, how He was there, inspires us to break out from the vain way of life we received by tradition from our fathers. We alone,

as true believers in the representative nature of His sacrifice, are thereby empowered to break out of the routine of our lives.

1:19 *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot*- 1 Pet. 1:18,19 sets the blood of Christ in utter opposition to materialism; the very historical fact of His cross of itself means a rejection of material things. The financially strapped refugees needed to be reminded of this. We are familiar enough with the way in which Israel's crossing of the Red Sea represents our redemption in Christ. Their response when they got the other side was to willingly sacrifice the riches of Egypt which they had brought with them; they gave them to the Lord's work, so that the tabernacle could be built up. Israel's exodus and establishment as God's Kingdom at Sinai was the prototype of the early church's experience. They too, for the sheer joy of the Truth, resigned their material possessions. The merchant man for the sheer joy of finding the beautiful pearl sells *all* he has, for the pure excellency of possessing just that one pearl (Mt. 13:44-46).

"Precious" is the same word just used about how precious is faith (:7). The blood of Christ is only precious to those who believe that by His work we shall eternally live. To damage the faith of another is to damage something so very precious, and if they stumble, then the blood of Christ is no longer for them precious.

1:20 *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world*- The same word has been used in the opening argument in :2. We were foreknown in God's plan; but this is because we are "in Christ", and all that is true of Him is true of us. By baptism into Him, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. This solves the problem of how some were foreknown from the beginning, and others apparently were not. The truth is that all those who choose to become "in Christ" share all that is true of Him. If He was foreknown, so then are we. It is our choice as to whether we wish to be in Him. And note that as He was foreknown, so were we. That does not require His literal, personal pre-existence, just as it doesn't demand ours.

But was manifested at the end of times for your sake- The "foundation of the world" could refer to the Jewish or Mosaic age. For Judaism, in which the readers had grown up, referred to the Sinai covenant as "the foundation of the world". So "the end of times" would then refer to the end of Jewish times, the time of the Mosaic Law, which was ended by the Lord's death. His manifestation would then refer particularly to His death rather than His birth. His death was the supreme manifestation of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb without spot (:19).

1:21 *Who through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory*- Nearly everyone in the first century believed in the God-idea. There were very few atheists. Hence the radical nature of statements like 1 Pet. 1:21: we "through him

[Jesus] are believers in God", because God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord inspires faith in the Father to such an extent that anyone whose faith in 'God' is not based on the risen Jesus does not actually count as a believer in God.

So that your faith and hope might be in God- The hope / certain expectation which is in view is not simply the existence of God, but of final salvation. That is guaranteed by the Lord's death and resurrection.

1:22- see on 2 Cor. 6:6.

Seeing you have purified your souls- This returns to the theme of :2, that the Spirit has sanctified us, purified us. But we must respond by living in practice according to what we are in status; we must allow the operation of God's desire to purify / sanctify us, and the working of His Spirit to that end. Hence they had "purified your souls... through the Spirit".

In your obedience to the truth- Peter writes in the RV of "your obedience of the truth unto [issuing in] unfeigned love of the brethren... having been begotten again... of incorruptible seed, through the word of God" (1 Pet. 1:21,22 RV). The purity and truth of the "word of God" - and by this he surely refers to the Gospel message- is what issues in a true love for others, in comparison to the pseudo-love that fills our human experience in this world. Truth leads to true love- that's the message. This is the importance of correct teaching of the word of the Gospel. And yet how often have we used the concept of 'truth' to hate and divide our brethren...? John's writings reflect many struggles. But in the end they all forge into one ultimate struggle- between light and darkness, love and hatred, truth and error, life and death. Hence the struggle for purity of doctrine becomes parallel with the struggle between love and hatred. Love is therefore and thereby connected with purity of doctrine.

To sincere love of the brothers- We obeyed the truth “unto unfeigned love of the brethren... [therefore] see that ye love one another” (1 Pet. 1:22 AV). Our obedience to the truth of Christ placed us in the status of those who unfeignedly love their brethren; but this means, Peter is saying, that we’d better get on and love them in practice.
Jonah 2:9 contains the enigmatic statement that those who "hold to empty faiths" (Heb.) "forsake their own *hesed*". *Hesed* basically refers to the capacity a superior has to show mercy, grace and love to someone in an inferior position. For over 20 years I wondered what Jonah was really getting at. I think I then grasped it- those who hold to empty faiths forego the capacity to show *hesed*, favour to others- the implication being that the result of the one *true* faith is that we are empowered to show *hesed*, love, favour, grace, mercy, to others. And this ties in perfectly with 1 Pet. 1:22- we obey the truth *unto*, with the result that, we show "unfeigned love of the brethren". This is how and where true doctrine comes to its ultimate term- love of others. Karl Barth put it powerfully: "The best theology would need no advocates: it would prove itself". If each doctrine of the

Gospel had its intended outworking in our lives, there would be no need for the explanation of Gospel doctrine; the doctrines would be lived out in our personalities. Perhaps this was why there was so little 'theology', propositional truths or academic doctrine, on the lips of the Lord Jesus. For He was the word of the Gospel made flesh. To quote Barth again: "Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is Himself the way".

Fervently love one another from the heart- The experience of the grace which brought about the forgiveness of our sins will make us gentle people, kind hearted, generous, not hard-minded in our judgment of situations; it will make us dedicate ourselves to the work of sharing this superb grace with others through preaching, and will inspire us to work unceasingly to reclaim those who have wandered away from the grace of God, and to build up those who hesitate to fully accept it. As God has reached out into our little world, so we will try to do in the lives of those around us. The end result of obeying the truth is "unfeigned love of the brethren... love (of) one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). "Ye were running well; who did hinder you, that ye should not [keep on] obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7) suggests that obeying the Truth is not just in baptism; it is an ongoing motivation to keep running the race of practical life in Christ.

1:23- see on Job 22:27,28; Lk. 8:11.

Having been begotten again- AV "Being born again". This second begetting was by the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). God has taken the initiative. But we must respond, allowing His movement, and living the life of conscious love, which is the singular fruit of the Spirit. We "love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again...". Love of the brotherhood is in the end the result and guarantee of the new birth. We are asked not to receive God's grace in vain, nor do despite unto the spirit [power] of grace. These phrases surely suggest that the experience of grace is a compulsion to action, which we can resist but ought rather to allow to work in us to bring forth fruit. The [Gospel of the] Kingdom of God and our relation to it now ought to bring forth fruit in us (Mt. 21:43). It isn't just a set of true propositions.

The Greek tense of "begotten again" could imply an ongoing process; thus Peter in :3 speaks of how we have already been born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Christ (a clear reference to baptism), and yet here goes on to say that having obeyed the truth, we must go on in being (continuous tense) born again by the work of God's word (1 Pet. 1:3,23). See on Col. 2:6; Gal. 3:27.

Not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and endures- See on :25 *The word of the Lord*. I suggest the "word" here refers to the Lord Jesus. It is He who now "lives and abides for ever".

1:24 *For, All flesh is as grass and all the glory of it as the flower of grass*- We shouldn't see the mortality of man and the true meaning of the Hebrew word nephesh as a

negative thing that we unfortunately have to tell people who believe their loved ones are alive in Heaven. "The voice" tells Isaiah to cry. "And I said, What shall I cry?" (Is. 40:6 LXX; RVmg.). What was to be the message of Isaiah's Gospel? The voice addresses Isaiah as "O thou that tellest good tidings", and tells him the good news he is to preach. It is that "All flesh is grass... the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever". The reality of man's mortality is the backdrop against which we can see the eternity of God and the offer made to us through His abiding word that we really can escape from our condition. Christian preaching about "man is mortal" need not be bad news. The message can be turned into good news! For it was this message of mortality which prepared the way for men to accept Christ (Is. 40:3-5); the mountains of human pride are made low by this message so that we can accept salvation in Christ. 1 Pet. 1:24 RVmg. quotes these verses and concludes that we are being offered salvation through "the word of the God who liveth for ever" - the Gospel that is prefaced by the message of human mortality. God's eternity and man's mortality are placed side by side- and thus the way is prepared for the wonder of the fact that through "the word" of Jesus, of the Gospel, we the mortal are invited to share in that immortality.

The grass withers and the flower falls- The seed of all things produces fruit which cannot abide, no matter how beautiful and pleasing it may appear for a moment. The contrast is with the seed of the Gospel of Jesus, which produces permanent results. The great salvation in Christ is an inheritance which will not fade away, like the flowers (see on :4) and which produces eternal glory (:7), unlike the glory of the flower which fades. The things of the Kingdom and the great, eternal, glorious salvation in Christ are being contrasted with material things- because it was materialism which was the problem faced by the exiled Jewish believers in Turkey to whom Peter was writing.

1:25 *But the word of the Lord endures for ever*- The word of the Lord Jesus is put for the fruit brought forth by it. See on 1:24 *The grass withers*.

And this is the word of good news which was preached to you- “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth (accepting the basic doctrine of the Gospel)... see that ye (continue) being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God... and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet.1:22-25 AV). Note the continuous tense of "*is*", according to the AV; remembering that Peter is writing to those already converted. The once off act of intercourse and begettal, whereby the seed or sperm initiates new life, is here spoken of in the continuous sense. Similarly, a sower sowing seed is a once-off act, yet the parable has an ongoing application. Human "seed" and begettal is "corruptible" (1 Pet.1:23)- i.e. the offspring does not have the exact character of the person from whom the seed originated. Yet God's seed is "incorruptible" in that it will eventually result in our being brought forth in the exact image of God after the judgment, when we are fully born of Spirit nature. This

is because "the word (seed) of God... liveth and abideth for ever", i.e. God's word can have constant intercourse with us, constantly creating us after the image of our spiritual Father.

The word is to be made flesh in us as it was in the Lord. "The word" in the New Testament often refers to the basic Gospel rather than every inspired word which there is in the whole Bible. But here it specifically refers to the word which is Jesus. "The word of God (a title of Jesus)... the word of the Lord... is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:23,25 RV). It is this word of the basic Gospel which is the "milk of the word" which enables us to "put away therefore all malice... guile... hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1,2). And having spoken of tasting / drinking the word of God (the same figure is in Heb. 6:5), Peter then speaks of tasting the grace of the Lord Jesus (2:3). He is the word of the Gospel made flesh- to taste His Gospel, the word, is to taste of Him.

1 PETER CHAPTER 2

Jews whom Peter had once baptized in Jerusalem wasn't good. They had allowed the stress of the refugee life to lead them into unspirituality; they had now allowed free operation to the gift of Holy Spirit made available to them at baptism.

"Hypocrisies" recalls how Peter was carried away with the "dissimulation" of the Judaizers (Gal. 2:13), and he uses the same word when he appeals to the brethren to lay aside "all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1); he was asking them to do what he himself had had to do. He had been a hypocrite, in living the life of legalism within the ecclesia whilst having the knowledge of grace.

In Jeremiah's time, gossiping was associated with 'proceeding from evil to evil' (Jer. 9:3); it is part of a downward spiral of spirituality. Once gossip starts a quarrel, it's like water bursting out of a dam; soon the whole land of Israel will be flooded (Prov. 17:14 NIV). So it's best not to start it, not only for our own sakes, but because of the effect it will have on the rest of the body. Peter likewise points an antithesis between gossiping and receiving "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:1,2). Real spiritual growth is impossible if we are taken up with gossiping; and this is true on the communal as well as individual level.

2:2 *Be as newborn babes, longing for the spiritual milk which is without deceit*- Peter was writing to those he had baptized many years ago, who had become hardened by this world. He urges them to look back to their conversion, and start again. Hebrews criticizes Jewish converts for needing milk rather than meat, so Peter's exhortation here is not without an element of criticism and regret that they had not matured more. The euphoria of those thousands of baptisms at Pentecost must be considered against how Peter now writes to them, years later.

'Be babes' he exhorts, 'and grow as they do' (1 Pet. 2:2). The same word occurs in Lk. 18:15 in description of the "infants" whom Peter rebuked. The Lord's response had been to tell Peter to be like them (Lk. 18:17). And, having been humbled into learning something of a child's teachableness, a babe's desire for the sincere milk, Peter now asks others to learn the lesson.

So that you may grow thereby to salvation- "Salvation" is being like the Lord, the saved one; we grow into it, as well as being granted it finally. James 1:18 speaks of "the word of truth", the inspired word of the basic Gospel message. But he goes on to appeal for us to be "doers of the word" (James 1:22,23). "The word" must be that of v. 18- the word of the Gospel. He sensed the tendency to accept the word of God as true, to show this by baptism: and yet not to be "doers" of that word. It is in this sense that the word of the Gospel is what we grow by (1 Pet. 2:2 cp. 1:23,25; 2:8; 3:1); by our daily response to the most basic things which we have understood and claim to believe, we will grow spiritually. When we were baptized, we read the simple Biblical statements about baptism and obeyed them. That translation from Bible reading into practice is something which we thenceforward struggle to maintain for the rest of our lives. There is a power in the inspired word, whereby one mind- God's- can penetrate another with no intermediary but a piece of flattened wood pulp, black print on white paper. It's an amazing phenomenon to be part of. Lev Tolstoy in his spiritual autobiography *A Confession* tells in gripping manner how he read the words of Jesus

"Sell everything you have and give to the poor" and then finally overcame all the restraints of his nature to do just that. He freed his serfs, gave away the copyrights to his writings and began to dispose of his huge estate. Words on paper must likewise lead to action in us. The more familiar we become with the text of Scripture by daily reading, the stronger is the temptation to become blasé, and not read the word expecting to be taught something new, expecting to be challenged to change.

2:3- see on Rom. 2:4.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious- 1 Pet.2:2,3 describes desiring "the sincere milk of the word" as *tasting* the grace of the Lord, through knowing "the word of his grace" Acts 20:32). Peter may well be alluding to Heb.6:4,5 concerning *tasting* "the Heavenly gift", *tasting* "the good word of God", which parallels being "made partakers of the Holy Spirit". Thus the word of Jesus is connected to the gift of the Spirit, a connection made all the stronger once we realize that the Greek word for "grace" sometimes refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter is quoting here from the LXX of Ps. 34:8, so we can agree with the GNB: "As the scripture says, "You have found out for yourselves how kind the Lord is"". In this case, we have the sense that in our receipt of salvation at the last day, we will have a totally unique and personal experience. We will have found out His grace for ourselves.

The words of Ps. 34:8 "taste and see that the Yahweh is good" are alluded to in 1 Pet. 2:3 "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good". As discussed on :13, Peter will quote several more verses from this Psalm 34 in 1 Peter 3. He sees David's situation as similar to those of his audience- a Jew under persecution and in exile at the hands of his own brethren. And a Jew who had slipped back, and was now repenting of lies and wrong behaviour, albeit as a result of the pressures of a life on the run. The 'goodness' is of the good life of living spiritually and truthfully now; for that is what the eternal life will be about (:13). But Peter wonders if his readers have in fact acquired this taste; whether they really get it, that we are living now the 'good' life we shall eternally life, we love that life and want to eternall live it.

2:4 *Come to him as to a living stone*- The contrast is with the dead stones of the temple, which had played such a crucial role in the culture and faith of Peter's Jewish readership. Peter goes on to say that we too are "living stones" (:5); the titles of the Lord Jesus are applied to all of us in Christ.

Indeed rejected by men but chosen by God and precious- The Jewish believers had been rejected by the same group in Jerusalem who had rejected the Lord Jesus. And so Peter uses titles of the Lord Jesus [taken from Is. 28:16 LXX] which he has just used about the believers. They too were "chosen by God" (1:2) and were "precious" (1:7). All that is true of Him becomes true of us.

2:5 *You as living stones are being built up*- Even thought the Jewish believers being addressed were at a low point in their spiritual growth, the Spirit was seeking to build them up. The wise man builds his house upon the rock of Christ (Mt. 7:26), and yet the Lord Jesus builds His church on the rock of our faith in His resurrection (Mt. 16:18). Our efforts are confirmed by the Lord; this is His way of working by the Spirit. The implication is that the Lord is the builder; in contrast to the builders of the Jewish leadership, who rejected the Lord as the chief corner stone (:7). It may have been a frightening, scary and lonely prospect to be rejected by the 'builders' of Judaism and driven into exile, without any structure of spiritual support and leadership. For the early Christians continued to attend the temple and remained in the

synagogues until they were cast out. Peter is urging them to realize that the Lord Himself is their builder, their good shepherd.

Into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood- Exile from the temple system would have been a frightening experience for these orthodox Jewish converts. But they were being reminded that *they* are the temple, they are the priesthood. So often, structures we depend upon are removed and we are made to realize that it is for us to do and be what those structures were for us. Every Israelite was intended to be a priest; they were to be "a Kingdom of priests". The "covenant of my peace" was with both Israel (Is. 54:10) and the priesthood (Mal. 2:5). The same is true of spiritual Israel; "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5). The process of baptism recalls the way in which the priests washed and then embarked on service to the rest of Israel. Christ is the supreme priest; but because we are "in Him", we too have some part in the priesthood. See on Rom. 12:1.

As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord... praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ- Our offerings are acceptable to God by (Gk. *dia*, "in", on account of) Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5); by / by being in Christ we offer to God the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). The fact we come unto God directly *dia*, "by", through, on account of the Lord Jesus does not mean that therefore Christ must interpret our every word to God; it cannot mean that in prayer we cannot come directly to the Father. If this were so, the Lord's model prayer would be seriously lacking in its omission of any such clause which reminds us that we are praying to God through the mediation / interpretation of Christ. If English and Greek mean anything, the Lord categorically stated that He does *not* transfer our prayers to God; through Him, as a result of His work, we have a direct approach to God: "Ye shall ask *me* nothing... Ye shall ask [the Father] *in* my name (i.e. because you are located there, in that position / relation): and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you" (Jn. 16:23,26,27). Christ does not pray for us in the sense of offering up our words of request to the Father; He prays for us, according to Rom. 8, of His own freewill, with His own agenda, not ours. The aim of His suffering and Heavenly mediation today, is that He might "bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). This refers to His reconciliation of us to the Father, rather than His offering of our prayers. Because we are in His Name, on account of ("by") Him and His work, we can pray directly to the Father. He does not pray the Father for us.

We are all parts of the same body, branches on the same vine, bricks in the same building; we are all strangers and pilgrims, lacking any rights of a citizen. We are all

members of the same priesthood, with equal responsibility to offer up acceptable sacrifice. Don't miss the power of this to New Testament Jewish ears: the special responsibilities of the priests were now applied to *every* believer.

2:6 *Because it is contained in scripture: Look, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, chosen, precious*- The Jewish converts who were now in exile from Jerusalem, excommunicated from the temple, were in fact still in Zion- spiritually. Peter is clearly aware of the sense of spiritual loneliness which they felt after being cut off from the temple system. They had left their homes to come and live, or retire to, Jerusalem- because the temple was there. Peter had baptized them, and they had been cast out of the temple system and were now refugees in Turkey. But they were the temple and the priesthood- that is the force of his argument.

And he that believes in him shall not stumble- The Jewish refugees, cast out of the temple system, perhaps felt they would stumble as a result of being outside the temple structure; and perhaps Peter sensed they were close to doing so. But he urges them to retain their faith in Christ as the true corner stone, who like them had been rejected by Jerusalem Judaism.

Or, "shall never be put to shame". This would be another connection (see on :3) with Ps. 34, this time to Ps. 34:5 "their faces shall never be covered with shame".

2:7- see on Jn. 12:3.

Therefore, for you that believe he is precious- The repeated emphasis upon the Lord Jesus being "precious" connects with the preciousness of their faith (1:7). Their faith was precious to the Lord, and He was precious to them. We see here the mutuality between a man and his Lord.

But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone- The Lord is a stone- either of stumbling, or the chief cornerstone of our faith. Yet the Lord presents a different two options with regard to Him as the stone. We either fall on the stone and are broken; or it falls upon us and grinds us to powder, with full allusion to the stone of Dan. 2:44 which will grind the condemned to powder by the Lord's return (Mt. 21:44). But stumbling over the stone means it is a stone of offence to us. We either stumble upon the Lord, we sin and are broken by it but repent; or else He will condemn us at the last day. It's rather like the parable of the two sons; we are either the prodigal and end up saved, or the self-righteous older brother who ends up outside the Lord's fellowship.

2:8- see on 1 Pet. 5:2.

A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence- Looking back, it must have been shameful for Peter to recollect how he had sought to dissuade the Lord from going up to Jerusalem to die there for the world's redemption. At that time the Lord had called him a rock, upon whose declaration of faith he would build his church, and then soon afterwards a stumbling-stone, an offence. Peter combines these two descriptions in styling the Lord "the head(stone) of the corner (upon which the ecclesia would be built), and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Pet. 2:7,8). There is undoubted allusion to the very titles which the Lord had given Peter. And yet here Peter applies them both to the Lord Jesus, even the "rock of offence". His point perhaps was to show that he saw Christ as manifest in him, and he being "in Christ", *even in his weakness*. Nothing could separate Peter from the love of Christ; and therefore he merges the titles of Christ with those of himself, even when they describe his weakness. This was the unity that was possible between a man and his Lord, and Peter holds it up in inspiration to his readers.

For being disobedient, they stumble at the word- But the Lord Jesus is the rock or stone over which they stumble. So "the word" refers to Him, in that attitudes to His

word are attitudes to Him. He is the word, made flesh. We cannot claim to love Him if we disregard His word. The "disobedient" here refer to the Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Christ; for the Greek really means to disbelieve. So when Peter later uses the same word in warning his readership about those who are disobedient to the Gospel, or husbands who do not initially obey the word, he has specifically in view Jews who do not believe in Jesus as Christ (3:1; 4:17).

To which they also were appointed- This does not just say that the wicked are disobedient; they are *appointed* to this. God therefore had a hand in their disobedience- through confirming them in their conscious rejection of Him. On the other hand, "Whom (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). The predestination was not just to know the Gospel, but to be righteous- to be able to conform our characters to the perfect example of Jesus. Thus "I have chosen you... to bring forth fruit" (Jn. 15:16), i.e. spiritual attributes.

2:9 *But you are an elect race*- They who believed in Christ were the true Israel of God, and not those back in Palestine who had rejected and persecuted them.

A royal priesthood, a holy nation- God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). “All the people of Israel” were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). All Israel were to lay their hands on the Levites to show that they were truly Israel’s representatives (Num. 8:10). When Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God’s priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us: "Ye *also* are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9). The Lord Jesus is a King-priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:13-18; Ps. 110:4); and through being in Him, we share this position. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Israel were constituted a Kingdom of priests; a whole nation who would preach forth God's ways to those about them. And this designation and commission is applied now to the new Israel (1 Pet. 2:5,9 cp. Ex. 20:5). Males who could not procreate were barred from the congregation (Dt. 23:1), possibly in prototype of how spiritual procreation was to be a vital characteristic of the future Israel.

Israel were called out of Egypt in order to declare among the surrounding nations the character and greatness of Israel's God. In this calling to be a missionary nation they failed miserably (what similarities with the new Israel?). The very reason why we are a "chosen race, a royal priesthood (is) *that* we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness (cp. Egypt)". Our separation from this world is therefore related to our praise of God. We don't shew forth the knowledge and praise of God to this world by singing to them; but rather by showing in our lives and preaching that we have been separated unto a glorious Kingdom of light. This is the true shewing forth of praise.

A people for God's own possession, that you may show forth the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light- Judaism was therefore "darkness".

2:10 *Who in times past were no people*- The true Israel of God are those who are the baptized seed of Abraham. The very negative language and imagery used here about Judaism and natural Israel was designed to comfort the Jewish refugees who

had been rejected by Orthodox Judaism and the "Jerusalem that now is". Paul in Galatians 4 likewise speaks most negatively of the then current Jerusalem.

But now are the people of God- After their baptism at the Red Sea, Israel were declared the Kingdom of God by reason of God being their King through their promised obedience to His word (Ex. 19:5,6). They were "saved" (Jude 5) from the power of Egypt (cp.sin). Yet they had to walk through the wilderness (cp. our probations), behaving according to the responsibilities of being God's Kingdom, and yet still capable of backsliding before they became established as the physical Kingdom in the land. Those very same Abrahamic promises of inheriting the land of Canaan as the centre of the coming Kingdom are made to us through our Red Sea baptism. Abraham lived in the land of promise in his mortal life, but did not of course experience what it would be like in the Kingdom (Heb. 11:9). That he had to look forward to in faith, as do we, his seed. Peter leaves us with no doubt as to the validity of this parallel: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (cp. "a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation", Ex. 19:6), an holy nation, a peculiar (i.e. purchased) people; that you should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness (Egypt) into His marvellous light (cp. the glory at Sinai?). Which in time past were not a people (Kingdom), but are now the people of God" (1 Pet. 2:9,10). Alluding to this same idea, our guardian Angels, speaking on our behalf, welcomed the risen Lord into Heaven with the song "You... have made us unto our God (now) a Kingdom of priests; and we shall (in the full manifestation of that Kingdom) reign on earth" (Rev. 5:10). Hebrews 12 describes our being in Christ in language referring back to God's declaration of Israel as His Kingdom at Sinai (Heb. 12:18,29= Ex. 24:17). See on Acts 7:36.

Who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy- Hos. 2:23 is being alluded to. The son of the whore Gomer was adopted by grace by the faithful Israelite Hosea, into his prophetic family. Clearly that child represented the Gentiles. But it also represented Israel. In this beautiful way, Jew and Gentile are united by grace within God’s family.

2:11 *Beloved, I urge you as temporary residents and pilgrims*- Language directly relevant to their position as refugees in exile from Jerusalem, but also reminding them that thereby they were in fellowship with Abraham, father of the faithful, and were thus his true seed.

To abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul- It could seem that the exiled Jewish Christians were slipping away into fleshly lusts. Such lusts war against the soul in that the Christ-man within us is our real being, our true self. But this comes under attack if we give in to fleshly lusts. Such internal warfare is not therefore how things should be. Gal. 5:17,18 likewise speaks as if this kind of internal lusting is not how things should be in those led of the Spirit: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other, so that you cannot do the things you should. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law". Their soul, their real person, was the spirit, the spirit person formed in them, potentially, by the work of the spirit. I take this to be a criticism of how things were with the Galatian believers, rather than a general statement of how things are for all those possessing human nature.

2:12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable*- It would seem that the cash strapped exiles were not behaving as honestly as they might as they lived amongst the Gentiles of Turkey.

So that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God- Peter, like Paul, seems to have expected the Lord's coming very

soon. He reasons that the Gentiles observing them may be persuaded by their good deeds, so that when Christ comes, they would glorify God and accept the Lord then. This principle is valuable for us in this age.

On the day of visitation- The "day of *visitation*" is coming for us all (1 Pet. 2:12). The Greek is related to the word describing how after the denials, Christ turned and *looked* upon Peter (Lk. 22:61). This was for him his day of judgment, which we must all pass through. He called down Divine curses *upon himself* if he knew Jesus of Nazareth- and thus brought the curse of God upon himself (the record of his cursing and swearing refers to this rather than to the use of expletives). This was for him his day of judgment, which we must all pass through.

2:13 *Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*- They were to consider the Gentile rulers as the Lord; just as the obedience of slaves to their masters was reckoned as serving the Lord, so submitting to rulers would likewise be reckoned as submission to the Lord.

Whether to the king, as supreme leader- Maybe an allusion to Caesar, but he is called "the king" rather than the emperor because Peter wants us to figure that the real king is the Lord Jesus. Peter asks his sheep: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man… unto governors… as free… honour all men" (1 Pet. 2:13-17). This is all evident allusion to the way he had once felt that as free in Christ and in Israel, he didn't need to submit to men and pay taxes. But the Lord had gently rebuked him, and provided the coin to pay for them both (Mt. 17:25-27). The Gospels records would have been well known amongst the early believers; there is a tradition that at least the Gospel of Mark was learnt by heart as part of instruction for baptism. Peter's readers would have known of the incident, and now, here he is telling them to learn the lesson he had had to learn.

2:14 *Or to governors as those sent by him to punish evil-doers and for the praise of those that do well*- This is hard to understand when not all civil leaders in history have done this; and it was soon not true at all in the Roman empire. But "the king" could refer to the Lord Jesus, and the governors could refer to church elders. But the more comfortable reading is that at that time and place Peter is writing about, the governors were as stated, and should be obeyed. This would then go to show that the NT letters are not always to be read as global statements for all time, but are specific to a time and place in the commands they give.

2:15 *For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*- As in Paul's pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus (e.g. Tit. 2:8), there is great concern that the Lord's Name should not be brought into dishonour in a situation where the believers were surrounded by critics eager to slander them.

2:16 *As free and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God*- Here again we see Peter influenced by the letter to the Romans, which is understandable if he had been in Rome when the letter arrived (5:13). We are free and yet slaves of God. That freedom from law was it seems leading them into sin; hence the need for the appeal not to continue in sin because grace abounds. The Gentile Galatians, who were in the same geographical area as these Jewish exiles, had to be warned likewise not to use their freedom in Christ as an excuse for sin (Gal. 5:13). So this was clearly a problem in the churches of that area.

2:17 *Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king*-"The King" could refer to the Lord Jesus. See on :13. But it may be an allusion to the Lord's comment that His people were to render to Caesar what was Caesar's. For he was "the king" of the Roman empire. The Jews strongly disliked this and had a tendency not to

honour him, and Peter is asking them to act outside of their cultural inclination- again a principle which is valid for all time. These calls to respect others are psychologically understandable- for exiled refugees would have a tendency to bitterness and therefore disrespect of others.

2:18 *Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the harsh*- I have argued that Peter is writing to those he had baptized on Pentecost, who had now been scattered from Jerusalem by Jewish persecution of the church. Perhaps some of them were wealthy and had slaves; and some of those masters were "harsh". Or perhaps some of the exiles were so poor that they had ended up selling themselves into slavery, and detested them. Yet they are exhorted to live in a spirit of respect to all people, as stated in :17. Human beings should be respected, whoever they are and whoever you are in relation to them, even if they are bad- because they too are made in the image of God.

2:19 *For it is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief - suffering unjustly*- For the sake of our conscience, we should endure persecution *after the pattern of Christ on the cross* (1 Pet. 2:19-22). He did not hang there fearing a bad conscience; it was his clear, sinless conscience before God which motivated him to endure. See on 1 Jn. 3:18. "Commendable" is *charis*, "grace" or "gift". In this case, we could look upon unjust suffering as a gift. In the context of :18, the reference would be to slaves who refused to be obedient to their masters for the sake of their conscience toward God. Masters owned their slaves and used their bodies just as they wished; it would be understandable if Christian slaves refused to be obedient, and refused to accept that their minds and bodies belonged to an earthly master. For they knew they were God's slaves (:16).

2:20 *For what glory is it, if, when you sin and are beaten, you shall take it patiently?*- The reference is to Christian slaves being beaten by their masters (:18). “Beaten” is the s.w. in Mt. 26:67 about Christ being struck with a fist- something Peter would have probably watched out of the corner of his eye from where he was.

But if when you do well, and suffer, you shall take it patiently- By a slave refusing to obey the master's commands to do sinful things. See on :19.

This is acceptable with God- The parallel is with the reference to "glory" in the first half of the verse. Those who refused to be obedient to their master's sinful demands will be praised for this in glory when they are accepted at the last day with God. Those slaves would be glorified for their quiet words of refusal in a villa in southern Turkey, and their endurance of a beating for it in the garden shed...

2:21- see on Jn. 21:19.

For this were you called- The letter begins with a reference to our calling, and the way the Spirit strengthens us to follow that calling to its final end in salvation at the last day. It is interesting to note the changes of pronouns in 1 Pet. 2:20 ff: “Hereunto were *ye* called: because Christ also suffered for *you*, leaving *you* an example, that *ye* should follow his steps... who his own self bare *our* sins... that *we* having died to sin, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes *ye* were healed”. In the context, Peter is speaking about the need for slaves to live out the death and life of Christ; but when he comes to speak of the Lord’s death for sin, he cannot but include himself as a sinner and a beneficiary in the cross. In Peter’s final maturity, his mind was full of the cross. His letters and preaching were full of allusion to Isaiah’s prophecies of the suffering servant (especially Acts 3:13,26; 4:25-30; 1 Pet. 2:21 ff.); he and Philip are the only preachers to explicitly make this connection. It could be that Peter was so

impressed by the way the Lord washed his feet that his mind was evermore transfixed with this image and the Biblical allusions behind it. And note that initially, Peter had totally failed to grasp that Jesus was indeed "the servant". Every allusion he makes to Jesus as the servant was a reflection of his recognition of his earlier failure to perceive it.

Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example- The brutal beating of the Christian slave woman in the garden shed of a villa in southern Turkey connected her directly with the Lord's sufferings. And she would share in His resurrection. His cross and experience was such that we can find direct connection with Him there, through our experiences of aspects of His sufferings in our own. Truly He was our representative.

That you should follow His steps- The beating of the Christian slaves was to be connected with the Lord's beating; and after that, He walked to Golgotha. And the slaves were to follow even further- in His steps there.

2:22 *He did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth*- Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile, as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). The Lord's trial attempted to find evidence that He had spoken bad words during His ministry, but no evidence was found. "Found" translates a legal word, s.w. Mt. 26:60; Jn. 18:38; 19:4,6 concerning Christ's trial, parts of which Peter would have seen or heard first hand. And yet it was ultimately God's judgment which found no deceit in the Lord's mouth- note how never deceiving, being totally honest, is paralleled with not sinning. Sin is a lie, the devil [sin] is a false accuser. All sin is a form of dishonesty.

2:23 *Who, when he was insulted, did not retaliate with insults, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to Him that judges righteously*- a reference to the Lord's final words on the cross: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit"? We likewise should follow that example in our dying with Him, in that we too "commit the keeping of [our] souls to him in well doing" (4:19). See on Mt. 27:26. At the Lord's death, the Father judged both His Son's righteousness and the world's rejection of it at that time. See on Jn. 12:42; 19:13,37. It's as if the Father judged the world as unworthy and His Son as worthy in the time of the Lord's death.

2:24- see on Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 5:1.

Whom himself bore our sins- "Who his own self bare our sins in his body up on to the tree" (2:24 RVmg.) suggests the watching Peter reflecting, as the Lord's body was lifted up vertical, that his sins of denial and pride were somehow with his Lord, being lifted up by Him.

In his body upon the tree- An unusual term for the cross (he also uses it in Acts 5:30; 10:39). Perhaps because he saw the crucifixion (5:1) and was struck by the way the Lord carried a piece of a tree and was impaled upon it. He carried our sins in His own self (AV), in His body. I take this to mean that He was totally identified with us in our sinfulness; not that our sins were part of His body in some metaphysical sense. His physical body was like ours; there was nothing unique in that body of itself which carried our sins. The language speaks of identity rather than anything else.

That we, having died to sin, might live to righteousness- A reference to baptism, our identity with Him in response to His identification with us. The Lord died as He

did so that we might live righteously (1 Pet. 2:24); the account of the crucifixion is written as it is so that we might be inspired to a true faith (Jn. 19:35). He "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that *we might die to sin* [Gk.] and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). He died for our sins, there all our weakness met their death in His death- so close was the association between Him and our sins. Our response to that is to put those sins to death in *our* bodies, as He put them to death in His on the tree. He carried our sins "*that* we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. weals- Peter saw them) ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). Because of the suffering entailed in the putting to death of our sins by the Lord's cross, we should respond in likewise mortifying them. Because He died, so should we. We recognize that principle in baptism and are to continue living it out.

By whose stripes you were healed- Gk. 'weals', the swollen up bruises, which Peter would have seen when Christ turned and looked at him through blackened eyes (after the beating of Mt. 26:67). See on Mk. 15:15.

2:25 - see on Lk. 15:4-6; Acts 2:39; 3:19.

For you were going astray like sheep- Peter is clearly concerned that they were going astray, but he now writes as if they had stabilized and returned. He spoke of his hopes for them as if they had happened. Or perhaps the reference is to how their lives in Judaism had in fact been no better than sheep going astray.

But are now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls- The same word for "converted". Peter reminds his sheep of how they are now "returned" (s.w. 'converted') to the Lord Jesus, just as he had been. His experience of the Lord's gracious spirit inspired him. Time and again in his letters he alludes to his own weaknesses in order to inspire his flock.

1 PETER CHAPTER 3

3:1 *In like manner*- Just as the Jewish Christian slaves were to be subject even to bad masters, so that principle continues in family life.

You wives be in subjection to your husbands- As slaves were to be subject even to bad masters, likewise wives to, presumably, bad husbands, on the principle of "as unto the Lord". This is how slaves have just been asked to be in subjection to bad masters. The women were converts from Jewish orthodoxy; perhaps their husbands had now left the faith due to the persecution or being caught up with the worldly stress of being refugees in Turkey. But :7 speaks of "husbands" as if believing husbands are in view; Peter is therefore addressing the situation of sisters whose believing husbands are not believing and behaving as they ought to.

The church is *subject* to Christ, as wives are to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1). Yet because the wife too represents the body of Christ, all of us are to be subject to each other (1 Pet. 5:5). See on Eph. 5:31.

That, even if any do not obey the word- Peter has used this word for 'disobedience' in reference to Jews who refuse to obey the Gospel of Jesus- see on 2:7,8. So their husbands were Jews who now didn't believe in Jesus as Messiah. Or perhaps they never had done, and had had to flee Jerusalem because of the persecution of their Christian wives.

They may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives- But is not the word of the Gospel what ultimately wins converts to Christ? It is, but that word must be made flesh in persons, and it is therefore their witness to that word in life lived which is equally the preaching of the word to a person. This statement is disproof of extreme Biblicism, whereby it is held that the word alone is all sufficient to save someone.

3:2 *Seeing your chaste behaviour coupled with fear*- This continues the connection between wives and slaves in difficult domestic situations; for the slaves were to likewise be subject to their masters with "fear" or respect (2:18). The respect for persons, mixed with a good way of life, was intended to be a powerful witness to the unbeliever.

3:3 *Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel*- 'Not A but B' doesn't necessarily have to mean 'Not A at all'. Such a grammatical construction is common in several languages. The idea is that they were to focus upon internal beauty far more than upon external beauty. The idea of adorning for a husband is used approvingly elsewhere in the Bible.

3:4- see on Lk. 24:39; Rom. 7:22; 1 Cor. 2:15.

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit- This is not corruptible, surely alluding to the description of our spiritual treasures as eternally lasting in Heaven, where there is no corruption (Mt. 6:19,20). Our future inheritance is described by Peter as "incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:4), yet he also speaks of God's word which creates the new man, as also being "incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:23), as is the hidden man which it develops (1 Pet. 3:4). This teaches us that the new man created within us here and now by the action of the word, is in fact strongly related to the future "incorruptible" inheritance we will receive at the second coming. And yet our spirit is incorruptible- although we die, our spirit will

continue eternally, in the sense that who we are now in spirit, by personality, is who we shall eternally be. This demonstrates the importance of character and spiritual mindedness.

Which is in the sight of God of great value- Just as our faith is so precious to Him (1:7). Those exiled from the temple needed to remember that their personal spirituality was so intensely noticed by the God of Heaven.

3:5 *For after this manner, in the past, the holy women who trusted in God also made themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands*- Submission is a real theme with Peter (2:13; 3:1,22; 5:5). Perhaps he had struggled with this idea himself. The Jewish exiles would have struggled to submit themselves to the situations they found themselves in.

We note that Sarah will now be mentioned as a woman who trusted or believed in God. "Belief" is really to trust; to trust that God will move forward as He has done before, even though we cannot understand how. But Sarah is presented as not really believing or trusting the Angelic word of promise, indeed she laughed at the idea that she could become pregnant. But belief and unbelief are never absolutes; and God focused upon the belief that there was latent in her "hidden man of the heart" (:4) even though there was unbelief on the surface. Just as Moses on one hand fled Egypt fearing the wrath of the king, and yet Hebrews 11 says he fled not fearing it.

3:6 *As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*- The way in which God chooses the good side of Sarah and recognizes it for what it is can be seen even more finely in 1 Pet. 3:4-6. Here sisters are bidden follow Sarah's example of
1. Having a meek and quiet spirit
2. Not outwardly adorning herself
3. Obeying Abraham
4. And calling him her "Lord".
It can be shown that the Spirit in Peter is adopting an extremely positive reading of Sarah.

1. She isn't revealed as having a meek and quiet spirit at all; but presumably, God saw that underneath her anger and bitterness there was a meekness and quietness, perhaps especially seen as she grew older.

2,3. Concerning not outwardly "adorning", the Greek text is alluding to the Septuagint of Gen. 20:16, which says that Abimelech told Sarah that he had given Abraham many silver pieces "that these may therefore be for you to adorn your countenance". Abimelech is speaking sarcastically (note how he calls Abraham "your brother", referring to Sarah and Abraham's family relationship). It was a custom for married women to wear their silver pieces on their face (cp. Lk. 15:8). Presumably she had taken these off, in order to appear single and sexually available. Abimelech is saying: "I've given your so-called 'brother' Abraham 1000 silver pieces, so just make sure you wear them in future and don't lead any more men into sin". And what does the Spirit comment? "Thus she was reproved" (Gen. 20:16). Her willingness to pretend she was single and not refusing the sexual advances of Abimelech can only be seen in a negative light from the Genesis record. She lacked continued faith in the promises of a seed, and she disregarded God's marriage principles for the sake of an all too convenient 'obedience' to her husband. It may have been that she regarded her inability to have children as partly his fault (cp. the deadness of Abraham's body, Rom. 4:19). The thing is, she had already shown enough faith to conceive (Heb.

11:11), and presumably the effect of this was seen in the physical rejuvenation of her body, which made her so attractive to men, although she was 90 years old. Both Sarah and Abraham had shown faith, she was living with her own body as the constant reminder of God's faithfulness, and yet in the incident with Abimelech she wavered and had to be reproved. Yet she is seen in a positive light by the Spirit; her lack of wearing ornaments, even though it was to show she was single, is commended; as is her obedience to her husband, even though she was reproved for this. The point is, like all of us, her motives were probably mixed. She did want to be truly obedient to Abraham, she did want to have a meek spirit rather than outward adorning. Her wrong motives surfaced, and were rebuked. But God saw deep inside her heart, and saw the good motives, and drags them out and holds them up as an example.

4. Sarah is commended for calling Abraham her "Lord" (1 Pet. 3:6). She is recorded as doing this in one place only: "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:12). She doubted God's promise; she is rebuked for this by the Angel. Yet in doing so, when she came to think of Abraham, in her heart she called him "my lord". So in the midst of her lack of faith in one respect, she also had a commendable attitude to Abraham. All this, don't forget, was going on "within herself". God searched her thoughts, He saw her wrong attitudes there deep in her heart, and He saw what was commendable there too; and through Peter He drags this out and reveals it to us all as an inspiration. See on Gal. 4:30; Heb. 11:11.

Whose children you now are, if you do well- Peter was writing to Jewish believers. But his point is that they were only the true descendants of Abraham and Sarah if they acted and believed as they had. Whilst this was quite confronting for Jewish believers to be reminded of this, in this context it was comforting; for those back in Jerusalem who had driven them into exile were not in fact the children of Abraham and Sarah. Paul makes the same point in writing to the Galatians, the same area where Peter's audience were located. He says that orthodox Judaism is the offspring of Hagar and not Sarah.

And are not put in fear by any terror- Perhaps an allusion to how Abram and Sarai lied about their marital status.

3:7 *You husbands, in like manner*- The "manner" refers to submitting to the other just spoken about. For Peter will go on to appeal to all to be subject to each other (5:5).

Live with your wife with understanding- This refers to having the wisdom to submit and be sensitive to each other. As noted above, it also involves perceiving faith and spirituality even when these may not be externally apparent. Because that is the "like manner" in which God looked at Sarah. The wisdom or "understanding" is that the wife, like the husband, is to receive the inheritance by grace ("joint-heirs of the grace of life").

Giving honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel- To honour women for the sake of the fact they were weaker than men was unheard of in the ancient world. Women were dishonoured exactly because they were physically weaker. This was radical, counter cultural stuff- just as radical as the call of the Gospel in our age.

As being also joint-heirs of the grace of life- Peter describes sisters as 'joint-heirs' with their husbands, implying "full religious equality with man- a thought impossible for Judaism". But the grammar really suggests that they were both joint-heirs. They were "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). But they were both joint-heirs. Because they were both connected to Christ, they ought to therefore be with each

other. Husbands and wives are "*heirs together*" just as the whole church are "heirs together" through being one in Christ (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6). See on 1 Pet. 3:1. “The grace of life” may refer to the gift of life in the Spirit which is received now, and comes to full term in the eternal life of the Kingdom age.

That your prayers are not impeded- 1 Pet. 3:7 gives an unexpected reason for appealing for husbands and wives to get along with each other: that your prayers be not hindered. So important was prayer in the thinking of Peter. Comparing ourselves with the first century community, it seems to me that we simply don’t give prayer the place of importance which they did. 1 Tim 2:1 reflects *their* balance: “I exhort therefore, that, *first of all* [the Greek implies ‘most importantly’ rather than just being first in a list], supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men”. Marital strife results in prayers being "impeded", the same word translated 'hewn down' (Mt. 7:19) in a judgment day context. The evidence that the experience of answered prayer is an indicator of God's pleasure with us is quite compelling.

The way Paul talks of how in 'marriage', the man represents Christ and the woman the church, helping each other towards salvation, would indicate that he presumed marriage was only relevant to believers; Christian marriage seems to be the only model of marriage he assumes. Here Peter speaks of husband and wife praying together (1 Pet. 3:7); he too assumed marriage in the Faith as the only model of marriage.

3:8 *Finally, all of you, be likeminded, compassionate, loving as brothers*- Unity is not uniformity. This is not a call to have identical positions on everything. Rather is it similar to Phil. 2:5, where we are asked to have the mind of Christ. The one mind we should have is the mind of Christ. This is what binds believers together in spiritual experience, rather than an on paper agreement about theology. I have argued that the initial audience of these words were the Jerusalem Jews baptized by Peter who were now in exile, going from one city to another trying to make money, as James 5 implies. Basic brotherly compassion and sensitivity was being hindered by an obsession with trying to survive at their previous middle class level.

Sensitive, humble- Husbands were to likewise live sensitively with their wives (:7). The principles regarding marital relationships are to be practiced within the wider community of believers.

3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but instead give blessing*- To give blessing to those who sin against us is exactly what God did to us; for the Gospel is all about blessing, just as was first preached to Abraham. We are not only to receive blessing, but as Abraham's seed, we are to be a blessing to others. And those promises to Abraham are the core of the Gospel.

For this were you called, that you should inherit a blessing- Peter opened the letter by saying that believers have been called from the beginning, and God's Spirit has been tirelessly at work down the ages preparing *us* for the moment when we respond to the call and we are given the blessings of the Gospel, which shall finally be revealed at the last day. We should respond to this by blessing those who sin against us.

3:10 *For he that would love life and see good days*- The "good days" are those of the Kingdom to come; if we love the idea of the life eternal, then we must live now as we shall eternally live. For the Gospel gives us eternal life now in that we can live now as we shall eternally live, as John's Gospel points out. Matthew tends to put it another way; the parables of the Kingdom refer to life lived now, which is the Kingdom life. The quotation here in 3:10-12 is from Ps. 34:12-16 LXX, but with variations- an example of how inspired writers quote the Old Testament but change

various details to be relevant to their theme or audience. The context of Ps. 34 is David's reflection upon how he had been saved by grace from Gath, by pretending to be mad and thus being cast out of the city he was trapped in. He fled there at a time of low faith (see on 1 Sam. 21), in trouble because of lying to Ahimelech. So his warning against telling lies is self critical. We who read these words are encouraged to identify with David in his weakness and repent as he did. We too are to live the Kingdom life now, the "good days", the eternal days of the Kingdom, are to be lived now. The 'goodness' is in terms of the moral attributes of the next verses. Or as C. S. Lewis put it in *Mere Christianity,* "very often the only way to get a quality is to start behaving as if you had it already". David at the time of Ps. 34 was a Jew on the run from persecution from his own brethren, who had in weakness behaved inappropriately and was now repenting. This is exactly relevant for Peter's audience. We note that 1 Pet. 2:3 also alludes to Ps. 34, in that case to Ps. 34:8 "taste and see that the Lord is good".

The Lord had taught that we are not to love our life in this world, but even to "hate" our life. The life that is to be loved is, I suggest, not this life- but specifically the eternal life in the "good days" of the Kingdom.

Let him restrain his tongue from evil and restrain his lips so they speak no lies- He who wants to be in the Kingdom will restrain his tongue and not lie. As with James, Peter is making the point that what man may consider merely cosmetic, mere words, is of eternal importance to God. Perhaps Peter has in mind how he had lied and not restrained his lips when he denied the Lord.

But how in practice to "restrain" the tongue? We lack the iron will to do so, in many cases. Iron will, steel in the soul, is surely not the way to spirituality. The same word is used in 4:1: "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind. For he that has suffered in the flesh has *ceased* from sin". The Lord Jesus suffered and died; He there is our inspiration to control the tongue. If we identify with His death, in baptism and an ongoing commitment to let His death be our pattern, then we will be counted as in Him, and will naturally seek to live according to that status. And His Spirit will help our efforts. This is the way to cease or restrain from sin, such as speaking lies. Note the parallel between "evil" and "lies". Lying is evil. Dishonesty is at the heart of all sin.

3:11 *And let him turn away from evil and do good*- To turn away or "eschew" (AV) evil recalls Job (Job 1:1). It seems that the Jewish brethren had fallen quite seriously; and yet in 1 Pet. 2:25 Peter says that they had been going astray, but had now returned. But here in chapter 3 it seems clear that they were still far from having turned back. We conclude therefore that 2:25 is Peter's positive desire that they should turn away from evil and turn back to the Lord Jesus. But he thinks of them as already having done so.

Let him seek peace and pursue it- Doing good is for Peter epitomized in seeking peace, both with God and with others. He surely has in mind the Lord's special blessing for "the peacemakers".

3:12 *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*- The eyes and ears of the Lord are contrasted to His *face* which is "against them that do evil". Eyes and ears are part of a face. The point may be that the Lord is highly sensitive to the prayers of the righteous; but that deep sensitivity is not for the wicked, but His general 'face' is against them. We cannot always pray, and some cannot verbalize things well. This doesn't mean that their prayers are not heard. The Lord's eyes and ears are paralleled

here. He sees their situations as prayers which He hears. Just as He 'heard' the cry of Abel's blood, or the cries of workers who weren't paid for their work in James 5.

3:13 *And who is he that will harm you, if you be zealous for what is good?*- There are many examples of where zeal for good results in being harmed. So Peter is writing here [as in many of the NT epistles] about a particular set of circumstances at a specific time. It would seem that the Jewish Christians were getting in trouble with the law for doing "evil", perhaps because of their desire for money. At that time and place, they need not have feared trouble with the authorities- unless they were doing wrong, which it seems they were.

3:14 *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled*- As with the slaves of chapter 2, we get the impression some were suffering for their sins, and others for their righteousness. The connection with the slave passage in 2:18-20 is significant in that Peter is demonstrating that the same principles apply to all in the church; just as submission of wife to husband in 3:1 is actually to be practiced by all members of the church to one another in 5:5. The practical application of common spiritual principles is what brings unity in practice within the church, whether we are slave or master, male or female, or Jew or Gentile. Note that the same categories are in view when Paul teaches that baptism into Christ eclipses all these category distinctions (Gal. 3:27-29).

3:15 *But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord*- Knowing and having Christ as Lord of our hearts will practically enable us to overcome tribulation, and will lead to a suitably humble witness in response. Peter began in 1:2 by speaking of how the Spirit sanctifies us; but in our hearts or spirit we must consciously act to have Christ as Lord.

From where do we get the motivation from for loyalty to Christ? I'd suggest that it comes from first of all realizing, on a theological level, the greatness of Christ. He is now Lord of Heaven and earth, all power has been given unto him, He is the "Prince of the Kings of the earth". Those early brethren who had seen the Lord in His humanity really appreciated this. Thus "Yahweh of hosts, him shall you sanctify" (Is. 8:13 LXX) is applied by Peter to the Lord Jesus, whom we should sanctify (1 Pet. 3:15). Paul speaks about "the Lord" as if we all know who he refers to; *the* Lord, the one and only Lord, the exalted Lord Jesus. This especially comes out in his breaking of bread passage in 1 Cor. 11:23-29. Such is the supremacy of Christ that "We cannot lift Christ too high" as Robert Roberts expressed it. If we appreciate the extent and height of His Lordship and exaltation, we will see the extent to which our minds should be dominated by Him. Our very consciousness should beat with His spirit, His mind. We are told that He should *live in our hearts*; for us, He should be the alpha and omega (Rev. 1:11). The confession of faith before baptism is summarized, in its quintessence, as confessing with the mouth Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9 RV). All the doctrines a candidate must know beforehand are summarized in this.

Because Christ is Lord of all, we must preach Him to all, even if like Peter we would rather not preach to them. This was the motivational power and reality of Christ's universal Lordship for Peter (Acts 10:36). The same link between Christ's Lordship and witness is found in Phil. 2:10 and 1 Pet. 3:15 (which alludes Is. 8:13- Yahweh of Hosts, of many ones, becomes manifest now in the Lord Jesus). The ascended Christ was highly exalted and given the Name above every Name, so that for those who believed this, they would bow in service at the Name of Jesus. Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus- this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16;

4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can't be kept quiet. 3 Jn. 7 refers to how the great preaching commission was obeyed: "For his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing (material help) from the Gentiles" (Gentile believers). For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help to enable this. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord's Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

Always ready to give answer to every man that asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear- They were to be ready always to give an answer to those who ask, albeit with fear; exactly what Peter failed to do on the night of the denials. He continually alludes to his own weakness. The hope within is "Christ as Lord" who is sanctified within our hearts. He is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Christ within us is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Our hope is therefore primarily about eternal relationship with Him; the environment where we shall enjoy that Hope is the Kingdom of God on earth, but the essence is the eternal relationship with Him. He was a good example now of witnessing to his great hope but with meekness. Utter confidence in the "hope", the *elpis*, the certainty of our salvation, mixed with meekness and awareness and allusion to our own failures... this is what makes witness really powerful. Having one without the other will not persuade men.

In our suffering for righteousness' sake at the hands of the world, we must "give an answer (s.w. 'a defence, clearing of oneself)... a reason (*logos* , cp. Mt. 12:36)... with meekness and fear... having a good conscience... let him not be *ashamed* " (1 Pet. 3:15,16; 4:16). This is all judgment seat language. And yet we must go through this now in our confrontations with the world. The trials of our faith are like fire which purifies us (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12). And yet this is the language of the last judgment (Mal. 3:1,2). In our response to trials, we have the outcome of our judgment. We must rejoice *now* in our tribulations with the same joy which we will have when we are accepted by the Lord at the last day (1 Pet. 4:13). Job felt that his calamities were God entering into judgment with him (Job 14:3). If we react properly to trials, we thereby receive now "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:9). Thus the question of the degree to which we now are 'saved' is connected with the fact that to some degree, the judgment process is also going on now.

Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can’t be kept quiet.

3:16- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

Having a good conscience, that, when you are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ- Are slanderers really put to shame now by our good living? The putting to shame of the wicked is at the final judgment. The Greek phrase translated "When" might better be rendered 'In which...' or 'In that which'. At the day of judgment, it will be demonstrated that actually it was

the slanderers who were guilty of the things they were accusing the believers of. And they will be put to shame at the last day for that. It is psychologically true and observable that slanderers will often accuse others of doing exactly that which they are doing. That is the principle of transference; they realize their sins, subconsciously, and know they should be punished for them. So they transfer those sins onto others, e.g. by slander, and seek to get them punished for those sins.

3:17 *For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing*- see on :14. Suffering according to the will of God is an idea picked up again in 4:19. We can take comfort that any suffering is not outside the will of God. There is no satan out there causing it.

3:18- see on 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; 5:1.

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit- This could well have been written by Peter with a glance back at the way that after his denials, he the unjust went to the crucifixion scene and reflected just this. When in 5:1 he comments that he witnessed the sufferings of Christ, he could be saying that therefore these thoughts were his thoughts as he witnessed it: the just suffering for him the unjust, to bring him back to God.

Do we seek strength to endure unjust treatment and the grace to submit cheerfully to the loss of what we feel is rightfully ours? Be it discrimination in the workplace, persecution from the Government, perceived abuse or degradation by our partner or family...? Let the cross be our endless inspiration: “For it is better, if the will of God be so [a reference to the Lord’s struggle in Gethsemane being our struggle], that ye suffer for well doing... *for* Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:17,18). Remember how under persecution, the faithful love not their lives unto death because of their experience of the blood of the lamb shed for them (Rev. 12:11).

Eph. 2:18 speaks of how "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". This access is not only in the moments of time we designate for prayer. Christ suffered for us and obtained our forgiveness, "that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18), and we are in that position now, all the time, not just when we pray. Being in this position means that our Spirit, the essence of our spirituality, our deepest spiritual desires, are transferred to the Father by the Son.

3:19- see on Acts 3:26; Acts 3:34.

In which also- We seek to understand how Christ could preach in his spirit. He was “put to death in the flesh but made alive in [Gk. ‘through, on account of’] the spirit”. The Lord was raised “according to the spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:4). Why was Christ resurrected? Because of His sinless life and character, i.e. His “spirit” of a holy life. In this lies the connection between the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus. He was raised by the Father because of His spirit of holiness, his holy spirit of life. We too will be raised to eternal life on account of our spirit of life which we are now developing: “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11). This passage shows that the spirit of Christ is the same spirit that is to dwell in us. This doesn’t mean we are disembodied spirits, but rather that our way / spirit of life must be that of Jesus. 1 Pet. 4:1 makes the same point – we are to arm ourselves with the same mind / spirit that was in Christ as He suffered on the cross. If our Spirit and that of Christ coincide and are one, then we have the witness that we are truly God’s children (Rom.

8:16). It was through *this* same spirit that Christ witnessed to imprisoned humanity, especially at the time of Noah, as Peter shows. The spirit of Christ was in all the prophets, and this was the essence of their witness. "The testimony [preaching] of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" in the sense that the preaching of the prophets was in essence the preaching of Jesus insofar as they had His Spirit in their message.

There is an undoubted theme throughout 1 Peter 3 and 4 of the opposition between the "flesh" (that which is external, the appearance of things) and the "spirit", that which is internal, which is of God.

Being dead to sins	Should live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24)
Not the outward adorning	But the hidden man…a quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:3,4)
Put to death in the flesh	But quickened by the spirit (1 Pet. 3:18)
Baptism is not a washing of the flesh	But the answer of a good conscience / spirit (1 Pet. 3:21)
Don't live in the flesh	But to the will of God (1 Pet. 4:2)
Judged by men in the flesh [outwardly]	Live to God in the spirit (1 Pet. 4:6)

The spirit by which Jesus was quickened is thus paralleled with our spirit of living to God, a quiet spirit, a life of righteousness, of good conscience etc. His Spirit is to be our spirit – we are to be of the "same mind / spirit" with Him, sharing the mind which He had especially during His time of dying (1 Pet. 4:1). And this is exactly the point of Phil. 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" at the time of His death. Notice that the Spirit of Jesus is epitomized by the mindset which He displayed during His death. It is this very mind / spirit which is to be in us. It is therefore in this sense that *through His death* the Lord Jesus preached 'in spirit' to those whom He had never met.

In this sense, it was the spiritually minded lifestyle of Noah which was his witness to the world of his day. Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the people of Noah's day. In 2 Pet. 2:5 he says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] 'by' righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. There is ultimately only one Spirit (Eph. 4:4). The same spirit of holiness which was in Jesus was likewise thus in Noah. "The Spirit", the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are all equated in Rom. 8:9. We note that Gen. 6:3 explains that it was God's Spirit which "strove with man" in the 120 years of Noah's witness. The spirit of God, the spirit of Christ, a meek and humble spirit... these are all referring to the same thing here.

He went- Firstly, we need to remove any misunderstanding which arises from the phrase "he went". Contemporary Greek literature often used such expressions in a redundant sense. Eph. 2:17 speaks of the Lord Jesus 'coming' and preaching peace to us. But this doesn't mean that He Himself in person came up to us and preached.

Indeed, the language of going, coming or moving is often used in relation to the preaching of a person – e.g. Mt. 9:13: "*but go* and learn what that meaneth". The Lord didn't intend that they literally went away somewhere. Likewise Dan. 12:4 and Hab. 2:2 bid those who understand God's word to "run" – not literally, but in response to the word preached. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so – but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time.

And preached to the spirits in prison- The Lord Himself quoted Is. 61:1 about Himself: He proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But this passage is evidently behind Peter's assertion that after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus preached to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:18,19). His resurrection was the basis of His command to go into all the world and preach the word; and thereby His preachers went out to do and continue the work which He personally had done.

Biblically, a man or woman is identified with their spirit in the sense of their mind or way of life. Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men, with whom the believer ought to associate. This means that we ought to identify ourselves with the way of life, the spirit of life, of "just men" of the past. God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16:22; 27:16) in the sense that He is the God of all humanity. So "spirits in prison" can refer to people who, in their spiritual lives, are imprisoned. Immediately the mind goes to Is. 42:2,7, which in speaking of the preaching of Jesus, prophecies that He would release the spiritually imprisoned – not so much by direct didactic teaching, but by the spirit of His personality and example. So the "prison" is simply the prison of the human mind, which the mental example of Jesus can open up.

We obviously ask *why* ordinary people should be described in this passage as "spirits". The context is speaking of the witness of Jesus to people through His Spirit or way of life as manifested in His people. The *spirit* within His people appeals to the imprisoned *spirit* or heart / mind of their audience. We appeal to the *heart*, the spirit, by our witness – not merely to the intellect. The spirit of Christ within us appeals to the imprisoned spirit within others.

The "spirits in prison" were once ["aforetime"] disobedient (1 Pet. 3:20). The same two Greek words translated "aforetime" and "disobedient" occur in Rom. 11:30 about all of us, who "in times past [s.w. "aforetime"] have not believed [s.w. "disobedient"]. This is surely one of the many times when Peter's phrasing is so similar to Paul's that he is surely alluding to him; and thus Peter is making the point that although the witness of the spirit of Christ was, in his context, specifically to Noah's generation, it is also the witness which we all receive from those with the spirit of Christ at any time. Peter has just spoken of how disobedient [s.w.] people are converted by the witness of a spiritual, Christ-centred way of life (1 Pet. 3:1). Peter is writing against a background of "the last days", of which Noah's generation is a clear type. Just as they were witnessed to by the spirit of Christ in Noah, so will the generation of the last days have a like witness. God's patience "waited" in Noah's time; the Greek implies to wait *for* something. It is also translated "expect". God was waiting for and expecting a response from Noah's witness; and in this we see the essential hopefulness of God. He hoped against hope for response; and none came.

The Spirit of Christ and of God has always been His witness to all generations. The question arises as to why Peter chose to especially focus upon the example of Noah out of all the generations. Perhaps this was because Noah's generation is a type of the last days, in which Peter believed he was living. And therefore this entire study has a great relevance to our day; for the crucial witness of the last days is through the spirit of Christ in us witnessing to an increasingly self-imprisoned world.

Note that it was the spirit of Christ in Noah that was the witness to the "spirits in prison", the imprisoned people whose spirits he connected with. It was a witness of a spirit to a spirit. A connection of minds, we might say. Just as the disobedient husband was to be "won" by the spirit of his wife, which would appeal to his conscience or spirit. This is what witness and persuasion of others is all about- not a bald presentation of truth as words, but a personal connection of spirit / mind with the person being witnessed to. And this is evident enough- people usually come to Christ through personal contact with others, rather than through a totally intellectual, unaided analysis of His message, performed alone and with no human contact.

3:20- see on Mt. 24:48.

That previously were disobedient-

The 'disobedience' connects with how earlier in this chapter, Peter appealed for sisters to appeal to their disobedient husbands through their spirit, their hidden man of the heart, the spirit of Jesus within them. Just as Noah witnessed through the spirit of Jesus to the disobedient of his day.

Peter reasons in 1 Pet. 3 that the ark represents two things- being in Christ by baptism, and being saved from the tribulations to come on the world of the last days. These are typified respectively by the first and second entries of Noah into the ark. If our baptism is like that first entering in, then Noah's tense, earnest waiting for the rain in the next 7 days should typify our feelings towards the second coming (cp. the rain). We should live our whole lives after baptism as if we know for certain that the second coming is but a week away.

When the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was prepared-

Knowing the destruction that would come on all except Noah, God waited in the hope that more would be saved. He as it were hoped against His own foreknowledge that more would saved. He likewise waits and even delays in the same hope in our last days.

Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water- Peter likens the ark in the time of Noah to Christ, showing that as the ark saved Noah and his family from the judgment that came upon sinners, so baptism into Christ will save believers from eternal death (1 Pet. 3:20,21). Noah entering into the ark is likened to our entering into Christ through baptism. All those outside the ark were destroyed by the flood; standing near the ark or being a friend of Noah was quite irrelevant. The only way of salvation is, and was, to be inside the Christ/ark. It is evident that the second coming, which the flood typified (Lk. 17:26,27), is nearly upon us. Entry into the Christ/ark by baptism is therefore of the utmost urgency. Human words really do fail to convey this sense of urgency; the Biblical type of entry into the ark in Noah's time is more powerful. Noah's ark was an appropriate symbol for salvation through baptism in that the Hebrew word *teba* ("ark") only occurs elsewhere in reference to the "ark" or "chest" in which the baby Moses, condemned to death, came through water to a saved life. And "a similar root in Egyptian means chest or coffin"- connecting with the idea that baptism is a burial with Christ in water, as it were entering a coffin with Him, to

emerge into new life. Indeed the dimensions of Noah's ark are in proportion similar to those of a coffin.

The flood was brought about by Gods wisdom, not because a deity lost his patience and temper with mankind. God destroyed mankind because of His *grief* (Gen. 6:6)- and He did so because He planned on saving the world through water. Noah and the faithful were saved from corruption and the faith being lost by the world that threatened to destroy them (spiritually) being itself destroyed.

The idea is that the family of Noah being saved thanks to his having the spirit of Christ. And this fits the context of this chapter- that someone, e.g. a wife, can save her disobedient family by the witness of her spirit. The disobedient 'spirits' were "previously disobedient" which would imply that the witness of the spirit of Christ in Noah actually was succesful, and made them turn to obedience. But the only people Noah got into the ark were his family. So I suggest that he turned them from disobedience to obedience, as a result of the witness of his spirit, his hidden man, the spirit of Christ in him. And this is exactly the context of this chapter- that the believing wife was to witness to her disobedient family by her spiritual way of life, through the spirit within her- and bring them too to salvation in the ark of Christ, as Noah did.

3:21- see on Gal. 3:27; Heb. 10:17,22.

Which is also a true likeness of how baptism does now save you: not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God-

The idea is that baptism in water gives us the gift of the spirit of Christ, which will cleanse our conscience. Hence the reference to how His resurrection enables this. And it is having that spirit which will empower our witness.

Can we know that we have the spirit of Jesus, and that we are living the eternal life, to the point we are confident that “we will be there”? John addresses this question head on. “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him… if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 Jn. 3:19-22). The answer of our conscience is therefore highly significant. Now living in societies as we do, based around shame and guilt, we can condemn ourselves more harshly than God does. Baptism is “the answer (RVmg. ‘appeal’) of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Note how the phrase “toward God” occurs in both passages. We need to reflect more deeply upon what baptism really meant. Just as Romans 6, the classic baptism chapter, is asking the Romans to think back and remember what their baptisms really did for them before God. There we were counted as being ‘in Christ’. God now looks upon us as if we are in Christ, covered with His righteousness. In the court of Divine justice, the fact we have been baptized and had our conscience cleansed is our appeal for justification. And it will be heard. We condemn ourselves for our failures, yes. But on the other hand, do we believe that we really are baptized into Christ, with all that means in terms of how God now sees us? Do we believe rather than merely know… the most basic elements and realities of our Christian faith? I believe we do underneath, but we need to think deeply about all this.

'Not [A] but [B]' can mean, as in several modern languages, 'not so much A but B'. So indeed the filth of the flesh (language used about sin) is washed away in that we are forgiven at baptism; but more importantly, going forward in our lives, we therefore live with a good conscience which only such cleansing can give. Peter again is the parade example. He was forgiven for his denials, and now with good conscience

can appeal to others to accept the Lord's forgiveness. He along with Paul and David are examples of serious sinners who then acted and wrote as if they truly had a good, cleansed conscience.

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ- The resurrection of Christ thus "interrogates our conscience" in all areas of life (1 Pet. 3:21 RVmg.). We can't be passive to it; it's not painless to believe. Or we can understand that it is the Lord's resurrection which released the gift of His Spirit to us. And it is through the work of the Spirit in our hearts that our conscience is cleansed.

3:22 *Who is the one at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, Angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him*- There are repeated hints in this chapter that the believes were getting in trouble with the local authorities. They are urged to submit to those authorities, as unto Christ. And here we are reminded how that is possible- those authorities are subject to Him. Perhaps each of those powers had a representative Angel in the court of Heaven; and they too were subject to Christ. There may also be a swipe at the Jewish theories about Angels and the wrong idea that there are sinful Angels; the Christian should focus instead upon Christ, for in any case, all Angels are subject to Him.

1 PETER CHAPTER 4

4:1- see on Phil. 2:9.

Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh- That He suffered “in the flesh” could be seen as stating the obvious until it is realized that Peter is referring to the way in which he actually saw the flesh of Christ really suffering.

Arm yourselves also with the same mind- The height of this calling is colossal. To think and feel as He did as He hung upon the cross. The very extremity of the calling is what binds us together; we who at least attempt to rise up to it. The appeal is just as in Phil. 2:5- to take on the mind of Christ which He had in His time of dying. The principle of being 'of the same mind' should beg the question 'Of whose mind?'. The answer of course is the Lord. The real basis for unity in practice is not an on paper agreement about theological points, but a sober dedication by each person in Christ to take on the mind of the Master. And moreso, His mind whilst impaled on the stake. The mind that propelled Him, braver and more determined than any man has been, to death itself and beyond.

For he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin- A dead person doesn't sin. And we are in the dead Christ. See on 3:10 *Let him restrain*.

4:2 *You should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh*- The idea is "So that you...". Reflection upon the cross must have a distinct mental impact upon us, if we reflect upon it in sincerity and truth. There is what I would call a crucifixion compulsion; a transforming power in the cross. His sacrifice *must* have an effect upon those who believe it: “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves *with the same mind...* that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Pet. 4:1,2). So often the will of God is associated with the Lord’s death (e.g. Acts 2:23; Lk. 22:22; Mt. 26:42; Jn. 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:9,10; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:17,18). As the Lord’s life and death was devoted to the fulfilment of God’s will and not His own, so we too will have that stamp upon us "forasmuch..." as our Lord did and died as He did.

To the lusts of men, but to the will of God- Lusts and will are effectively parallel in :3 and also in Eph. 2:3 and 1 Jn. 2:17. If we don't do the will of God, we are doing the will of men. And we all like to think that we are somehow different from "men" generally. But we are actually controlled by their will and lusts, unless we do God's will. There is no other choice; we are slaves either to God or men. Paul plays on this logic strongly in Romans 6, presenting baptism as a change of master, just as Israel's Red Sea baptism was a change of master from men to God. We note that later in this chapter, Peter will write that we suffer according to this same "will of God". Living "to the will of God" means living in the path of suffering intended by Him, just as the Lord's death on the cross was the ultimate doing of God's will.

4:3 *For we have spent enough of our past lifetime doing the will of the Gentiles*- Peter, himself a Jew, was writing to believers who had once been very religious Jews, whom he had baptized at Pentecost. He says that their life before conversion to Christ was living as Gentiles do. Indeed, the life of legalism was associated with serious immorality and moral failure. The connection between serious moral failure and legalistic obedience is true to life; we can probably think of many such examples in our own experience. Paul likewise admits to a life of lust before conversion to Christ. See on Tit. 3:3.

When we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries- It's possible that sometimes "fornication" refers to a way of life and thinking rather than just the specific physical actions. Thus 1 Pet. 4:3 speaks of how before conversion "we walked (lived day by day) *in* lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine...". It doesn't mean that all day every day Peter and those brethren had committed fornication; but it was a way of life that got a grip on their personality. And so it is today, although made much worse by the ingenuity of man. That sexual impurity is a state of mind was of course taught by the Lord Himself (Mt. 5:28). Here Peter, in a rare autobiographical comment on his life before conversion, admits that he "walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine… running with them (the Gentiles) to the same excess of riot" (1 Peter 4:3,4). He uses the same Greek word as in Lk. 15:13 regarding the riotous behaviour of the prodigal. He saw himself in that younger son, rejected by the Judaistic elder brother, who would not sit at meat in table fellowship with him. According to other NT allusion, we are to see the prodigal as a symbol of all of us who will ultimately sit at meat with the Father in His house. And yet Peter makes the link plain for all to see.

4:4 *In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, and so speak evil of you- you-* The slanderers accused the Christians of doing exactly what they were doing. A Christian didn't join in some perversion- and those who did then falsely claimed that the Christian had done it. This is psychologically understandable. They wanted others to commit their sins so that they would feel better about them. And when the Christians refused, they still tried to bring them down to their level by falsely stating that in fact, they had done them. And from elsewhere in the letter we know that they were seeking to then get the Christians legally punished for doing the things which they themselves did. This is a psychological classic- transference of guilt from a guilty person to another through slander, realizing that the sin deserves punishment, and therefore demanding that the slandered person be heavily punished.

4:5- see on Lk. 20:25.

Who shall give account- The same term is used of our giving a *logos*, an expression of our innermost intentions, at judgment day (Mt. 12:36; Lk. 16:2; Heb. 13:17). This is enough emphasis for us to conclude that we will indeed say something at judgment. The purpose of judgment is not for the Lord's benefit, but for the sake of our own self knowledge. And our memories will surely be empowered to be able to remember...

To him that is ready to judge the living and the dead- Again Peter implies he expects the Lord's imminent return. The living would be those who are alive at His coming; and the dead would be those responsible to judgment who shall be raised to give an account. Those who urge us to sin are unaware, or forget, that we are not judged by them, but by God at the last day.

4:6 *For to this end was the gospel preached to those now dead*- The dead are those in :5; those who died and will be resurrected to judgment. Several times Peter appeals to the example of those who had gone before and were now dead; Noah, Lot, Abraham, Sarah, the prophets. They were all judged by men as foolish because they refused to act as they did, or slandered them.

That they might be judged according to men in the flesh- The context is of the men of :3 judging the believers who refused to sin along with them. They judged them by slandering them and trying to get them in trouble with the law- for doing the very things they themselves were doing. This happened to the believers of old time.

But live according to God in the spirit- They were judged as good as dead by their contemporaries, who were angry that they refused to sin along with them. But they were spiritually alive to God. And Peter wishes his slandered brethren to realize they were simply going through the experience of so many.

4:7 *But the end of all things is at hand*- Again we see Peter's expectation of the Lord's coming in his generation. The fact this expectation has been preserved by the inspiration process is perhaps to teach us to likewise live in the expectation of the Lord's imminent return; this is indeed part of the Christian faith, to continually live in expectation of His soon coming.

Therefore, be of sound mind and sober in prayer- Literally, 'watching in prayer'. Passover night was to be "a night of watching" (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), strongly suggesting "watching in prayer" (Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:27?). Similarly those who are found "watching" at the Lord's midnight coming (cp. that of the Passover angel) will be found acceptable (Lk. 12:37).

4:8 *Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves*- Love within the Christian community is what is most urgently called for by an awareness that the Lord could come at any time. Why love? Surely because this will be the prime issue which will factor in the outcome of our judgment.

For love covers a multitude of sins- It cannot really be just that by loving, we get covering for our sins. The letters of James and Peter are clearly connected, and the parallel in James is in James 5:20 [see note there]: "He who turns back a sinner from the error of his way, he shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins". Our love for others can lead to *their* sins being covered. This has huge implications; our efforts for others in this regard should consume our lives if indeed we can play a role, account for a certain percentage, in the final equation of human salvation. The Lord is of course the Saviour and not us, but in His wisdom, He has delegated some elements of His scheme to us and our freewill. Thus the faith of a man's friends led to his forgiveness in Mk. 2:5.

4:9 *Be hospitable to each other without complaining*- Peter speaks of the need to use hospitality *without grudging* (1 Pet. 4:9); he foresaw how brotherly love could be shown physically, but with an underlying grudge that in fact we somehow *must* show such love. This is not the "love unfeigned" of which the Scriptures speak. But the context is of :9, about our efforts for others leading to their forgiveness. The hospitality in view may therefore be more than simply giving folk a bed for the night. And :10 goes on to say that such hospitality is part of using the gifts of God's grace for others.

4:10 *According as each has received a gift*- The parable of the talents is clear that each believer is given a gift or talent to use in the Lord's service. This is part of the gift of the Spirit received at baptism. Church structure often leaves individuals with the impression that they are intended to do no more than attend meetings. But we each called to some form of ministry- ministry is not just for those believers who 'choose to go into ministry'. That phrase and concept is very damaging and unhelpful to the mass of believers.

Minister it- We have all been given some gift, and that is to be used in the servanthood / slavery of our Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 4:10). We can mindlessly say that yes, Jesus is Lord, quite forgetting that it implies we are His serving slaves. The magnitude of the ‘slave’ concept in the ecclesia of Christ is easily overlooked, and it was this which made it so different from others.

Among yourselves- The gifts given are specifically intended for usage within the body of Christ. This is why separation from the body is not at all what God intends-

for then how can we minister what God has given us "among yourselves". We cannot be true Christians in isolation from others, just internally assenting to the truths of the Gospel.

As good stewards of the manifold grace of God- The grace of God is “manifold”, using a Greek word which means multi-faceted, many coloured, light split into its various components through a prism (1 Pet. 4:10). The gifts ["grace" means literally 'gift'] which were to be shared were not therefore talents in the sense of various natural abilities; but our refraction further of God's grace to others. And it is this which makes God's grace so many coloured, so rainbow like in beauty.

4:11- see on Rom. 9:17.

If anyone speaks- We have just been told that each man / person has been given a gift and is to minister it. Now we read "If anyone speaks... if anyone ministers". But we are all called to minister. For we have all been given gifts to minister to others. So I do not read this as meaning that one may be called to speak, and another to minister. We are all called to minister, so we are all called to "speak". But *laleo* means just 'to speak' and is at times used about preaching; it doesn't refer to platform speaking specifically.

Let him speak as if it were oracles of God- This is the language of the Old Testament prophets. Those men were not to be looked at as icons from afar, on some level of spirituality far above our own. In all our speaking, which is an integral part of ministering to others with the gifts we have been given (:10), we are to do so as if we are each none less than about prophetic work. This doesn't mean that all that comes from our mouths will be Divinely inspired [hence "*as if it were* oracles of God"], but we are to speak and serve / minister with the same gravity and seriousness the prophets had.

If anyone ministers- Verse 10 is clear that we have each been given gifts which we are to minister.

Let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ- The supply of the Spirit is to be used; we are not to seek to serve / minister to others in our own strength. This is so that *God* and not us will be glorified- as this verse continues to say explicitly.

To whom belongs the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen- A clear allusion to the closing phrases of the Lord's prayer. Those words however are about God, but Peter here applies them to the Lord Jesus; because as he has just written, God is glorified through Christ.

4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange*- Perhaps some thought that Peter's warning of a coming holocaust, based as it was on Old Testament precedent, was "strange" [Greek: 'foreign, an intrusion']. And how many will react to similar warnings made in our last days in just the same way? The Greek word translated "strange" here often refers to the Gentiles- as if Peter is correcting any feeling they may have had that the tribulation predicted would only affect the Gentiles. 'Think it not *strange*, a Gentile thing only- it will affect both you believers and the Gentile world at large'. This is a highly relevant warning to those today who state with such dogmatism that believers will not experience any of the tribulations which are to come upon the surrounding world. A suggestion worth testing is that the sufferings of natural Israel have always been matched simultaneously by difficulties for Israel after the spirit.

Concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you- Peter initially had in mind the coming persecution under Nero. It seems the Spirit of prophecy informed him about this. He seems to reason in :13 that if the believers would endure that fiery trial, then they would be glorified at the Lord's

coming, as if he imagined the second coming as coming immediately once the tribulation had been endured. The Olivet Prophecy speaks similarly. But there was a deferment until our last days. The trial by fire, or literally, by smelting / melting, is referenced in Peter's earlier mention of how faith is like gold tested in fire (1:7). Although the immediate context of Nero's persecution is not ours, we can still take the general principles. Not just in that we too are set to pass through a tribulation of fiery proportions; but in that all our sufferings connect us with the Lord's sufferings, and thereby relate us to His resurrection glory.

4:13 *But insomuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice!*- The purpose of the tribulations of the last days, as well as all our sufferings in whatever generation, will be to make us truly fellowship our Lord's agonizing, to make us know for ourselves that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him". It is fair to assume that those who really try to shoulder their Lord's cross now will not need to go through such an experience in the tribulation of the last days. There are many connections between the experiences of the latter day saints, and the sufferings of Christ. Peter's letters were written to strengthen the faithful in the problems of the AD70 'last days', as well as our own. They are full of reference to Christ's sufferings (e.g. 1 Pet.1:11,19,21-24; 3:18; 4:1). "The fiery trial which is to try you (is cause for rejoicing because it makes you) partakers of Christ's sufferings" (4:13). See on Mk. 13:13 for more evidence that the last generation of believers will particularly fellowship the Lord's sufferings through their experiences in the final tribulation.

That at the revelation of his glory you also may rejoice with exceeding joy- We have shown that our sufferings in the tribulation will associate us with Christ's sufferings- so that the joy on his return will be "exceeding" ! "The time [AD70] is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" [4:17]. Going through the tribulation will effectively be our judgment seat. "The righteous [will] scarcely be saved" [4:18]- spiritual survival during this time will be by the skin of our teeth; as was our Lord's spiritual survival on the cross which we will then fellowship.

4:14 *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed*- "Reproach" is the word used for how the Lord on the cross was reproached. He there is us today in our sufferings. He had such a wide range of sufferings so that none of us need ever feel alone, without anyone who understands or has trodden the path before.

This uses ‘the name of Christ’ as meaning ‘living in or preaching the name of Christ’. The two ideas are so closely related. In the course of this witness, men will ‘speak evil’ of us, and yet in doing so they are speaking evil of the Christ we are so identified with (:4,14). “For his name’s sake they went forth” in obedience to the preaching commission (3 Jn. 7). Because we bear the Lord’s Name by baptism into it, we *are* Christ to this world. Likewise, those in covenant relationship in the Old Testament bore Yahweh’s Name, and were therefore in all ways to act appropriately lest their behaviour “profane My holy name” (Lev. 22:32).

The allusion is to the beatitude that we should rejoice and be blessed / happy if we are reproached [s.w.] for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:11). The Lord said that this identified us with the prophets (Mt. 5:12). And Peter has just made the point that we are as those prophets (see on :11 *As oracles of God*).

Because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you- We have just read that we shall share the Lord's glory if we suffer with Him (:13). There is only one Spirit; the Spirit of Christ and that of God are all the same Spirit. The present tense suggests that just as the Spirit of glory shall rest upon us at the last day, when the Lord's glorious resurrection becomes ours, so even now it rests upon us. The activity

of the Spirit in our lives now is a foretaste of the future glorification by the Spirit at the last day. In this sense Paul argues that the possession of the Spirit is an earnest, a guarantee, of future salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). The 'resting upon us' recalls the cloud of glory resting upon the Israelites after their Red Sea baptism and as they travelled through the wilderness. Its presence was the guarantee that they were being led on a journey which would climax in entry to the promised land. The allusion to the resting of that cloud is appropriate; because Peter's point is that the Spirit which shall glorify us at the last day is active in our lives right now. They were now the true tabernacle; the temple cult was already obsolete.

4:15 *For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer*- That this needed to be said is an indicator of how seriously low they had fallen- these one time 'righteous' Orthodox Jews, now Christian converts. But as in all the pastoral letters, it is noteworthy that Peter doesn't demand the disfellowship of such persons. Rather he seeks their reformation, and urges the eldership to teach soundly and truly care for the flock.

Or as a meddler in other men's matters- We shouldn't suffer as murderers or thieves… nor as meddlers in others' matters. Meddling in others' matters is put on the same level as murder and theft! Time and again, we expect there to be a dichotomy made by the Lord between the sinners and the righteous, the good guys and the bad guys. But before Him, we are all sinners. Thus to the prostitute kneeling before Him, He assures her that her sins are forgiven; but He turns to the 'righteous' Simon and severely rebukes him for a lack of love and for being too judgmental (Lk. 7:36-50).

4:16 *But if anyone suffers as a Christian*- Peter has just spoken of how our sufferings are those of the Lord (:13). The idea is that we suffer as Christ suffered, as one of the Christ people, the people who are focused upon Him, whose lives are bound up in His life.

Let him not be ashamed- This is rather like Timothy being told to not let anyone despise his youth. It is we ourselves who control whether or not we are 'successfully' despised or ashamed.

But let him glorify God in this name- "This name" is a rather odd construction, until we recall that Peter was told not to "preach in this name" (Acts 4:17; 5:28). Constantly, Peter is making his pastoral appeals based on his own experience of the Lord, both in His life, and also in the way He had worked with Peter after His ascension. We should do likewise, with words and actions shot through with reference to our own personal experience of the Lord Jesus.

4:17 *For the time of judgment begins at the house of God*- Another reference to Peter's persuasion that the Lord's return in judgment was imminent, and was even beginning in the form of the Neronian persecution. See on :12. Peter has earlier laboured the point that the believers are the house / temple of God. He is saying that the AD70 judgments upon the temple are about to come- but the "first" or most important thing to God is *our* judgment, since we are His people and Orthodox Judaism were not.

And if we are judged first- The Greek *proton* doesn't have to mean 'first' in a chronological sense. And "first begin" in the AV is wrong; for there is no Greek word here corresponding to "begin". I have just suggested that the emphasis is on the fact that judgment is beginning; not that it begins first with the believers and then with the world. Indeed the Biblical pictures of the time around the Lord's coming would suggest that the world is judged first, and then the believers; with the unworthy being sent back into a world which is then already experiencing judgment. Most importantly, from God's point of view, *proton*, is the judgment of His people; the

punishment of the unbelievers is not something He takes pleasure in nor is unduly eager about.

What shall be the outcome of those that do not obey the gospel of God?- The word for "obey not" is used nearly all 16 times it occurs of those *Jews* who refused to accept the Gospel. And Peter has used it in this way in 2:7,8. The Jewish temple and the Judaist system associated with it was to be judged, but more important than that, "first", would be God's judgment of His people- the true house of God.

4:18- see on Mt. 14:30; 2 Pet. 3:15.

And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? - The judgment of their persecutors was not to make these Jewish converts feel that they were justified just because their persecutors were evil. Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. Indeed, they shouldn't be. For Christian believers aren't good people. We are saved by grace alone. The righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18). The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17). The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that He hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4). We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay".

Peter is here quoting, liberally and mixing quotation with interpretation, from the LXX of Prov. 11:31. Peter never introduces his quotations as Paul does, with an "It is written...". And he always quotes from the LXX, and often in a rather loose way. Peter was illiterate, and would know the LXX quotations by memory, recollecting how they had been read to him, rather than having read them with his own eyes and memorized them. And this shows in the way he quotes the OT- although the whole process and final product was Divinely inspired.

4:19 *Therefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God*- Peter writes so often of suffering, because he had personally seen the Lord's final sufferings (5:1), and was for ever under the indelible impression of His death. Those who suffer according to God's will are those who suffer with Christ there (:13). No suffering is outside the will of God; there is no cosmic satan who has some 'will' in our suffering. And this is a great comfort.

Commit their souls in doing well- Throughout this letter, Peter alludes to various details of the physical crucifixion. He has alluded to the wheals / "stripes", the lifting up on the tree stake, and other details. Here the allusion is to the Lord's outbreathing His Spirit, His last breath, to the Father; commending His spirit into the Father's hands. And Peter is saying we should do even that, in lives of "doing well".

To a faithful creator- Because Yahweh God was Israel's creator, therefore He ought to have been their King (Is. 43:15). If we really believe His creative authority over us, then He will rule in every aspect of our lives. Realizing that God is a "faithful creator" should inspire us to commit the keeping of our lives to Him in time of suffering (1 Pet. 4:19).

1 PETER CHAPTER 5

5:1 *The elders among you I urge (I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ-* Peter was present at the cross. After the denials, knowing his condemnation, where did Peter go after his denials? Probably he could quite easily have also gone and hung himself- for he was of that personality type. But instead he went to the cross- for he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 5:1), and his words and writing consistently reflect the language of Golgotha's awful scene. There, in that personal, hidden observation of the cross, probably disguised in the crowd, not daring to stand with John and the women, his conversion began. Then his love for his Lord became the more focused. Now he could *do* nothing- and his thinking had been so full of *doing* until that point. All he could do was to watch that death and know his own desperation, and somehow believe in grace. "Who his own self bare our sins in his body up on to the tree" (2:24 RVmg.) suggests the watching Peter reflecting, as the Lord's body was lifted up vertical, that his sins of denial and pride were somehow with his Lord, being lifted up by Him. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18) could well have been written by Peter with a glance back at the way that after his denials, he the unjust went to the crucifixion scene and reflected just this. When in 5:1 he comments that he witnessed the sufferings of Christ, he could be saying that therefore these thoughts were his thoughts as he witnessed it: the just suffering for him the unjust, to bring him back to God.

Peter was a "witness" of the sufferings of Christ. The same word is used to characterize his witness of preaching in Acts 1:8; 5:32; 10:39. The Greek word doesn't convey that he simply saw the Lord's sufferings, but that he saw-and-therefore-spoke it. There is something in the cross that cannot be held passively once it has been seen / understood. It *must* be spoken out. Having described the physicalities of the cross, Is. 52:15; 53:1 continue: "*So* shall he sprinkle many nations… for that which had not been [i.e. the like of which had never been] told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard [ever before the like of] shall they consider. Who hath believed our preaching (Heb.)? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" by our preaching? There is an undeniable link between the Lord's sufferings and the preaching of them. They are in themselves an imperative to preach them. *So* shall He sprinkle many nations with His blood of atonement and new covenant, in that His sufferings would provoke a world-wide ("to all nations" cp. "many nations") witness to them by those who knew them. Paul sums it up when he speaks of "the preaching of (Gk. 'which is') the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18). This is how essential the link between preaching and the cross. Peter's witness to men is a living exemplification of this.

Who is also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed)- Our eternal future will be about God's glory being revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). And yet we are even now partakers in that glory which shall be revealed through us in the future. In this we see the connection between our present spirit of witness, and the eternal life. We 'have' eternal life in the sense that we live out now the essence of the life we will eternally live. Our eternal future will be all about revealing Christ, who is the glory of God; and this therefore is to be the essence of our lives today. Which is all why 'preaching' isn't an optional extra to the Christian life, something some are into but not others; the essence of revealing / manifesting Christ is to be the essence of our whole existence. And further, the fact we will do this to perfection in God's future Kingdom is seen by

Paul as the ultimate encouragement for us, on account of which we can count all the sufferings of this life as nothing (Rom. 8:18).

We have been called to "glory" in possessing Divine nature in the Kingdom (2 Pet.1:3,4). Obviously we do not fully have that now. Yet we are firmly connected with that hope; Peter earlier described himself as "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" in us. Likewise we have been credited with righteousness now through Christ (Rom. 9:30), yet our reward in the Kingdom will be a "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8).

5:2 *Tend the flock of God*- The Lord's commission to Peter to "Feed my sheep" is now passed on by Peter to all pastors, whom he pointedly describes as "fellow elders", as if to safeguard against any possible misunderstanding to the effect that he was the senior, special elder. They were *all* to follow his path and thereby achieve the same for others. It is only the typical perversity of the Catholic church which makes them read Peter as the very opposite: as a father figure unapproachable in achievement by any other. The way Peter calls Christ the *petra* of the ecclesia (1 Pet. 2:8) is surely to warn against any view of himself as exclusively the rock.

Which is among you- The reminder is that the pastors themselves were amongst the flock, also sheep of the good shepherd. They were among the flock (:1), and the flock among them (:2).

Not reservedly but willingly, according to the will of God; not for dishonest gain, but eagerly- God's will for the salvation of all the sheep was and is to be the "will" ["willingly"] of the pastors. We will not therefore care for others only in return for material payment or some other benefit; His constant will for the salvation of His people is to be ours.

5:3 *Neither lord it over those entrusted to you*- This phrase 'Lord it' is surely chosen to remind them that the flock had Jesus as their only Lord. Pastors were to set an example which encouraged them to accept His Lordship- not theirs.

But make yourselves examples to the flock- Making ourselves examples doesn't mean posing nor hypocrisy, but rather acting in such a way that consciously sets ourselves up as examples. This was particularly necessary in illiterate communities, where the only real access to the word was to see it made flesh in other Christians. The same word is used in Jn. 20:25 about the "print" of the nails- another perhaps unconscious allusion to Peter's experience of the Lord's sufferings. Elders are not to be domineering but to be examples, *typoi* (1 Pet. 5:3); but we are all *typoi* to each other (1 Thess. 1:7).

5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested*- A reminder that they themselves were but sheep having a shepherd.

You shall receive the crown of glory that does not fade away- The glory of human leadership fades away. They were to serve others with no expectation of reward now, neither materially nor in terms of glory in the eyes of others.

5:5- see on 1 Pet. 3:1.

Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder men. Yes, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another- James and John had desired the senior places in the Lord's Kingdom. "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren", and we can imagine Peter to have been the most indignant. For he had thought then that he loved the Lord more than any of the others (cp. Mt. 26:33; Jn. 21:15). "But (in admonition) Jesus called them unto him"

and taught that only in the world did men worry about who was greatest and mind that others were over them, and went on to teach that the true greatness was in humility: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life…" (Mt. 20:25-28). These words were lived out in epitome at the last supper- and again, Peter had objected to it. He had failed to grasp the Lord's teaching here. And having learnt the lesson finally, he can teach others that they like their Lord should not 'lord it' over their brethren, but rather be clothed with humility after the pattern of the kneeling Lord in the upper room (1 Pet. 5:3,5). "Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another" is a clear reference to the Lord's humility at the last supper. But it had been Peter who didn't perceive it. Now, it is as if he pleads with his readers not to be as slow as he had been to perceive the supremacy of humility.

"Gird yourselves" is as in GNB "put on the apron of humility, to serve one another". The allusion is not only to the Lord's upper room washing of the disciples' feet- which Peter had so strongly objected to at the time. The allusion is to Phil. 2, where Paul also alludes to this, and goes on to make the point that the Lord Jesus "put on" the mind of a servant, and humbled Himself- and was therefore exalted. And this is exactly what Peter goes on to say in :6. Peter is presenting the Lord in the upper room and on the cross as our pattern. That is exactly what the Lord asked us to do- to do to others as He did to us there. And Peter now understands this, when at the time he had resisted it. As will be noted on :6, Peter and Paul often allude to each other; in this case, surely Peter has Col. 3:12 in mind: "as God's elect and beloved, put on sensitivity, kindness, humility, meekness". Peter also talks about the believers as "elect".

A relationship with a God like ours really ought to humble *us*. He, the Almighty, has asked us to humble ourselves so that we might walk with Him, as if He is so far beneath the petty pride of man (Mic. 6:8 mg.). This really ought to humble us. The whole purpose of the Gospel is to bring down the mountains of human pride and lift up the valleys of those who lack any self-respect (Is. 40:4), thereby making an equality of attitude amongst God's people. The vision of the Kingdom in Is. 2:2-4 was used as an appeal for *humility* amongst Israel (2:10-12). We have been clothed with God's righteousness (Is. 61:10; Rev. 3:18), and therefore we should be clothed with humility too, as our response to this (1 Pet. 5:5).

For God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble- The quotation is from Prov. 3:34 LXX. Solomon's Proverbs so often allude to his father David's Psalms, in this case to Ps. 84:11, where God "gives grace" (s.w.) to those who "walk uprightly". Those who walk upright before God are those who walk down, humble and lowly in their own eyes. This is the great paradox. That true greatness is in humility. "God resists the proud" is a phrase worth reflecting upon. Who wants God against them... but God is passionately against the proud, and resistive to their prayers. Humility is so important to Him.

We learn from Gal. 2:9 that Peter "perceived the grace that was given unto" Paul. Peter was familiar with Paul's writings, and surely he is here alluding to Paul as a parade example of a man to whom grace was given. For Paul uses the same phrase so often in speaking of the grace given to him, "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8)- the list is impressive: Rom. 12:3,6; 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 3:2,7,8; 2 Tim. 1:9). Eph. 3:2-8 is the key passage, where having described himself as the worst sinner, worse than all other Christian believers, Paul says three times that grace has been given to him. Again we see that humility is related to realizing the extent of our sinfulness, and feeling that we are the worst of all.

5:6- see on Mk. 9:35.

Therefore, humble yourselves- God wants to exalt us at the last day, and so His hand, His Spirit or action in our lives, will be humbling us now. And we are to willingly merge with that process, realizing that this life is all about being brought down, so that we might be lifted up to His glory at the last day. The ideas are very similar to what we have in Phil. 2, where we are asked to have the same mind which was in Jesus on the cross, who humbled Himself [s.w. Phil. 2:8] so that He might be exalted. So whilst self humbling is a conscious act, we are confirmed in it by God's hand. The same Greek words are used in the parallel James 4:10, also written to Jewish believers: "Humble yourselves *in the sight of the Lord* and He shall lift you up" (s.w. "exalt you"). The parallel is between God's hand, and "the sight of the Lord". We are assisted in the self humiliation process by recalling that we live life in His sight; the Lord is watching us closely, and a sense of His presence should inspire our self humbling.

When Peter writes that Paul's letters contain "things hard to be understood", this is no mere throw away comment. As the Divinely inspired word of God, the Bible doesn't have throw away comments. We learn from that comment that Peter was familiar with Paul's writings. Peter and Paul appear to often allude to each others' writings; such was the respect between them. Here, "humble yourselves" can be understood as an allusion to Phil. 2, where the Lord humbled Himself and became obedient to death; and was then exalted. There is no button on the side of our heads which we can press to become more humble. Self humbling, therefore, requires some greater force and hand than our own. And the connection with Phil. 2 suggests that that is in our sustained reflection upon the Lord's self humbling in His death, and our conscious identity with it.

But it is hard to consciously humble ourselves. There is no button on the side of our head which we can press, we cannot place our hand on our own heads and push ourselves down. But Peter has in mind the Lord's comments about self humbling in the Gospels: "When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that has invited you comes, he may say to you: Friend, go up higher. Then shall you have glory in the presence of all that sit to eat with you. For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 14:10,11). We show our self humbling specifically at the communion meal. Conviction of our own sinfulness should result in our feeling that we truly deserve the lowest place. Paul modelled this, feeling "chief of sinners", "less than the least" of all believers. If we have not had this deep sense, that I am the worst of all, "the lowest..."... then we have some travelling left to do. And we demonstrate this attitude at the breaking of bread. To use that meeting to exclude others... is a sad reflection of the fact that those who do so have not yet been brought to their knees. To take the lowest seat in church life reinforces humility in that we are aware that others *appear to be* worse sinners, or less spiritually mature, than ourselves. But let the cross convict us of our sin. If we maintain that conviction even in the presence of others, then the humility is reinforced; it is not just a recognition made on the cusp of emotion.

Likewise the parable of the tax collector and publican must also be in view here. He "went home rendered righteous rather than the other. For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:14). The publican was so obviously insincere, that the publican might well have failed to put himself beneath that man. But he really felt he was the world's worst sinner, even worse than the obvious hypocrite in church next to him: "God, be merciful to me, the

sinner" (Lk. 18:13). As in Lk. 14, we see that being physically next to weak fellow believers in church is in fact the litmus test of our feeling that we are indeed "chief of sinners". Even Paul did not deny the Corinthians access to the Lord's table. And if we have truly been convicted as feeling that we are the worse sinner... then we will never practice a closed table.

Under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time- "The might hand of God" is quoting from Dt. 3:24 LXX. The context is of Moses apparently seeking to resist that "mighty hand" by insisting that he enter the promised land, when he had been told that he could not do so because of his sin: "Lord God, thou hast begun to shew to thy servant thy strength, and thy power, and thy mighty hand... I will therefore go over and see this good land that is beyond Jordan" (Dt. 3:24,25). This request, or demand, was not granted. So it seems Moses is being cited as an example of one who did not humble himself under God's might hand- because he came to recalculate and rerenegotiate his sin, in his own mind. Therefore to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand is to recognize our sins and accept that we are unworthy to enter the Kingdom.

5:7- see on Phil. 4:6.

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you- The "anxiety" was related to being refugees in Turkey, worried about money and an uncertain future. Peter is roughly quoting from Ps. 55:22 LXX, which was written in the context of David's care / anxiety when facing the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba. Just as conviction of sin humbles us (:6,7), so we are to cast upon the Lord all our anxiety about salvation, or about the consequences of sin. Which ultimately refers to death. We do so believing that the Lord is indeed the sinner's friend, and our sin has been dealt with..Ps. 55:22 AV has: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee". The idea is that He will bear both you and your burden. And again we are to understand the ultimate burden as sin: "mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38:4). The word "burden" is very often used in the Old Testament for the burden of a word of condemnation from God [e.g. "The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap" (Is. 17:1). The Lord's words clearly encourage us to shed that burden through acceptance of Him: "My burden is light" (Mt. 11:30). This burden, this fear of condemnation, is our subconscious, unspoken, unarticulated anxiety or "care". And it has been dealt with. And this is why, in the context of :6, we can be humbled by this. For what sinner like you and me cannot be humbled by the experience of forgiveness and assured salvation?

Simple faith that "He cares for you" ought to remove anxiety; Peter is clearly alluding to the sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:25). Just as the illiterate Peter appears to summarize Old Testament quotations as an illiterate person would, so we could take this as his summary of Mt. 6:25. The Greek text makes a seamless connection between humbling ourselves, and casting anxiety upon God. Much worry about material survival is a result of pride...

KJV is correct: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you". The idea is that our care becomes His care and concern. And our care or concern, ultimately, is for the forgiveness of our sins, our fear of condemnation at the last day. And this has truly been dealt with by Him. This is the message of 1 Jn. 4, that fear is associated with condemnation, and God's love in the gift of Jesus has dealt with that. So that we can assure our hearts before Him at the last day and be confident in His salvation. Our care, our ultimate psychological, subconscious concern or anxiety about

condemnation, about death and its meaning for me... has been dealt with. If we cast that upon Him. For our sins were laid "upon Him". We cast our care [Gk. 'distractions'] upon Him, but our sins were laid "upon Him" (Is. 53:6) on the cross. Perhaps the idea is that if we lay our sins upon Him, then we have no other 'cares of this world'. We are in that sense without a care in the world, if the burden of our sin is laid upon Him.

5:8 *Be sober, be watchful*- They were to "be watchful" (1 Peter 5:8 RV), watching unto prayer as the end approaches (4:7), as Peter had not been watchful in the garden and had earned the Lord's rebuke for going to sleep praying (Mt. 26:40,41). They were to learn from his mistake. Their watchfulness was to be because the devil was prowling around, seeking whom he could desire (5:8). This was exactly the case with Peter: Satan desired to have him, he should have prayed for strength but didn't do so sufficiently (Lk. 22:31). He was warning his brethren that they were in exactly the situation he had been in, a few hours before he went into that fateful High Priest's house.

Your adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour- This fits with Peter's concern that the Jewish Christian exiles are living within a very critical society eager to find fault with them; and the 'devouring' in view would be the fiery trial of the upcoming persecution of Christians by Nero (4:12). Pliny records how Christians were asked to make a threefold denial of Christ (*Epistles* 10.97). It has been suggested that the account of Peter's threefold denials of Christ has been included in the Gospel records as an encouragement to those whose faith failed them that still there was a way back to restoration with the Lord Jesus, just as there had been for Peter. When Peter encourages his persecuted brethren to resist the "roaring lion" of Roman / Jewish persecution, he is therefore to be seen as writing against a background in which he had actually failed the very test which his brethren were facing. Yet he can therefore even more powerfully encouraged them, because he had also experienced the Lord's restoring grace.

It's maybe significant that the Septuagint translates "going to and fro" in Job 1:7 with the word *peripatei* – and we find the same word in 1 Pet. 5:8 about the adversary of the early Christians 'going about' seeking them – a reference to the agents of the Roman and Jewish systems.

5:9 *Stand firm in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brothers*- Strength to endure is given by the encouragement of the example of others. This is exactly why we have the concept of church, of life together- because especially in illiterate society, teaching and encouragement would largely be by direct observation of the example of other believers. See on :3. "Stand firm" is "resist" in James 4:7: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". The idea is that if the Christians resisted the persecution, then it would be removed from them- presumably by the Lord's return. The fact He didn't return in the first century would suggest that the early Christian community did not resist as expected. But we can take the principle- that our sufferings are not as unique as we may feel. The "same sufferings" will be experienced by others; indeed 2 Cor. 1:4-8 seems to argue that suffering does repeat in form amongst believers, exactly so that the believers may minister encouragement to each other.

Who are in the world- Throughout the rest of the Roman empire. These Jewish converts were to take encouragement and inspiration from their Gentile brethren, whom they might have been tempted to despise.

5:10 *And the God of all grace*- "Grace" means 'gift, and it is to the gift of the Spirit which Peter now refers.

Who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while- Peter opened the letter with a reference to how the calling of God is worked out in our lives through the operation of His Spirit.

Shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you- These are all internal issues, relating to internal psychological, spiritual strengthening. The words are elsewhere used about the internal strengthening of the Spirit.

5:11 *To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen*- An allusion to the concluding phrase of the Lord's prayer. The point was that they were to allow the Lord to have dominion in their hearts now, because that is effectively living the Kingdom life- for He shall eternally have dominion over us and all things. In this sense we "have eternal life" as John's Gospel expresses it.

5:12 *By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him*- The sheer complexity of human persons means that we cannot ultimately judge them. We see our brother's various personas, sometimes his true, reborn self coming out; and our images of others derive as much from ourselves as from them. It amazes me that we humans succeed in accurately communicating with each other as much as we do. The more one perceives the complexity of the person and the personas whom we meet, the more apparent it is that we cannot claim to be their judge. And the more evident it is that the judgments which human beings constantly make about each other are so superficial and often inevitably false. Further, if we truly believe that we ourselves are in Christ and "impute" His person as being the essence of our real self, then we must likewise impute His righteousness to our brethren. Thus Peter could say that he 'imputed' Silvanus to be a "faithful brother" (1 Pet. 5:12). If only we could consistently live out this truth, then all friction between brethren would be a thing of the past.

I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it!- The whole letter has spoken of God's grace / spiritual gift at work in us, seeking to move us onwards towards final salvation. And we are to realize that this is indeed the ultimate truth of life.

5:13 *She that is in Babylon*- If a code name for Rome, then this would indicate Peter was present in Rome at some stage, and this would nicely explain his allusions to Paul's letter to the Romans. But "Babylon" is also a title for Jerusalem in the prophets and later in Revelation. He may be reminding these Jewish Christians, exiled from Jerusalem, that there were still faithful believers in Jerusalem.

Elect together with you, greets you, and so does Marcus my son- The letter opens with the point that our election or calling operates through the Spirit, and Peter has urged his readers amongst the Jewish Christian exiles to perceive how the Spirit has continued the salvation process with them through their experiences. But it operates according to how it operated from the beginning, when we were first elected or chosen. But we are not the only ones chosen- Gentile believers in Rome, or perhaps other Jewish Christians back in Jerusalem from where they had fled, were also just as much part of the Spirit's ongoing plan and process of operation. This is the unity of the Spirit- the same Spirit operating in our lives is also operating in those of our brethren from whom we may be somewhat distanced, and whom we may be tempted to despise.

We note that Peter had a believing wife, and here we read that he had a believing son. He was therefore well qualified as an elder.

5:14 *Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all that are in Christ-* Peace was a highly relevant wish for these refugee brethren. But that peace was from the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation with God through Christ.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2 PETER

2 PETER

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 PETER CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those that have obtained the same precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ*- Peter progresses in his humility from calling himself "an apostle of Jesus" (1 Pet. 1:1) to adding "a servant and an apostle". Growing humility should characterize all spiritual growth. He saw faith as what was "obtained"; even faith is the gift of God in that some are called and others are not (Eph. 2:8; 2 Thess. 3:2). The Greek for "obtained" is the same word used for receiving a lot cast, when many other words could have been used. We sense in Peter at the end of his life a deep awareness that all is of grace, and we respond to that grace in faith, but thereby even faith is a gift, *charis*, grace of God. That faith is in the reality of righteousness imputed to us in Christ, on which basis we can be humbly confident of future salvation. If we do really believe it, we cannot be idle in this knowledge of Christ; it will elicit in us a response (:8 RV).

1:2 *Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*- This was no mere standard greeting; Peter believed that his prayerful wish for his readership would be fulfilled in them appreciating the grace hinted at in :1, and having an ever multiplying peace with God. This assurance of grace and peace is from knowing the Father and Son in the Hebrew sense of 'knowing' a person, i.e. having a relationship with them, rather than growing in incremental knowledge of theology.

1:3 *Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the precise and correct knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue*- The grace explained on :1 is God's power to us; the Spirit is both the power of God and also His work within us, empowering us to have "all things" required for the spiritual life. The precise knowledge of Him doesn't mean that the more theory we acquire, the more power we have. For Peter's audience would have included many illiterate folk, whose access to the Old Testament scrolls was limited, and who only heard the earliest New Testament documents read to them. The knowledge in view is therefore that of relationship, as noted on :2. Indeed the Greek is better rendered "acknowledgment"; it is the recognition of God's power at work in us, and an openness to receive all the empowerment He gives, which is so critical. God's Spirit power works through His calling us; as noted on :1, we "obtained... faith" because we were called to it. And the end result of God's system of calling some by grace is to His glory by us in marvel and thankfulness.

1:4 *Whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust*- Just as "faith" is "obtained" or granted (:1), so too the promises which form the basis of the new covenant are likewise "granted" by the power of the Spirit (:3). The preciousness of the faith we have been given (:1; 1 Pet. 1:7)

connects with the preciousness of the promises in which we have faith. The precious "faith" given is therefore specifically faith / belief in the precious promises. Whilst on one hand God will not force people to believe, on the other hand, our faith is so weak that without God's involvement in it we shall never believe enough.

The context here is of the new life possible in the power of the Spirit. The great and precious promises could refer to the promises of the Holy Spirit. Or the plural "promises" may be an intensive plural for the one special promise, of the Spirit. Peter's initial audience were those he had baptized at Pentecost, urging them then to accept the "promise" of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). The Lord had promised the Spirit several times, and Paul likewise refers to the promise of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13). Acts 2:33 had also made the connection clear between promise and Spirit: "He has been raised to the right side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit, as he had promised". It was and is these promises of the Spirit which empower us to overcome "lust". The land promises to Abraham do not of themselves contain that promise.

The very fact we have received the promises should mean that therefore we separate ourselves "from the corruption that is in the world". We will be happy to have a light hold on possession of property, knowing that this earth is ours, it's just that for now, we are just passing through it, surveying it, after the pattern of Abraham. Yet the corruption of lust has overtones of immorality, which we noted on 1 Peter were a problem for the Jewish converts.

The past tense "having escaped" suggests that partaking in the Divine nature is something we now experience. Peter will soon use the same word, again in the past tense, to speak of how we "have escaped" from the world (2:18,20). Those who have escaped are "partakers". The same word is used by Peter in describing himself as a "partaker of the glory" (1 Pet. 5:1). Insofar as we escape the corrupting lusts of the world, we partake right now in the "Divine nature". This is hard to define if we isolate the phrase, but it could be summarized as the essence of God, what by nature He stands for, His Name. And :5-7 go on to define what the characteristics of God's essential nature really are- the various aspects of the Spirit which we can now have in our own spirit. And we partake in those things as we disassociate or end our partaking / fellowshipping with the world of lust and corruption; we partake in His Spirit as we stop our partaking in the flesh. "The Divine nature" is put as the opposite of "the corruption... through lust". The idea is as in Heb. 12:10, of being right now "partakers in His holiness". The phrase broadly parallels Paul's idea of receiving God's holy Spirit into our hearts.

Partaking of Divine nature is therefore ongoing now. It is not correct to think that we live now as any other secular person does, but with our baptism guaranteeing some huge change to Divine nature for us at the Lord's return. We are on a process and path of

partaking of that nature now, although it will be physically and materially expressed in the change of nature required for us to become immortal.

1:5 *Yes and for this very cause you on your part should show all diligence*- We are now partaking in Divine "nature" (:4). The essential idea of the Greek word for "nature" is that of growth; for God is His Spirit, He is dynamic. We are therefore, "for this very cause", to experience ongoing growth, with the various aspects of spirituality reinforcing each other as we grow. The spiritual characteristics now listed are the things of the "Divine nature" (:4) which we now partake in. "Diligence" in Greek carries the idea of speed, haste and urgency. This would fit with the reasoning we will encounter in chapter 3- that the sooner we develop spiritually, the sooner the Lord will come.

To your faith add virtue, and to virtue, knowledge- This cannot mean that we consciously plan our own growth by adding characteristics to those developed earlier. Life doesn't work like that, nor does development of character and personality. If the idea was that we progressively add things to our own personality then a different Greek word would surely have been used; the word is usually translated 'to minister to'. The idea is that someone ministers or adds to another. Peter uses a form of the word in 1 Pet. 4:11 to describe how God "gives" or "adds" in order for us to have the ability to serve Him. Vine comments: "The verb originally means to bear the expense of a chorus, which was done by a person selected by the state, who was obliged to defray all the expenses of training and maintenance. In the New Testament the word has lost this technical sense, and is used in the general sense of supplying or providing". It is used nearly always about the ministering or supply of the Spirit to us (2 Cor. 9:10; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2:19). Our partaking in these things of the Divine nature is of course our choice, and yet the Spirit is operative in leading us on this path of development. The Spirit of God is His mind, His way of thinking, what He is by nature; so partaking in His nature will be through the gift and operation of His Spirit. And a synthesis develops whereby one spiritual characteristic leads to another.

The "virtue" we are to have is a reflection of God's "virtue" in calling us (:3); and that calling was by grace, energy expended in order to intervene in our lives by grace and seek to lead us to salvation. It is that "virtue" we are asked to have.

There is a great emphasis by Peter on the need for "knowledge" to overcome the coming tribulation: 1 Pet.3:7; 2 Pet.1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18; an impressive list. By all means compare this with Dan. 12:10, which prophecies a sudden jump forward in understanding God's word by the faithful of the last days. But 'knowledge' in its Hebraic sense refers to relationship; and it would have been difficult for an illiterate readership to amass technical knowledge. Peter himself was likely illiterate; Peter’s confidence in preaching to the wise of this world in his *a-grammatos* way (see on Acts 4:13) is continued in the way his letters stress that the only true knowledge is that of Christ (2 Pet. 1:5,6; 3:18). He was writing in response to the Gnostic heresy that *gnosis*,

knowledge, enlivens the eternal spark within man until a man's knowledge becomes his 'immortal soul'. Peter didn't leave this for the more erudite to combat. Like an illiterate peasant farmer unashamedly challenging atheistic evolution, Peter powerfully made his point.

1:6 *And to your knowledge self-control, and to your self-control patience, and to your patience, reverence toward God*- As noted on :5, this process is not consciously controlled by the believer, but is the path of operation taken by God's Spirit for those who are open to it. There is no chronological sense here- otherwise it would be a case of having self-control and patience before having any reverence toward God. The sense rather is of a symbiotic growth towards spiritual maturity.

1:7 *And to your reverence toward God, brotherly kindness, and to your brotherly kindness, love*- Relationship with God is reflected in relationship with others, especially our brethren, as John's writings often make clear. We are not able to claim a relationship with God whilst ignoring our brethren. The fruit [singular] of the Spirit is love, love manifested in all the various ways we have listed in the descriptions of the "fruit of the Spirit". And here likewise, we are not reading of sequential, chronological development, in which "love" is not supplied into the mix until the end of the process; rather, the entire symbiotic relationship which comprises our spirituality is summarized in love.

Our experience of tribulation leads to the development of patience, then real hope of salvation, and above all, as the final stage of maturity, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). It is the work of the Spirit within us which matures us towards the final maturity of love. Here, 2 Pet. 1:5-7 describes a similar upward spiral of chronological development, again culminating in brotherly kindness and then, love. And again it is the work of the Spirit which effects this work.

1:8- see on 3 Jn. 11.

For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the precise and correct knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ- "In the... knowledge" is better "unto the... knowledge". By living in the Spirit, and developing every aspect of the characteristics which comprise "the Divine nature", we come to 'know Christ' in the sense of relationship with Him. And that point of mature relationship is "love"; and it is not a relationship for the sake of it, but like any good relationship, ours with Jesus has fruit, it motivates and inspires to action and activity, rather than being idle in our knowledge / relationship with the Lord Jesus. And there is an upward spiral in it all; if the fruits of the Spirit abound in us, then they in turn make us fruitful in our knowledge / relationship with our Lord Jesus. This is the secret to spiritual growth; and this is a window onto quite how the human Lord Jesus could be as morally perfect as God.

1:9- see on Lk. 17:12.

For he that lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins- If we lack spiritual fruit, we have forgotten our cleansing from sin. The implication is that an awareness of our cleansing urges us in gratitude toward spiritual growth. To not 'see' the forgiveness of past sins is to be short sighted, to live seeing only what is immediately before our vision. And that is the sad state of the majority of people. The Jewish converts to whom Peter was writing had forgotten that they were serious sinners, forgiven by grace, and could not 'see' the significance of their baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Peter in preaching to them in Acts 2 had laboured the need for forgiveness; and now he is writing to those same converts many years later, sad that they had lost sight of that urgency for cleansing which they had initially had. The moment of cleansing from sin was on the cross (Heb. 1:3 s.w.). The Lord's cross failed to speak to them as it once had.

1:10 *Wherefore brothers, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure*- We were called and chosen from the beginning, by pure grace. But this is not to say that one man is zapped for salvation whilst another is not, and there is no further say in the matter. We must "make sure" that calling by living appropriately to the fact we have been saved by grace. The way to do that was to focus on the development of spirituality as just mentioned in :5-7.

For if you do these things, you shall never stumble- The "things" in view are the "things" of :8, the spiritual attributed of :5-7. If we live in the spirit of those things, in the upward spiral of spirituality which we discussed on :5, then we will not have the opportunity to stumble in our walk. This again is a window onto how the Lord did not stumble in His path. He gave Himself over fully to the path of spirituality, whereby one aspect reinforces and elicits others; and so the opportunity to stumble arose with far less force than it does in the life of the immature person who tries to fight each temptation with steel will and knuckles white with the tension of attempting self-control in our own strength.

1:11 *For thus shall be richly supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*- Entering the Kingdom is a phrase commonly on the Lord's lips in the Gospels. Jn. 3:5 teaches that we can only enter the Kingdom if we are born of the Spirit, and it is that work of the spirit which has been in view throughout 2 Peter 1 so far. But we must play our part, doing the things (:10) which the Spirit leads us to.

Perhaps the richness or abundance of entry implies that there will be different degrees of reward in the Kingdom. Are these not a reflection of the different levels which men have served God on in this life? One star will shine brighter than another; one will rule over five cities, another over two. There is entry into the Kingdom, and an ‘abundant’

entry (AV). Or the idea may simply be that the final moment of entry into the Kingdom will be the highest exemplification of the Lord's abundant or rich grace toward us.

1:12 *Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth which is with you*- One of the themes in Peter's second letter, written as it was at the very end of his life (2 Pet. 1:14), was that of the need to "remember" the words of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 1:12,13,15; 2:3; 3:1). This was with evident allusion (the same word is used) to the way that on his shameful night, Peter had remembered the word of Christ, and wept those bitter tears of ineffable regret (Lk. 22:61). Peter knew some of his sheep were weary with the way, and needed a like repentance and subsequent energizing which he had known. He was wishing all his readers (and that includes us) a path of growth that followed his. He had always *known* the words of Christ; indeed, he had loved them. He shows himself an enthusiast for Bible study and reflection on the Lord's words. But he didn't remember them in that they weren't living as a compelling force within his conscience. After his first denial and the cock crowing, surely he 'remembered' the Lord's words: that before the cock crowed twice, he would deny Him thrice. He must have shrugged off that first cock crowing as coincidence, sure he wouldn't deny again. And then the second denial- well, there was no cock crow, so, don't worry... But he wasn't aware enough of his own liability to failure to have the Lord's warning words in the forefront of his mind. He didn't pause to reflect that the cock would soon crow again, and therefore he would be sorely tempted to make the third denial. He knew the word of the Lord, but failed to remember it. And this he now realized. And he urges his readers to learn more quickly and less painfully what he had to be forced to learn.

Now Peter was converted, he was strengthening his brethren (Lk. 22:32). This theme of strengthening was evident in Peter's letters (s.w. 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17). Some of his last written words were that "You... are *established* in the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12 AV); he uses the same Greek word which the Lord used when He asked Peter so *strengthen* his brethren (Lk. 22:32). Peter at the very end knew that he had made it. His awareness of his own failures was at the root of his appreciation of his Lord's grace, and this was the motive power behind all his pastoral work. But "truth" often refers to the sure reality that we shall be saved; the hope, the confidence, that if we die now or the Lord returns, we shall definitely be in the Kingdom. This is as the AV puts it "the present truth". This doesn't mean that truth varies and is true only at any given moment for that time. The idea is not of 'truth' as in intellectual purity, but "truth" as in assurance of the highest and most ultimate truth- that at this present moment, I shall be saved. That is the basis for a sure hope, and of all joy and peace through believing. We may fall away tomorrow; but we can rejoice in the "present truth", what is true at this present moment.

1:13 *And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*- Peter saw his death as a taking down of a tent (2 Pet. 1:13), using the same word for the tabernacle he had wanted to build for his Lord at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:4). Then, he had wanted the tent to be set up so that the time of the Lord's departure wouldn't come; so that the Lord would stay with them there, with Moses and Elijah, in what must have seemed like the Kingdom of God. Again, Peter didn't want the cross, either for his Lord or for himself. But now he had learnt his lesson; he saw that his tent must be taken down, the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus, the words of His coming death and future Kingdom, these were quite enough. There had been no need of the tent on the mountain, and now he saw there was no need for the tent of his body either. We are all the same. Our death will literally be a death with the Lord, in that our resurrection will be after the pattern of His (Rom. 6:5).

Yet Peter goes on to talk about the transfiguration in :17,18. He had that in mind, and so perhaps unconsciously uses the same word for "tent" or "tabernacle" as was used for the tent he had wanted to build then. There may be no direct semantic connection with the later reference to the transfiguration, but we have here a wonderful evidence that this letter really came from Peter, albeit under Divine inspiration; for the process of thought and use of language is just as we would expect from a man who really was at the transfiguration and is now writing a letter some years later. For "remembrance", see on :12.

1:14 *Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle comes swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated to me*- For "tabernacle", see on :13. Peter sensed that the end of his mortality was soon. It could be that like Paul, he reasoned and felt as if the second coming was imminent. Or perhaps he knew within himself due to illness or being imprisoned under a death sentence that his end was near. And he of course recalled the Lord's words to him in Jn. 21:18, that he was to die in a way that glorified Him, perhaps also by crucifixion, in the manner that the Lord Jesus "hath shewed me" (AV) by His own example. This connection with the Lord's words suggests to me that Peter, unlike Paul, expected to die before the second coming. The way he now writes of them remembering his message after his death (:15) is clear enough in this regard. This difference in perspective shows how two sincere believers can have different understandings whilst believing the same Gospel.

1:15 *Yes, I will give diligence that at every time you may be able after my death to call these things to remembrance*- "My death" is Gk. *eksodos*. As he faced up to his own imminent time of dying, he saw that his death would be a death with the Lord (Paul also spoke of his death in this way). He spoke of his death as "my *eksodos*" (2 Pet. 1:15), using the very same and specific word which he had heard at the transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah comforted the Lord regarding His *eksodos* (Lk. 9:31). The Lord's death

was his death; he would die as the Lord Jesus had shown him by example (see on :14). The Lord's death is our death; the symbolism of baptism is to be remembered by us particularly at our death, and in our understanding of the death of our brethren. His death was a crescendo, the end point of a process, very intense at the end. This adds huge meaning and significance to old age and terminal illness; we are not to be seen as no longer significant, a burden merely to be carried by others, by medical staff and our families. We are being led to final identity with His death, that we might live eternally with Him in the power of His resurrection.

How could Peter try his best to ensure that after his death, they would remember his message? Perhaps he means that he would try to ensure that his message was written down and preserved; and that "diligence" was achieved, for we to this day hold his inspired letters in our hands. "That you may be able" is literally 'that you may have it'; which makes sense if Peter had in view a written record of his words.

The emphasis on remembering the words is to be understood in the light of the transfiguration experience. His brethren were to take heed to the word, just as he had to be almost rebuked: “This is My beloved Son: *hear* him”. Peter loved the word, but so often didn’t hear it, and at the crucial moment didn’t remember his Lord’s word. He had said “at thy word” I will let down the net; but when he saw the huge catch, he was amazed; he realized that he hadn’t really believed his Lord’s word. And he knew he was simply “a sinful man”, worthy of condemnation for his lack of faith (“depart from me”). He had to be taught that his own natural abilities were nothing at all. He was taught this in relation to fishing, to his faithfulness, commitment to laying down his life for Christ. He was made to learn that he knew nothing as he ought to know. And he implicitly admits this to his readers, when he asks us to take heed of the word which we may think we well know, just as he had to. Peter learnt the lesson of the transfiguration when he told the Jewish authorities that he had to hear God’s word rather than theirs (Acts 4:19).

1:16 *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty-* As witnessed elsewhere in the New Testament, the brotherhood [especially the Jews amongst them] were under the influence of the various Jewish fables (Tit. 1:14), the *midrash* of the rabbis which twisted the sense of God's actual word. The transfiguration was understood by Peter to be a foretaste of the Lord's power and second coming. What he witnessed on the mount was evidence that this same Jesus should likewise come in power to mount Zion at the last day. And he was not repeating Jewish fables; he was an eyewitness of that majesty. And he had "made known" to his readership this fact; the gospel records are transcripts of the preaching of men like Peter who were eyewitnesses. The Gospel is therefore to be found in the gospel records; and elsewhere

I have suggested the gospel of Mark is Peter's gospel record. Peter would have been one of the eyewitnesses who gave material to Luke for the compilation of his gospel (Lk. 1:2).

1:17- see on Jn. 13:32.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, delivered to him by such a voice from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased- Perhaps Peter means to say that when this voice of Divine approbation came, there was a visible manifestation of glory around the person of the human Lord Jesus on the mountain top. But This is My beloved Son" is a quotation from the voice heard at the Lord's baptism. All the Synoptics record it there. Peter says that the voice came "from the Majestic glory", using the same word as he has just used in :16 when he says that he was an eyewitness of the Lord's "majesty". This eyewitness experience was at the Lord's baptism. But he says that he heard the same voice again on the mount of transfiguration (:18). He could well be saying that the voice at baptism sounded the same as the voice at the transfiguration- it was God's voice. Here we have a profound evidence of the personality of God- He has a voice, and that voice sounded the same on the two occasions Peter heard it.

1:18 *And this voice we heard, delivered out of heaven, when we were with him on the holy mount*- Peter is struggling in words to explain how the voice heard was from Heaven, not from earth, and was the actual voice of God, written down by him in words. That same sense of wonder is to be found in fact in every word of the Bible- it is all in some sense God's word. Hence the Greek suggests "There came *such* a voice to (Christ) from the excellent glory... and this voice which came from heaven *we* heard... we have also a *more sure word* of prophecy, whereunto *ye* do well that *ye* take heed" (2 Pet. 1:18,19). Notice the progression in his reasoning here. Peter considered it such an honour that he could hear the words which God primarily intended for Christ. And even more wondrous, the word of prophecy which we have all heard is an even *more* wondrous revelation of God's glory than the word of God which came at the transfiguration. Yet do we even begin to reach that sense of wonder which Peter had on the mount? That sense of rapture, of real spiritual transport, of reaching out of earthly things into Heavenly, that desire for the experience never to end, even though we realize that we only understand a fraction of the infinity which is revealed by God's word?

1:19 *And we have the word of prophecy made yet more sure*- The Greek is awkward here. I think the sense is that Peter is sparing a thought for those of us who did not hear the Divine voice at the Lord's baptism and transfiguration. He is saying that in any case for "we" who heard the voice in reality, the prophetic word is even more "sure" as a witness. Because events can be forgotten, no matter how momentous at the time;

memory fades and also distorts. But the fulfilment of the prophetic word of God is more sure for Peter than even his personal experience of hearing God's actual voice. And it is to *that* recorded voice which his readers needed to pay attention to.

"Prophecy" in Hebrew refers to speaking forth God's word, more than prediction of future events. There were New Testament prophets, speaking forth God's word under inspiration. Peter has earlier appealed for his readers to give due attention to his own inspired words. He is reasoning that although they did not hear the Divine voice as he had done, the letter he was writing, along with that of the other prophets, was even more sure than his account to them of having heard God's actual voice. The written inspired word is no less the actual voice of God to men.

To which you do well that you take heed, as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day-star arises in your hearts- The command "hear Him!" was given to Peter and those who heard it; but the witness of God's prophetic word is even "more sure", and all of us must likewise "take heed" to that; and Peter's readership were to take heed to Peter's own inspired words just as much. This even more sure word of prophecy is shining as a light (candle) in the dark ("squalid", R.V.mg.) place of our mortal mind, or of the dingy apartments the Jewish refugee converts in Asia were living in, "*until* the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts". When the day of Christ's coming arrives, we will then have the fullness of the light of God's revelation. The present word of prophecy is but a lamp struggling against the darkness of our natural mind, in this life. But at the Lord's return, our very innermost beings will be filled with the light of God's revelation in Christ. Somehow our knowledge of God will be of such a different magnitude, that we will no longer relate to the word of prophecy in the same way as we do now. We must take heed to the word *in our hearts*- this is the idea, rather than any suggestion of a mystical coming of Christ in our hearts.

1:20 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation*- To appreciate the force of Peter's argument in the previous verses, it must be understood most importantly ("first") that prophetic Divinely inspired scripture is just that- it is not the personal interpretation of men, unlike the Jewish fables referenced in :16. "Private interpretation" is parallel with a word coming "by the will of man" (:21). We would better read the phrase as meaning that no prophetic, inspired word "is private interpretation", the kind of personal interpretation or take on things which the Jewish fables were.

1:21 *For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit*- According to our understanding of the inspiration process, so we will respect God's prophetic word. Men did not think up what they were going to say, or will themselves to prophecy. They were moved, carried or driven along, by the Spirit, so that the words they spoke were of God, of His will rather than theirs. This explains

why so many of the inspired writers in the Old Testament were of themselves unwilling; they spoke according to God's will and not their own.

But we need to clear up the misconception that the prophets were merely fax machines, dispassionately forwarding God's message to men. Their words were indeed the words of God, they were inspired, but they also had emotional involvement. All Scripture is indeed God-breathed, but this involved the prophets in breathing in of that Spirit and exhaling it, as it were (2 Tim. 3:16). The passage in 2 Pet. 1:19-21 has been somewhat misunderstood. Holy men of God indeed spoke as they were "moved" by the Holy Spirit; but, contrary to what is repeated parrot fashion by so many, the Greek for "moved" doesn't necessarily mean 'irresistibly carried along', as if the prophets had no personal input into what they said and were just treated as machines. The Greek word *phero* appears several times in 2 Peter:

- "The grace that is to be *brought* unto you" (2 Pet. 1:13)
- "There *came* such a voice to [Christ] from the excellent glory" (2 Pet. 1:17)
- "This voice which *came* from heaven" (2 Pet. 1:18)
- "The prophecy *came* not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *phero* ['as they were...' is not in the original- it's in italics in the AV] the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21)

Clearly enough, *phero* in 2 Pet. 1 doesn't mean 'irresistibly carried along by'. The context of 2 Pet. 1:21 is a warning that as there were false prophets in Old Testament times amongst the people of God, so there will be in the new Israel (2:1). Peter's stress is that the Old Testament prophets were *holy*, they spoke according to the will of *God* and not the will of *man*; their words came from the Holy Spirit, and not the spirit of the flesh- in distinction to the false prophets who spoke of the flesh.

2 PETER CHAPTER 2

2:1- see on Gal. 5:1.

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies- The failures of natural Israel are traceable to false teaching from the priesthood / leadership, rather than purely personal apostasy. All the examples of rejected false teachers mentioned in 2 Pet. 2 were responsible, and in the ecclesia of their times. These false teachers had once known the Truth [:12] and would therefore be reserved to judgment [:9]; they attended the memorial meeting [:13], they had or claimed to have the gift of prophecy as Balaam did [:15 cp. Heb.6:4-6], and had once left the world, although now they were returning to it [:20-22]. In other words, they had all the external trappings of good Christians. We must expect something similar in the latter day ecclesia.

The appropriacy of the allusion to Israel's history was in the fact that Peter is writing his letters to his own converts, who were largely comprised of the Jews he had baptized in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

Denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction- He warns that they even deny the Lord who bought them (AV). They *even* do this- as if denying the Lord was the worst possible, imaginable sin. And it was the very thing which he had so publicly done, three times, and had effectively done again when bowing to Judaist false teaching. They deny "the Lord"- and that had been Peter's favourite title for Jesus during the ministry. As he warned of the evil of the apostate brethren, his own sense of personal failure and frailty was so evidently shown. And yet it was no reason for him to simply say 'So, I can't judge, I can't criticize another after what I did'. What he had learnt from the whole experience of forgiveness and grace was that the wondrous grace and atonement of Christ *must at all costs be preached and preserved*.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them. This is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel. Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt. This same illogicality is seen in us if we refuse baptism, preferring to stay in the world of slavery, or later when we chose the world as opposed to Christ. We deny, we refuse, we reject, the Lord who bought us by going back to the world from which he redeemed us. The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5). And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

2:2 *And many shall follow their destructive ways, by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed*- This has to be connected with the Lord's teaching that "many" (Gk. the majority) would fall away just before His coming (Mt. 24:12); Peter is perhaps picking this up, and shewing that this will be due to following false teachers. "Destructive ways" is literally 'the ways of condemnation'. The heresies they taught were likewise those of condemnation (:1); and their condemnation was therefore near (:3 s.w.). There is a great power in ideas; believing the wrong ones leads to destruction / condemnation.

False prophets bring forth bad fruit; the nature of the teaching therefore affects the nature of the fruit (Mt. 7:16). False teaching [which isn't the same as genuine intellectual failure] therefore elicits a bad way of life ("their destructive ways"); and the false prophets of the latter days will result in iniquity abounding (Mt. 24:11). This is why teaching does matter. Without faith- which comes from holding *the* Faith- it is impossible to please God. True righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit; the result of the

word of the Gospel working within us, the result of the Spirit of Christ which God has sent forth into the hearts of His people. Many outside of the Faith appear to in fact be far more righteous than most of us, in terms of 'good works'. But these good works are an outcome of their natural personality type; this is how they *are*. But God has sent His Son to the sick who need a doctor, to those imprisoned by their own thinking, to the tragically blind. Through the power of the basic Gospel, we have the power to change.

Any student of the New Testament epistles cannot fail to notice these repeated warnings against false teachers. Peter reminded his readers of "the words... spoken by the holy prophets [New Testament ones?] and the apostles... knowing this first [i.e. most importantly], that there shall come [false teachers and mass apostasy] in the last days" [2 Pet.2:3]. Unless we say that "the last days" is a phrase which has no reference to our own times, we have to accept that there will be major false teaching and apostasy within the brotherhood just before Christ's return.

2:3 *And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you*- So often, financial advantage figures in the motivation of the false teachers. They not only taught falsely, but demanded payment for it. They made their message as attractive as possible in order to be paid for saying it. Their "feigned words" suggests they were falsely claiming Divine inspiration for their message; this problem has been addressed in the immediate context in 1:16-21. They justified immoral behaviour by assuring believers that a special message from God had permitted it; and people paid for this to be true, as it were.

Their sentence now from of old does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber- The essence of the judgment seat is now. Their sentence and destruction / condemnation had already been issued and would not delay in fulfilment. This idea of the last day being somehow 'delayed' is returned to in chapter 3. God is not tuned out towards human behaviour now, only opening the books and reviewing it at the last day. He now is sensitive to our actions, and His judgment toward it is ongoing.

2:4 *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved until judgment*-

It was presumably in one of the previous creations that the Angels were developed. They have knowledge of good and evil, just as fallen man has (Gen. 3:22). This could suggest that they too had the experience of temptation and choice between sin and obedience. Job speaks of the angels who were charged with folly as if this fact was well known (Job 4:18). John Thomas suggested that the "angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 lived at this time. There is no doubt that this passage in Peter, and the parallel in Jude, has some reference to Korah's rebellion. However, there are many such warnings to God's people which combine reference to more than one historical event, and it could be the same here: as if to say, 'History repeats itself. The angels that sinned so long ago went through in principle the same process of apostasy as Korah's company, and you too are capable of falling from grace in the same basic way'. Apostasy has a long continuity; all who fall follow a similar pattern, ultimately sharing the same apotheosis. It could even be that the fall of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon (Is. 14; Ez. 28) are recorded in the language of an angel / "anointed cherub" who wanted superiority over the others, and who then fell from Heaven (Ez. 28:14; Is. 14:13,14 cp. Eph. 4:10). There are strong similarities between these passages and the Jewish understanding of Angels that sinned before creation. These similarities would be in order to show the same kind of historical continuity: between the Angels who once sinned, and spiritually blessed men who turned away from what they could have

had. The fact that *all* the Angels *now* are righteous and incapable of sinning (cp. Lk. 20:35,36) doesn't mean that Angels never sinned in a previous creation. But the point to note is that they are now in the grave, chained in darkness- not running around as evil spirits causing mischief. They are "reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4), when "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3).

But this passage is of course seriously misunderstood by those who believe there are currently sinful Angels in existence. But if literal angels are referred to here, then they are not going around making people sin, seeing that they are kept safely chained up. They are “under darkness”, i.e. not openly on the earth nor in heaven. The parallel passage in Jude 5,6 implies that this is a reference to a well-known fact: “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this”. There is no record in any other part of the Bible about angels sinning in Eden; how then could these Christians be reminded of these things? All the other examples which Peter and Jude mention are taken from Old Testament examples which were well known, and this is no exception.

There is no indication that these things happened in Eden. There is no mention of the angels starting to cause trouble after they sinned – the implication in Jude 6 is that they were immediately chained up under darkness. At the creation “all the sons of God (the angels) shouted for joy” (Job 38:7) and they saw “everything... was very good” (Gen. 1:31); there was no evil whatever.

The Hebrew and Greek words translated "Angels” can refer to men. These “angels” are to be judged at “the great day” of the second coming. The punishment of the unworthy at that day will be total destruction (Mt. 25:41); yet we know that angels cannot die or be destroyed (Lk. 20:35,36)- an angel walked with Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:27,28). We read of the angel that appeared to Manoah, “when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar” (Jud. 13:20). God “makes his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4). Therefore these “angels” who are to be condemned must be human ones, because fire cannot destroy Angels.

Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah also (“even as”) “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (i.e. total destruction after judgment – Mt. 25:41). This implies that the angels that sinned were made a public example (as was Sodom) of what would happen to those who disobey God. However, there is no Biblical record of angels sinning in Eden – so how are these “angels” “set forth for an example” (Jude 6)? There is no indication that even Adam and Eve saw the punishment of anyone apart from the serpent. Remember that sin entered the world “by one man” – Adam (Rom. 5:12) – not by an angel sinning.

Notice that the words “Devil” and “Satan” do not occur in these passages. 2 Peter 2:9–11 interprets the reserving of the angels unto judgment as “The Lord knows how... To reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished... them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government... speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels... bring not railing accusations”. This is saying that the counterparts of the sinful angels are the unjust men who follow their human lusts. That these men are not Angels is shown by the fact that they speak evil of people, whereas Angels do not. Peter doesn’t imply there are different categories of angels, sinful and good. He does not say ‘the good angels do not...’, but rather he refers simply to “angels”, all of whom are good beings.

“Chains of darkness” represent death in Proverbs 5:22–23 (“cords” in v. 22 is rendered “chains” in the Septuagint). Thus the ‘angels’ are now dead. They are “reserved” unto the day of judgment. “Reserved” does not mean (in the Greek) ‘kept

prisoner', it implies rather that God has made a note of these people, and will give them their judgment accordingly, at the second coming of Christ. 2 Peter 2:1 sets the context for :4: "But there were false prophets also among the people (of Israel, in the wilderness, cp. Jude 5), even as there shall be false teachers among you". Thus the angels that sinned appear to refer to false teachers amongst Israel in the wilderness. That God "spared not" the sinful 'angels' connects with how God "spared not" the sinful Israelites in the wilderness (Ps. 78:50). Indeed, the idea of God not sparing is often associated with His attitude to apostate Israel: Dt. 29:20; Jer. 13:14; 21:7; Ez. 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:10. The angels "reserved unto judgment" matches how the Jewish world was "reserved unto judgment" in AD70 (2 Pet. 3:7).

The immediate context is in 2 Peter 2:3 – the Judaizers were about to be suddenly punished (in the holocaust of A.D. 70) – "whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not". Peter then reasons that as God immediately punished the 'angels' that sinned, so the judgment and damnation of the Judaizers would not be long delayed. If the angels were super–human beings who still have the liberty to go about tempting us to sin, and have had such liberty since the garden of Eden, then their day of judgment *has* lingered, it *has* been a long time coming, and therefore Peter's use of the angels that sinned as an example of God quickly punishing sin in v. 4 does not apply. Jude was writing against a background of belief that sinful Angels were roaming the world and inciting people to sin. He surely is attempting to debunk this idea by stressing that "the Angels who kept not their first estate" – whoever we understand them to be – are safely locked up in chains, unable to influence anyone on earth today.

We have noted that this incident is probably concerning human "angels" at some point in the history of Israel, probably on the wilderness journey, and that it would be well known and documented in Jewish history (i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures). It also involved a great public punishment of the wrongdoers which set them "forth as an example". The rebellion of the 250 princes of Israel in the wilderness led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, as recorded in Numbers 16, seems to fit quite well.

"Angel" can mean "minister", "messenger" (as John's disciples were messengers or ministers to him, Lk. 7:24). Numbers 16:9 describes the rebels as "ministers" of the congregation. The Septuagint uses the word *aggelos* for "ministers", which is the same Greek word translated "Angel" in 2 Peter 2:4. They left their first, or original, "principality" (Jude 6, A.V. margin); the rebels were princes, but wanted to be priests as well (Num. 16:2,10). Because of this, the ground opened and swallowed them (Num. 16:31–33), as a dramatic example to everyone of the fate of those who rebel against the Word of God. It was especially dramatic in that it is emphasized that this was the first time that such a thing had happened (Num. 16:30). Thus they are now dead, "in everlasting chains under darkness", in the heart of the earth, to be resurrected and judged at "the judgment of the great day". Jude 8 implies that "likewise", i.e. like the angels that sinned, the Judaizers "speak evil of dignities", e.g. Jesus and Paul. The rebels spoke evil of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:11–14). "Cast them down to hell" (2 Pet. 2:4). "Hell" in this verse is *tartaroo* in the Greek and is used only once in the New Testament. It was used in pagan Greek mythology to describe a subterraneous place of darkness for the dead. "Chains of darkness" is rendered "pits of darkness" in the R.V. The Greek word *serius* (pits) indicates an underground granary or prison, which corresponds with Korah, Dathan and Abiram's destruction when they "went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished" (Num. 16:33).

That they were destroyed and were not left alive is shown by a comment on this incident in Psalm 73. Here Asaph describes how "my steps had well nigh slipped" (v. 2) because the wicked seemed to be prospering so much. Then, "I went into the sanctuary (tabernacle) of God; then understood I their end" (v. 17). This was because the brass censers of the 250 rebels were melted down after their death and beaten into plates with which the altar was covered – another example of the angels that sinned being publicly "set forth as an example" (Jude 7). Asaph would have seen these and reflected on the fate of the wicked men. Thus he reflects upon the rebels, the angels that sinned, "surely thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down (by the earth swallowing them) into destruction" (v. 18) – therefore they are not alive, but in the same way as Sodom was destroyed with eternal fire, i.e. totally, so, too, were these "angels" (Jude 6,7).

The language of being cast down to the underworld and the darkness of the grave all features in the record of Egypt's judgment in Ez. 31:16–18. Yet Egypt was not literally cast down from Heaven. The allusion to Egypt is to show how the apostate Jews in the wilderness were treated as if they were actually Egyptians – because in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.

We must understand the immediate context in which Peter uses the idea of God having judged 'angels' [whoever they refer to]. He reasons that *if* God didn't spare 'angels' who sinned in the past but judged them; and *if* God punished sinners by a flood but saved Noah; and *if* God overthrew the wicked in Sodom but saved Lot... *then* we can be assured that God knows how to rescue the Godly and to judge the wicked in a future day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:4–9). The example of angels being judged must be seen as a warning and a comfort to us in our day. The implication would surely be that just as the flood and the destruction of Sodom were well known Biblical examples of Divine judgment, so must the judgment of the 'angels' be. And therefore the interpretation which associates them with Korah and his rebellion in the wilderness would seem to be most appropriate. And note that there is *no* Biblical record of rebellious Heavenly angels being judged and thrown down to earth.

2:5 *And did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly*- Given this apostasy of the sons of God and the unwillingness of the world to listen to Noah's preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) the size of the ecclesia must have declined, until it was only 9 strong. H.P. Mansfield claims that 'Methuselah' means 'When he dies, it shall come'- suggesting that he died a few days or weeks before the flood came. We can imagine the ecclesia falling away one by one until it was just that old brother Noah, his wife and his three faithful sons (no doubt he had other grandchildren and children whom he failed to influence). The small, declining size of the faithful in our last days and the total apathy to our preaching should not discourage us- as with all negative things, a positive message can be read into them in the light of Scripture. And the message here is that such things clearly indicate that we are in the last days. The only people to survive the temptations of these 'last days' before the flood were one family unit. As these events are so pregnant with latter day relevance, it may be that we are to perceive here a faint hint that strongly led family units are the way to survive the last days. Noah is described as "the eighth" (AV), perhaps alluding to the fact that of the eight people saved in the ark, he was "the eighth"; he put the others first.

Peter here mentions Noah and Lot together (:6). There are many connections between Peter's letters and the Gospels. I calculate that once every three verses, Peter is alluding to the Lord's words. And the figure is probably higher, seeing that we don't know all the words and actions of the Lord Jesus, and probably Peter is alluding

to incidents and words which aren't recorded. Like Paul, Peter's mind was saturated with the Lord Jesus. This was the secret of his spirituality, this was why he could cope with the ministry to the Gentiles which he had so boldly started being taken away from him and given to Paul, this was why he didn't slump into a life of melancholy bitterness. Some of his allusions are conscious allusions (e.g. those to the transfiguration). Others seem almost unconscious- e.g. the way he cites both Noah and Lot (2 Pet. 2:5-8) as warnings for the last generation, when the Lord had likewise used both of them together (Lk. 17:26-32).

2:6- see on 2 Tim. 2:14.

And turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, having made them an example to those that should live ungodly lives- According to Gen. 18:17-19, the reason God told Abraham what He would do with Sodom was because Abraham would teach others, and his descendants would teach others. This implies that Sodom's destruction was to be a special lesson for all generations. And 2 Pet. 2:6 says the same- Sodom was to be a perpetual "example unto those that after should live ungodly"; in this sense Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The fire was "eternal" in the sense that the example of destruction was to be to all generations. This paves the way for Sodom's destruction to be understood as a particularly significant type of the last days.

This warning is in the context of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. Peter saw Jerusalem, the "holy city" of Judaism, as spiritually Sodom- just as Isaiah did (also Rev. 11:8). Yet Judaism prided itself on separation from Gentiles and obedience to Divine law. All this was covering up an utterly "filthy" and "unGodly" interior.

2:7 *And delivered righteous Lot, distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked*- "Distressed" carries the sense of being oppressed; it is only elsewhere used in Acts 7:24 of the oppression of Israel in Egypt. The idea may not be that he was upset and worn down by the immorality all around him; it could be that he was actively persecuted by the wicked living people around him. This was why he needed to be "delivered", not just from the judgment to come upon Sodom, but from his persecutors. This was highly relevant to the Hebrew Christians being persecuted by and within Jerusalem, and it was they to whom Peter was writing. The same word for "delivered" is used of how God knows how to deliver the Godly from temptation / testing (:9). So Lot's deliverance was not simply from sharing in Sodom's destruction, but from the temptations and testing from living amongst such wicked people.

2:8 *(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)*- Lot's righteousness was not so great of itself. Perhaps he too had righteousness counted to him, as his uncle Abraham did. "Seeing and hearing" suggests a bombardment of his senses with the lawless deeds of Sodom- which are being used by Peter as parallel with the lawless deeds of Jerusalem and the temple cult. Their much vaunted keeping of law was in fact lawlessness, in God's eyes.

The calling of Lot out of Sodom is a type, on the Lord's authority, of our calling away to judgment. His position immediately prior to the Angels' coming must therefore connect with our situation now. Lot was in no way as spiritually strong as he ought to have been, nor as enthusiastic for the Lord's coming as his complaining about the evils of the city recorded in 2 Pet. 2:7,8 might lead us to think. The very fact that

he chose to live in the area whilst Abraham steered well clear of it is testimony enough to his worldliness (Gen. 13:10,11). The offering of his two daughters to the Sodomites also betrays a certain unspirituality (Gen. 19:8). The fact that Sodom's fate was revealed to Abraham rather than Lot may also be significant.

2 Pet. 2:8 reveals how Lot "tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds" (AV). Seeing that he failed to influence his family to properly appreciate the sins of that city, and that he was so attached to it that he was unwilling to leave, this must be interpreted as little more than the sort of middle class, respectable 'tut-tutting' that present day Christianity abounds with. After all, he had chosen to live there, he did not have to stay, and the record of his choice of Sodom in Gen.13 spotlights his unspiritual, worldly thinking in this regard when compared to Abraham, the stranger and sojourner. Whether this assessment of Lot's character is felt to be correct or not, it must surely be accepted that there was a serious dualism in his position which has strong similarities with ours today- vexing his soul about the sins of the surrounding world, and yet increasingly involved in it and greatly benefiting from it materially, at spiritual cost to himself and his family. Lot was effectively willing to betray his daughters to the men of Sodom, pointing forward to the Lord's prophecy of how in the holocaust to come, many will betray each other (Mt. 10:36), family life within the ecclesia will break up; a spirit of dissension will fall upon natural and spiritual families.

2:9 *Therefore the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation*- 'The Lord' to Peter meant 'the Lord Jesus'. He comforts them that the Lord Jesus knows how to deliver the Godly out of temptation. Surely he was referring back to how the Lord Jesus had prayed for him, knowing the temptation that was to come upon him in the High Priest's house, knowing Satan's desire to have him. And although it might have seemed that in the short term Peter's weakness rendered that prayer powerless, in fact in the end, his faith didn't fail, just as the Lord had prayed. And so from his own example he could comfort his readers that surely their Lord knew how to deliver from temptation, even if like Lot and like Peter those he delivers may deserve to be left to the outcome of their own words and actions.

To keep Lot from the great spiritual temptation provoked within him by that city, God destroyed it. Similarly God's abhorrence of this present world which Sodom typifies is largely due to the spiritual temptation it so evidently brings upon His people. And remember that it was thanks to Abraham's prayers that Lot was saved out of Sodom. Perhaps his prayers had been especially for Lot's spiritual deliverance from the situation he was in; and the destruction of Sodom perhaps happened exactly for that reason. There were surely many societies sinning at the time, but God didn't destroy them with fire and brimstone. He did so with Sodom because He realized that Lot wasn't strong enough to quit Sodom, and He wanted Lot's salvation. And so He destroyed them. All this for the sake of a weak man who later was to get drunk and sleep with his own daughters. We too pray that God will not lead us into temptation, and He may e.g. bankrupt the firm we work for in order to save us from working with the guys who will lead us to our destruction.

We can observe how Abram was asked to leave his family, so that God would give him a new family through his seed. But he was weak in obedience to this- he left Ur along with his father and Lot. But it was through that weakness that Lot came to be eternally saved, despite Lot's own weakness. God doesn't simply turn away from sin in disgust, but works through it.

And to keep the unrighteous under punishment to the day of judgment- There is no conscious survival of death. The sentence for sin is passed now (:3), but they only receive it at the day of judgment. They are therefore kept "under" that judgment, although dead, until they are resurrected to face judgment. The idea of keeping or reserving the wicked unto judgment at the last day is quite common with Peter (2:4,9,17; 3:7 all use the same word). Likewise our eternal inheritance and crown is "kept ['reserved'] in heaven" for us (1 Pet. 1:4). The judgment has already been made; but the result of the verdict is reserved or kept until the last day. As the Psalms make clear, we can know right now the Lord's judgments; they are revealed to us in His word, which is His judgments.

The 'keeping' in view is not conscious preservation of these sinners after their death. The contrast is with the first half of the verse. God kept Lot from temptation by destroying Sodom, because in his heart Lot wanted to be righteous- he like us was just weak. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. But conversely, those who wish to be wicked will be 'kept' by the "evil spirit from Yahweh" which affected king Saul- they will be kept in the path of life which leads to their condemnation. Because although God is not a manipulator, nor is man a mere puppet in His hand, He is a confirmer of men in the psychological path they choose.

2:10- see on Jude 14.

Chief among these are those that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries- Amongst those to be condemned, there are "chief" and also lesser ones, just as there will be grades of reward amongst the righteous. These gradations reflect the Father's huge sensitivity towards human behaviour.

In a sense, the Angels deal with men according to men's own perceptions of themselves, and with what can only be described as a certain spiritual culture. They do not "speak evil of dignities", as exemplified in the way the Angelic voice from Heaven addressed the wicked Nebuchadnezzar whom they were about to depose as "O king Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. 4:31). This isn't only an example to us of not being abrasive to people even if we know them to be seriously in the wrong. It's an example of how we should seek to deal with people within the terms of their own perceptions. It makes one wonder whether at the judgment, the Lord will address those who were known in their lives as 'Doctors' or 'Reverends'… obviously making the point, as the Angel was to Nebuchadnezzar, that human advantage means so absolutely nothing before the ultimate analysis and set of values of His judgment.

The "them" of :11 refer to the same "dignitaries"; Angels do not rail at them but instead say "The Lord rebuke you" (in the parallel Jude 9). The example of this cited in Jude 9 is a quotation from how in Zechariah, the Angels rebuke the human adversaries / local government authorities who were opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The "dignitaries" [*doxa*] *are* not Angels themselves, because :11 goes on to say that Angels do not talk about "dignitaries" in this way but rather call down the Lord's rebuke upon them (Jude 9). Seeing there are no sinful Angels, it cannot be that the "dignitaries" are Angels. Note that *doxa* is used of sinful humans and not Angels by Peter in 1 Pet. 1:24.

I noted on 1 Peter that some of Peter's Jewish refugee converts in Asia were getting in trouble with the local authorities and considered themselves above the local laws. They slandered "dignitaries" and also despised "dominion" or "government"; the word is used about human civil government in Eph. 1:21. These people are here called "self willed". They considered themselves above the law and had created themselves

as the final arbiter of right and wrong; they were as James says, judging the law and speaking evil of it by considering themselves as the ultimate law (James 4:11).

2:11 *Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not dare bring before the Lord an injurious accusation against them*- As explained on :10, the "them" refers to local government authorities whom the Jewish false teachers were slandering and setting themselves over. The parallel in Jude 9 exemplifies this by a quotation from how in Zechariah, the Angels rebuke the human adversaries / local government authorities who were opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Angels are "before the Lord" in the court of Heaven; and so are all of us, effectively. Yet even they talk about sinful people on earth with appropriate respect and restraint, not condemning them of themselves. This is a window into the awareness of God and the Angels concerning situations on earth, and how they discuss those situations with respect toward men. Their greater "might and power" do not make them disrespect those who are weaker. And that is truly a pattern for us, who each have some greater power than others in some way.

2:12 *But these, as creatures without reason*- "Without reason" is *a-logos*, without the *logos* of God's word. The parallel in Jude 10 says that they relied upon their natural knowledge and perception, rather than God's word.

Born mere animals to be taken and destroyed- The idea is that they were predestined to this destruction; and yet it was because they acted in the way they did of their own choice. There is a word play on the word "destroyed", which carries the idea of 'corruption'. Their final corruption in condemnation is because of their own corruption. Hence "in their destroying ['corruption'] they shall be destroyed / corrupted".

Speak reproachfully in matters of which they are ignorant; they shall in their destroying surely be destroyed- They were living out their own condemnation; human behaviour is of itself our judgment. Truly "we make the answer now" to the issues of the future day of judgment.

2:13 *Suffering wrong as the wages of wrong-doing*- This implies that the false teachers were even in this life suffering a punishment appropriate to the kind of sin they were committing. The phrase "the wages of wrong-doing" is repeated in :15 regarding how Balaam loved such wages. The only other usage of the phrase is in Acts 1:18 about how Judas bought a field with his "wages of wrong-doing". These false teachers were after money, but that love of money lead them to even now 'suffer wrong', just as happened to Judas. It would seem from some hints in 1 Peter that the 'wrong' they suffered was at the hands of the local civil authorities.

The allusion to Judas makes Judas out to be the arch apostate and betrayer of the Lord Jesus, whose example was followed by these false teachers. And yet Judas and Peter had committed in essence the same sin of denying their Lord, and at the very same time. Peter would have intensely been aware of this. And yet he holds up Judas as a prototype of all who fall, as if to say: ‘And there, but for the Lord’s grace, nearly went I. See the terror of it, and turn away from that road. I of all men can tell you that’.

They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime- One wonders about the way that Peter describes the apostate believer as drunk in the day time, when earlier he had dismissed with a confident logic the claim that he was drunk at Pentecost by saying that it couldn’t possibly be so, because it was early in the day and people can only get drunk at night (Acts 2:15). Could it be that his perception of sinfulness and the grossness of this present evil world had increased by the end of his life?

Spots and blemishes, revelling in their deceivings while they feast with you- These people were apparently confidently participating in the breaking of bread meetings. As happened at Corinth, these meetings were being turned into drunken feasts. They were unashamedly out to deceive the Lord's people through participating at these feasts. These were the types who needed to be excluded from the Lord's supper- not sincere folks who may have failed in some ways or who honestly misunderstand some of His teachings. They were spots and blemishes upon the bride of Christ. The Lord Jesus is working to present us to Himself *without* blemish (Jude 24 s.w.). These false teachers were therefore working directly against the Lord's work and intention.

2:14- see on 2 Pet. 3:16.

Having eyes full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls- The false teachers, both here and elsewhere in the New Testament, were sexual predators. The breaking of bread at Corinth was turned into a drunken feast where the equivalent of temple prostitutes were used. The Christian church was being operated just how most other religious cults of the time were- with sexual abandon and alcohol abuse used as part of their rituals. As suggested on 1 Peter, it seems that the converts Peter is writing to are those he made in the thousands in his early preaching to the orthodox Jews at Jerusalem. They had fallen a long way; from strict orthodox Jews full of faith in and love for Jesus, who had shared their goods amongst each other and then been persecuted, and for the sake of their faith had gone into exile in what is now Turkey... and there, the pressures of the refugee life had taken over. Bit by bit they had slipped into this state of immorality. We marvel at how a man can at one point in his life be so committed and spiritual; and only a few years later, end in the spiritual gutter. But we are surrounded by examples of it, and therefore the situation we are reading of here is not impossible to imagine. It is a sober warning that faith must be maintained. No apparent height of spiritual strength will be retained unless we in an ongoing sense exercise our hearts in the ways of the Spirit.

Having a heart exercised in covetousness, children of cursing- Their tragic decline was because of the bad exercise of their hearts. They were covetous, just as the orthodox Jews of Lk. 16:14 were. They came to Christ with great zeal, but that basic problem with coveting remained. It became the regular mental experience of their minds, and it eventually led them to this tragic collapse of faith, similar to what Paul laments in Hebrews concerning the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians who instead of going into exile, had reverted to Judaism. They were sons of cursing / condemnation; at that moment, they would be condemned if the Lord returned or they died. And they could change that.

2:15 *Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wrongdoing-* These false teachers were home grown within the church, rather than having entered in from outside it; they had gone astray, they were once in the right way, having been baptized. The stress is that they had a financial motive in their misbehaviour. The same term "wages of wrongdoing" is used about Judas in Acts 1:18. We marvel that love of money could lead to such awful behaviour, wrong beyond words, of betraying God's Son and destroying His people. But people commit all manner or murder for relatively small sums. This is the power of the love of money. No wonder Scripture warns against it so strongly.

2:16 *But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with a man's*

voice and hindered the madness of the prophet- Peter was unafraid to rebuke the high flying intellectuals who were wrecking the first century ecclesia. He likens his rebuke of them to the "dumb ass speaking with man's voice" which rebuked Balaam. This was what he chose to identify himself with; that inspired donkey. There was no great trained intellect in Peter; yet his zeal for God's word puts us to shame. As the time of the end progresses, it seems that more and more of Christ's church (in the Western world) are educated people. In this I see a tremendous danger. A man who could probably not read, who probably wrote his inspired letters by dictation because he couldn't write himself, had a zeal for understanding which puts us to shame. Paul correctly made the point (and who more aware that his intellectuality could run away with him than Paul) that God has chosen the weak things to confound the mighty; He has chosen the simple of this world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1 and 2). I get some kind of intuitive feeling that Paul had Peter at the back of his mind as he wrote this letter to working class Corinth (1 Cor. 1:26). The deep mutual respect between theologian Paul and fisherman Peter is a real working model for our ecclesias.

Yet "rebuked" can also be a legal term, meaning 'to convict'. So often in this passage we encounter this idea that the essence of judgment day is today. The convictions for sin are going on right now- and should be responded to. It's as if the guilty verdict and eternal condemnation is passed down to the guilty right now- but they can change the verdict by repentance. What urgency should there be therefore, when we are convicted of sin.

The dumb ass was speaking God's word. But that word was spoken in order to save Balaam from destruction at the hand of the Angel who stood in front of him. We see here God's justice and grace working together. God made the Angel go out to kill Balaam; and made the ass speak to Balaam and collapse beneath him so that this didn't happen. It's rather like the Angel of death going out to destroy all the firstborn on Passover night, including that of the Israelites; but turning away from the houses over which the Passover Angel hovered. Thus one Angel delivered people from another Angel. There is no contradiction here; rather an insight into the careful balance within all God's operations with men. He doesn't simply operate on auto-pilot.

2:17 *These are springs without water*- They appeared to be fountains but had no substance as such. This would allude to how they were teachers, fountains, sources of water in the desert; but without water.

And mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved- These types “are carried with a tempest [in] the mist of darkness”. The Greek for “carried with a tempest” only occurs elsewhere in Mk. 4:37 and Lk. 8:23 in description of how Peter and the disciples, proud of their sailing ability, were driven by the storm / whirlwind in the darkness. The Greek for “tempest” is highly specific- it refers only and specifically to the whirlwind storms which can arise on Galilee. Peter clearly intends the allusion back to the night when he too was driven in a Galilee whirlwind, and had been rebuked for his lack of faith. He is really saying that he too has been a condemned man and can relate to how they feel; yet he was converted out of it, and came to gracious forgiveness. And so, he implicitly appeals, can each of you my readers be.

They will be sent to a mist of darkness, as Paul walked about in a mist and darkness, not knowing where he was going (Acts 13:11). Thick darkness is associated with God's judgment (Is. 8:22; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15)- and recall how the judgment of darkness upon Egypt was so severe that human movement required 'groping' (Ex. 10:21). Perhaps there will be a literal element to this in the experience of the rejected.

Be that as it may, the utter *pointlessness* of life without God will be so bitterly apparent. And yet they would not face up to it in their day of opportunity. This likening of the rejected to scavenging dogs in the rubbish tips outside Jerusalem lends further support to the suggestion that the punishment of the wicked will be associated with literal Gehenna, outside Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 23:6 speaks of how the rejected will be "thrust away" by the Lord. The Hebrew means to wander, to be chased [and is translated this way elsewhere in the AV]. Significantly in this connection, 2 Sam. 23:7 speaks of how the rejected will be consumed in "the same place" where the seed of David was to overcome wickedness. Literal Gehenna was in the same vicinity as Golgotha; and this in this sense His death was a foretaste of the future judgment, as we observe elsewhere.

2:18 *For when they speak*- They were teachers within the church.

Great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error- The lewdness and lusts of the flesh all have sexual hints. As noted on :14 and :19, they were justifying sexual immorality within the church and actually at the breaking of bread meeting. We recall how there was a false teacher code named "Jezebel" who taught fornication within the church, claiming that she was speaking inspired words of prophecy which permitted and commanded fornication (Rev. 2:20). Their words were "swelling", just as false teaching is likened to yeast which swells up.

2:19 *Promising them liberty, while they are in fact slaves to corruption. For of whom a person is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage*- As noted on :18, the "liberty" was the libertine sexual freedom to use prostitutes at church meetings. This was their interpretation of Christian freedom. It may be that they misquoted Paul's writings to this effect. He states in Rom. 3:8 that his message of grace and freedom from law was indeed wilfully misquoted in this way. The tension between freedom and slavery is at the heart of Paul's teaching about baptism in Romans 6. We are made ultimately free through slavery to the Lord Jesus. These false teachers were offering apparent moral freedom only because they had been overcome by sin, personified here as "a person". The same word is used in :20 for how they had previously been "overcome" by the immorality of the world. It is this which had overcome the false teachers, and they were trying to bring others into the same bondage which they were in. This is the same mentality behind why addicts may seek to get others hooked; there is a downward tendency in human nature, we wish to bring others down to our level. The path of the Spirit is what reverses all this.

2:20 *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning*- See on :19. The having "escaped" suggests a one off point when they escaped; see on 1:4. That point was surely baptism. It is through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus that we "escaped" the world; but theoretical knowledge of doctrine is surely not in view, for one can be aware of all that but still be entangled in the things of the world. Indeed, Peter in his letters doesn't appear to need to tackle any major theological errors (unlike Paul to the Corinthians). "Knowledge" is being used in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with'. It is living, two-way relationship with the Lord Jesus which means we find the attractions of the world and flesh far less attractive. "Entangled" is a word only elsewhere used in 2 Tim. 2:4 about the spiritual soldier not entangling himself with the affairs of this life. The obsessive, entangling nature of the things of secular life are just as much a source of entangling as the defilements of the world in its worst sense. For those who

have once escaped these things and return to them, their latter end is worse than at their beginning, when they were ignorant of the Gospel. For such people are not responsible to judgment. But having known the Gospel and then returning to the world, the fate will be resurrection to judgment, seeing the future that has been missed, and then having to die eternally, "the second death".

2:21 *For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them*- The Jewish converts whom Peter is addressing, those baptized by him at Pentecost, would have heard John the Baptist's message. And that message of preparation for the new covenant is the only teaching described with this same phrase, "the way of righteousness" (Mt. 21:32). "The holy commandment" is a phrase used only elsewhere about the old covenant (Rom. 7:12). To turn away from the covenant was the ultimate sin for Jewish people. Peter is using this language of the old covenant about the new covenant. To have turned from the old covenant to the new, and now to turn away from it... meant that "it were better" not to have been born. The allusion is to Judas (Mt. 26:24), whom Peter sees as the epitome of all that fall; but see on :13.

2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit and a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire- The word for 'washed' means a complete bathing, and would be appropriate to baptism. These orthodox Jewish converts who had come from hard line Judaism to being washed in Christ by Peter baptizing them... were returning to the wallowing in the mud which had been their former way of life. And that was how Peter therefore esteemed the hard line legalism of Judaism- a wallowing in mud, as pigs, the classic unclean animal. In another analogy, their conversion away from Judaism had been a vomiting up of rotting unclean food; and they were now returning to what they had once vomited up. Judaism is not at all spirituality, according to how Peter, Paul, Stephen and others allude to it. The washing of baptism is likened to a vomiting up of rotten food. Again the implication is that the vomiting of the old life was a one off act which occurred at a specific time- their baptism. Baptism is therefore a specific action of the Spirit upon us in moral terms.

2 PETER CHAPTER 3

3:1 *This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write to you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance*- 2 Peter 3 concerns the coming of the 'day of the Lord' both in AD70 and more importantly in our last days. The allusions to the Olivet prophecy, which is similar in this respect, and the use of the word *parousia* to describe this 'coming' of the Lord confirm this approach. This chapter contains warnings of a major apostasy that would arise within the latter day ecclesia, and urgent exhortations as to how we should live in the last days. It is not an exaggeration to say, in the light of this, that these words were fundamentally written for our generation, living just prior to the second coming, notwithstanding any other application to earlier generations. The purpose of this chapter, in common with the whole second epistle, was to "stir up (the Greek implies suddenly, with force) your pure minds... that ye may

be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy (Christian?) prophets (e.g. Paul, v.15), and of the commandment of us the apostles" (v.1,2).

"Sincere minds" could be an example of Peter imputing righteousness to his readership, assuming their sincerity and standing "in Christ" despite being aware of serious failures amongst them. Or it could be that Peter is now focusing upon the faithful remnant amongst his readership.

3:2 *That you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles*- AV: "Of us the apostles". The things written in Peter's letters were therefore a reminder of what had been spoken by the New Testament prophets, and what Peter and the apostles had taught all the thousands of converts who were baptized at Pentecost. There was clearly follow up teaching in addition to the address recorded in Acts 2. The "prophets" would refer to the group of Christians who spoke on that day as inspired prophets, fulfilling Joel's prophecy of prophets being raised up.

The letters of Peter urge his readers to “be mindful of the words which were spoken before”. Yet this is evidently alluding to the frequent references to the disciples being slow to “remember” [s.w. “mindful”] the words which their Lord had “spoken before” (Lk. 24:6,8; Jn. 2:17,22; 12:16). Indeed, the same word is used about Peter ‘remembering’ [s.w. “be mindful”] all too late, the words which his Lord had “spoken before” to him (Mt. 26:75). So Peter was aware that his readers knew that he had not ‘remembered’ the words his Lord had “spoken before” to *him*- and yet, knowing that, he exhorts his readers to ‘remember’ or ‘be mindful’ [s.w.] of words which had been previously spoken. His readers likely had memorized the Gospels by heart. And yet Peter asks them to learn from his mistake, not to be as slow to remember as the disciples had been, and he especially. This is the basis of powerful exhortation- a repentant life, not an appearance of sinlessness.

3:3 *Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts*- The "first" or most important (Greek) thing they were to understand when it came to Bible teaching about the last days was "that there shall come in the last days mockers". The presence of false teachers within the ecclesia would be one of the clearest signs of the second coming. The Lord "began" His Olivet prophecy with a warning about false teachers, as if this would be the first main sign (Mk. 13:5). Likewise Paul says that it was needless for him to write to the Thessalonians about the "times and seasons" of Christ's return. "For yourselves know perfectly (clearly) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess.5:1,2); i.e. it would be when there were unready elements within the ecclesia, to whom Christ's return would be thief-like. In similar vein, John taught that the believers could be certain they were in the 'last days' of AD70 because of the presence of false teaching (1 Jn. 2:18).

Connecting this with our comment on 1 Thess. 5:1,2, it may well be that the 'false teaching' is not so much in terms of basic abstract doctrine, but in the encouragement of a way of life that is not alert for the second coming. As we progress through 2 Peter 3, and indeed the entire New Testament, it becomes painfully obvious that this class of people were to arise *within* the ecclesia. As there were false teachers among natural Israel, so there must be within the New Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter implies that this fact is a major theme in the teaching of all the apostles and Spirit-guided brethren. There are a number of connections between the descriptions of these people in 2 Pet. 2, and the language of 2 Pet. 3.

Such false teaching was something which Peter was prophesying: "There *shall* come... scoffers... saying...". But now the tenses change to the present: "For (because) this they willingly *are* ignorant of...". Even then these brethren had shut their mind to Bible based reasoning, refusing to consider the power of God's word as exhibited in the Old Testament. It was therefore only a matter of time before they started speaking forth false ideas. And Jude's allusions to 2 Peter 2 are because the situation predicted had by his time already started to come about, in the AD70 context.

The "mockery" was in order to justify the indulgence of "their own lusts". I have noted several times in chapter 2 that the false teaching was rooted in a justification of lust, especially sexual lust. The reality of the second coming ought to be a guard against sexual misbehaviour. The subconscious desire for most false teaching is in order to make the way easier and justify human lust.

This links up with the false teachers of 2 Pet. 2 being styled "them that walk after the flesh in... lust" (2:10). Thus, as always, the motivation for the questioning of true doctrine, in this case that of the second coming, was in order to justify a fleshly way of life. There seems a connection of thought here with the Lord's reflection that the servant who felt the Lord's coming was extensively delayed would start to "eat and drink with the drunken" and beat the fellow-servants. Peter's later reference to the Lord's thief-like coming for such brethren (:10) indicates that there is a connection here. This would show that Peter is interpreting the Lord's description of the man who thought that the Master was delaying His coming, as meaning that in reality he was questioning whether his Master would ever come. This must surely be where a disinterest in prophecy ultimately leads- in a man's heart, anyway.

3:4 *And saying: Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*- Note how the false teaching was expressed in the form of a question. This common characteristic of false teachers dates right back to the serpent in Eden, showing that they have the family likeness of the beast. But then came the thrust of their argument: "For since the

fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (AV). If "the fathers" here refers to the ecclesial elders who had known Christ in the flesh (as the phrase is used in 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Jn. 2:13,14), it would appear that these dishonest doubters of the first century were middle aged believers who had themselves been waiting some time for the Lord's return, having been baptized by Peter at Pentecost. Christ's parable of the wicked servant getting tired of waiting would indicate the same. In any case, a group of arrogant youngsters would be unlikely to have the impact on the ecclesia which 2 Pet. 2 and 3:17 indicate that these false teachers would have.

This idea that Christ would not literally return was doubtless wrapped up in very respectable terms. We cannot overemphasize that the motivation for this false doctrine was in order to justify a fleshly lifestyle. Apostasy from the truth always has this motive. Conversely, true enthusiasm for the Lord's return is invariably associated with a spiritual way of life (cp. Rom. 13:12). 2 Thess. 2:2 says that the deceiving brethren taught that the day of Christ is here" (R.V.)- presumably through the idea that the believers now are fully the Kingdom of God, that the Lord's mystical presence amongst us is in fact His real and only form of existence and 'coming' to be with us, and that therefore there was no need for a doctrine of a second coming. In such an hour as the unworthy "think not", the Lord will return (Mt. 24:44). The Greek translated "think not" implies a very strong level of conviction that he will not return; it doesn't just imply that they will be expecting him but not very eagerly.

It may be in this way that there is a claim of "peace and safety" within the latter day ecclesia, seeing that "peace and safety" is very much the Old Testament language of the Kingdom (1 Chron. 22:10; Ez. 28:26; 34:25,28; 39:26; Zech. 14:11). It is very difficult to achieve a balance between appreciating our high spiritual status now, and realizing that we are not yet the fullness of God's Kingdom. A true appreciation of our position should lead us to value the second coming more, to personally yearn for it, and see its vital necessity. Never will that be a dry doctrine which we just assent to.

But the question "Where is the promise of his coming?" has an extraordinary number of allusions to other Scriptures, which all confirm a uniform interpretation.

In Ezekiel 12, the desolation of Israel by the Assyrian invasion was foretold. The message was continually mocked by the false prophets, who claimed inspiration from God to claim that the day of judgment had been endlessly delayed. They also belittled the predictions made by the true prophets, spreading their ideas until it became a common joke that Yahweh's prophets kept speaking of a coming day of the Lord that never came. But God's reply was clear: "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?... I will make this proverb to cease... say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect (fulfilment) of every vision... I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall no

more be prolonged" (Ez. 12:22-25). The similarities with the last days leading up to AD70 are clear. The true word of God regarding the coming day of the Lord was mocked; a belief that "the days are prolonged" led to the conclusion that "every vision faileth", as the thought that "my Lord delayeth his coming" resulted in a lack of faith in the word of promise. Our Lord's statement that "all shall be fulfilled" at His coming (Lk. 21:32) matches the assurance given here that "every vision" *would* be fulfilled when the day came. Those within the ecclesia of Israel at Ezekiel's time who were expressing such doubt, were matched by those within the ecclesia of spiritual Israel (perhaps also Jews?) in the first century. Clearly they must have their latter day counterparts.

Set against the background of the imminent Assyrian invasion, the denunciation of Israel in Isaiah 5 also has marked similarities with the words of 2 Pet. 3. "My people... have no knowledge... that say, Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it... therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the stubble... (so) is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people" (Is. 5:13,19,24,25). Peter implies that the false teachers he is referring to should have "grown in knowledge" (3:18), and that because of their mocking request for God to speed up His purpose they also would have a fiery destruction. The irony was, of course, that the apparent delay was due to God's mercy in providing them time to repent (:9-12).

There are several allusions in 2 Peter 3 to the Olivet prophecy. The attitude Peter is speaking of here in :4 is related to that of the elder servant who decides that his Lord is delaying His return, and therefore he can act in a fleshly way as if the Lord will never come (Mt. 24:48). The person Jesus describes did not throw off the external trappings of his faith. "*My Lord* delays his coming" indicates that he still spoke of Jesus as his lord, and we are therefore left to conclude that he did not say these things in a spirit of public, gross abandon to the ways of the flesh, but rather deep in his heart, or perhaps as a new form of doctrine. Our Lord spoke of the man thinking this "in his heart"; but because our thoughts always find reflection in our words (Mt. 12:34), it is inevitable that Peter should speak of these people now actually saying those words. Thus the words of these false teachers had long been gestating.

The following verses in 2 Peter 3 speak of how God's word was present in the initial creation and His subsequent re-ordering of it. In just the same way, the word of God would have a part to play in the judgment of these false teachers. This would suggest that their claim that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" refers back to that of Gen.1. However, we can expect to see in the reasoning of these men a fair degree of complexity. It is just possible that the concept of a new creation in Christ was so common in the thinking of the early believers (Rev. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:15,16; 3:10; Rom. 8; Eph. 2:10; 3:9; 4:24 etc.), that they were saying 'Since the apostles ("fathers") died, everything is going on fine since the new creation began on

the cross. The spiritual graces we experience now as part of the new creation are such that there doesn't seem any need for this second coming doctrine'. The error was in focusing upon only one side of a bigger picture of Bible teaching, and then using that distorted picture to justify the way of the flesh. And yet the bottom line is that the latter day brotherhood will shy away from the second coming *in their hearts*, and doubtless each will articulate this in different ways: doctrinally, practically or simply in the attitude of their hearts.

3:5 *For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God*- They had willingly forgotten that it was through God's word of command that the earth arose out of the water at the creation, and by this same word of God the water was commanded to overflow the earth again at Noah's time, taking the world (or that part of it) back to how it was before creation- a sphere covered in water. One message of creation is simply that God's word is powerful; for creation is presented as creation through a spoken word of God. That same word is powerful and effective for both creation and destruction in judgment. The false teachers were exalting their word over that of God's.

3:6 *By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*- The "means" is that of God's word, "by which" the present world was created, by commanding the waters to recede to let the dry land appear (Gen. 1:9). Peter had previously made the point that the promised judgment of God in Noah's time was delayed in order to allow the maximum scope for repentance by that wicked world (1 Pet. 3:20). The false teachers were ignorant of this fact through having forgotten what they once knew- i.e. that a similar delay was being experienced by their generation in the coming of the Lord's day. Because of this, they were now squarely matching those who mocked Noah. The times of Noah are a definite type of the 'last days' of the Jewish system leading up to AD70. "The *world* that then was... perished... the *Heaven and the earth* which are now, by the same word (of God) are... reserved unto fire" (cp. water; :6,7). Thus Peter equates the "world" with the present "Heavens and earth", implying that a "Heavens and earth" were destroyed in Noah's time. It was "all flesh" that perished (Gen. 6:11-13). This indicates a clearly figurative interpretation of "Heavens and earth" as meaning an order of things. This line of argument has yet to be answered by Pentecostals, Catholics and others, over-enthusiastic to see in these verses a destruction of God's own perfect dwelling place as well as this beautiful planet. The quotation of Is. 65:17 in :13 should also be appreciated- the new "heavens and earth" is a new system of things to come upon this (already) beautiful earth. The literal heavens and earth were hardly destroyed in Noah's time.

Elements of this prophecy refer to the ending of the Jewish system in AD70; the world of Noah "perished" (:6) as the Jewish world would. The same Greek word occurs in Heb. 1:11 concerning the 'perishing' of the Jewish heavens and earth due to the unchanging

ministry of the Lord. This would indicate that the Law itself was in some way ended in AD70, although of course it was 'taken out of the way' on the cross (Col. 2:14-17). The same word for "perish" occurs in 2 Pet. 3:9 in the context of God's punishment of the wicked within the ecclesia- He is unwilling that "any (of them) should perish". Jude 11 matches this by warning the same class of how their prototypes "perished in the gainsaying of Core". It appears that the judgments which were to bring the Jewish system to a close would therefore be the same as those which would punish the false teachers. We can conclude from this that many of the first century false teachers were Jews or Judaist-influenced.

We are told by the Lord Jesus and Peter that the second coming is typified by the flood. There is therefore a similarity between the world of Noah's time, and our last days. It is easy for us to fail to appreciate the carnage of the flood; the Sunday School image of happy giraffes with extra long necks poking out of the ark really isn't correct. The destruction wrought by the flood was absolute and devastating. This gives us a clue to the huge amount of change which the Lord's coming will suddenly bring on the earth. 2 Peter 3 draws a parallel between Noah's world being destroyed by water, and ours being ended by fire. The flood water changed the climate, and totally remoulded the topography. We can safely assume that even *greater* physical changes will be brought about by the Lord's return. Is. 54:9 speaks of the latter day judgments upon Israel being "as the waters of Noah unto me: for the *mountains* shall *depart*, and the *hills* be *removed*; but my *kindness shall* not *depart* from thee, neither shall the *covenant*... be *removed*" . Thus in the future, the mountains and hills *will* depart as they did at Noah's time; but God's kindness and covenant will not.

3:7 *But the heavens that now are and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men*- The flood was the result of God's commands to the Angels. "By the same word" could suggest that when God spoke to the Angels about the flood, His commandments then also included details of the judgements at the second coming.

“By the same word" of God that had caused the earth to rise from the waters and later called the waters over the earth, "the heavens and the earth which are now... are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (AV). The allusion to Mt. 5:18 confirms that there must be some reference here to the passing away of the Law and the Jewish system associated with it: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled" . Our Lord's fulfilment of the Law was primarily on the cross, but the fact that 2 Pet. 3 speaks of the Jewish heavens and earth passing away in AD70 indicates that the finishing of the Law did not come into full effect until the destruction of the temple. This explains the many hints throughout the New Testament that the believers kept some parts of the Law prior to AD70.

2 Thess. 1:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming "from Heaven with his mighty Angels, *in flaming fire* taking vengeance" on those who had rejected the knowledge of God, and had consciously disobeyed the Gospel of Christ. This connection not only underlines the fact that both AD70 and our last days are spoken of in 2 Pet. 3, but also proves that the "heavens and earth" which suffer fire are representative of individuals. Hence Peter's description of the day of "fire" as being "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men".

2 Pet. 3:7 speaks of the heavens and earth being reserved unto "*the day* of judgment and perdition of ungodly men", and then goes straight on to point out that "one *day* is with the Lord as a thousand years". Whilst the judgment seat itself may last a very short time, does this read as if *the day* or era of judgment will in some way be the 1,000 years of the Millennium, even though the wicked individuals themselves will probably die fairly quickly? The Millennium will be the period in which the earth will gradually be cleansed of the results of the sins of "ungodly men". See on Rev. 14:11.

2 Pet. 3:7 uses the same Greek word for "ungodly" as in 2 Thess. 1:8 to describe the false teachers; and it occurs an impressive six times in Jude's letter concerning the same people. The warning that judgment would no longer be delayed shows that "the day of judgment" which came on the Judaizers must refer to AD70. But there can be no doubt that "The day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" must refer ultimately to the second coming. The idea of punishment being "reserved" is continuing a theme of the preceding chapter. “The angels that sinned" were "*reserved*" unto judgment" (2:4), the responsible people to whom Lot preached are "*reserved*... unto the day of judgment" (3:7), and thus for the false teachers of the first century too, "the mist of darkness is *reserved* for ever" (2:17). As the first two examples received judgment in this life and also a 'reservation' of future punishment, so the sinners within the first century ecclesias would receive a punishment at the manifestation of the Lord in AD70, and also at his second coming. This explains the dual reference of 2 Pet. 3 to both these periods. The theme of judgment being "reserved" adds weight to Peter's plea for his readers to realize that God was not suspending judgment indefinitely, but that despite an apparent delay in meting it out, judgment was without doubt reserved for revelation at a future date. The continued emphasis on God using the agent of His word to do this must be connected with Peter's request for us to give more careful attention to that word as spoken by the true prophets / teachers (3:12,15,16). It will be by the Word and our attitude to it that we will be judged at the last day. As the word of God would be the agent of destruction for the unworthy, so it could bring salvation to the righteous.

I have earlier suggested that the language of creation used here may echo the idea of the new creation in Christ. "By the word of God the heavens were of old" suggests the account of the new creation in Col. 1:17- and "the word of God" is a title of the Lord. Thus as He had brought about the new creation, so He was capable of punishing (in AD 70) and destroying (at the second coming) those parts of it which failed to reflect His glory.

3:8 *But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day*- The attitude of willing ignorance by the unworthy can quite easily be adopted by us. "Beloved, be *not* ignorant (as those of :5 were) of this one (Greek 'other') thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (AV). Peter bids us be aware of one other thing- that God can collapse and expand periods of time as He wishes. Not only can one of God's "days" be a vast expanse of time to us in human terms, but also one of our brief days can be turned into a thousand years by God if He wishes. This principle is illuminated by appreciating that Peter is here quoting Ps. 90:4. This prayer of Moses was bringing before God the miseries of the condemned generation in the wilderness, and pleading that God would repent of [i.e. change] His decision to bar them from entering the land (Ps. 90:12-17). After all, Moses had previously changed God's declared purpose of destroying Israel and making of him a nation; and had not God declared to him that He was willing to show Moses the fact that His purpose could be changed in accordance with human behaviour (Num. 14:34 A.V.mg.)? Thus Moses had every reason to try to change God's plan again through prayer. Against this background Peter is reasoning that if Moses could try to pray for the days of punishment for Israel to be shortened and for their sin to be overlooked, then we too can find reason to pray for the shortening of the days until the Kingdom, and for God's mercy upon the sinners of His people. There are a number of significant parallels between Peter's argument and Psalm 90:

Psalm 90	2 Peter 3
:2	:5
:5	:8
:6	The language of 1 Pet. 1:24; Is. 40:6-8 re. the first century Jews
:7	:7,10,12
:12	:2,15,18
:13,14	:12

And for the enthusiast: Ps. 90:16,17= Hab. 3:2 (re. the second coming) = 2 Pet. 3:12,13.

It is quite possible to translate 2 Pet. 3:8 as "One day with the Lord is as a thousand", which would suggest another Psalm allusion- this time to Ps. 84:18: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand". In this case Peter would be saying 'By all means be aware that a day of judgment and condemnation will surely come, as outlined in :5-7; but beloved, do be mindful too of the wonderful reward. Just 24 (12?) hours of perfect fellowship with the Lord, unmarred by our sin, is worth a thousand years of this life!'. Truly an inspiring thought, and a motivation to come to appreciate the righteousness of God.

3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should came to repentance*- "The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward" (AV) of the last days. This longsuffering of Jesus suggests the parable of the persistent widow, whose continued requests should match our prayers for the second coming (the vengeance of our adversaries which she requested will only come then). "Though he bear long" (s.w. 'longsuffering') with us, "God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Lk. 18:7). The "us" whom Peter refers to as experiencing the Lord's longsuffering ('bearing long') are therefore to be equated with "the elect" in their fervent prayers for the second coming. The days being shortened for the elect's sake therefore refers to the hastening of the second coming on account of the elect's prayers (Mt. 24:22). In view of the later references to Mt. 24, it is not unreasonable to think that Peter is consciously alluding to Mt. 24:22 concerning the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect's prayers, through his allusion to the parable of the persistent widow of Lk. 18:7.

Peter presses home the point: "The Lord (Jesus- :15,18) is not slack concerning his promise (to return- of Jn. 14:3,18,28), as some men (in the ecclesia) count slackness", but is longsuffering (:9). The Greek for "slack" here means 'delay'; this is assurance that God is not 'delaying' as men dilly-dally in the execution of their plans, but is rather postponing this for a good reason.

This kind of postponement, misinterpreted as "delay", was a major feature of God's dealings with natural Israel previously. So it is not surprising that there are a number of instructive Old Testament allusions here. Is. 30:17-19 records how Israel would suffer for their sins, but then God would wait for a certain time until they cried to Him in repentance, before bringing about a time of blessing on the earth based around the Lord's presence in Jerusalem. "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one (Dt. 28 language)... till ye be left as a tree bereft of branches (how Paul describes what happened to Israel in the first century, Rom. 11)... and therefore (i.e. because you are such sinners) will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted (through your repentance), that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in

Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more (the language of Is. 65:17-25, quoted in 2 Pet. 3:13): He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry (of repentance): *when* He shall hear it, He will answer thee". Not only is God delaying the Kingdom until there is repentance in Israel, but such is His *mercy* that He will not bring it about until such repentance. His purpose should not be seen, therefore, just in terms of the cold equation 'Repentance in Israel= second coming', but the supreme *mercy* and *love* which this arrangement shows should be appreciated. "And *therefore* will He be exalted" Isaiah comments- by those who understand these things. Rom. 11:32-36 is a marvellous example of this.

Peter's stress on how the word of God would bring about the day of the Lord shows his realization of how the false teachers were really trying to say that the word of God was untrue, and that *it* was delaying. Perhaps he had Hab. 2:3 in mind: "The vision (of the word) is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry". The context is a prophecy concerning the coming Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem. Evidently there were some in Israel who felt that the fulfilment of these words of God was 'tarrying' so long that it would never come. The next verse continues "But the just shall live by his faith", i.e. in the eventual fulfilment of the word of God. This is twice quoted in the New Testament concerning the first century believers (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38). It is therefore in order that verse 3 concerning the coming 'day of the Lord' in the Babylonian invasion should have relevance to the same period. If 2 Peter 3 refers here, then this is indeed the case. It is noteworthy that prophecies like Jer. 17:27 speak of this Babylonian invasion as a "fire" in both literal and spiritual terms- as 2 Peter 3 also employs "fire". Reading between the lines of the New Testament epistles, it is evident that Paul often phrased things in such a way as to warn against what was presumably a common temptation- in this case, to think that the day of the Lord had been delayed so long that effectively the brethren felt that it would never come. Thus Heb. 10:37 quotes Hab. 2:3 which we have been considering with reference to the second coming: "He that shall come *will* come (cp. 'I am that I am'), and will *not* tarry".

The key to overcoming this temptation was to remember that the delay in the Lord's coming was a sign of God's mercy in granting sinners time to repent. Rather than leading to slackness of service, the delay should lead to greater diligence.

This "longsuffering" is because God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (AV). The "any" and "all" here evidently refer to those whom God has called- the responsible. The fact that millions of people throughout history have lived and died with no chance of repenting or avoiding 'perishing' through response to the Gospel, is proof enough that God is perfectly willing that many should perish and

not come to repentance, as far as the world in general is concerned. But such is His desire for the *responsible* to live up to their spiritual potential, that He has delayed the coming of the Lord. Doubtless Israel deserved immediate punishment for their crucifixion of Christ- a human 'God' would certainly have reacted straight away- but judgment was deferred until AD70 in order to give them every opportunity to repent. God's judgments in the OT were often deferred because people repented (e.g. Is. 48:9; Nineveh); yet such is His supreme grace to Israel that when they unrepentantly crucified His Son, He *still* deferred judgment. The same is true in our days. What pain it must give our Father to see this time which has been allowed as extra opportunity being used irresponsibly! The bridegroom of the parable "tarried", the same Greek word translated "delay" in "my Lord *delayeth* his coming". Tragically, this resulted in the spiritual slumbering of all of the virgins rather than their greater eagerness and expectancy.

That this passage is indeed concerning the responsible is confirmed by the allusion it makes to Ez. 18:23: "Have I any pleasure (Heb. "will") at all that the wicked should die... and not that He should return from His ways, and live?". The context is concerning a Jew (i.e. responsible) who had been wicked but now had repented. The 'perishing' of 2 Peter 3:9 must refer to destruction at the judgment, God is not willing that any of us ("longsuffering to *us*ward") should be condemned then, therefore that day is delayed. Perhaps we can infer that it is because of God's particular love for our very last generation of believers that the day is delayed- perhaps by 40 years, as in the case of Israel in AD70? It is possible that there may be a "generation" of 40 years after the blossoming of the fig tree- i.e. the first signs of Jewish repentance (cp. the Jews for Jesus movement?).

The way this worked out in the first century is demonstrated by the judgment of the false teachers in the Thyatira ecclesia. "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold... I will cast her into great tribulation... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:21-23). This latter phrase clearly refers to the second coming (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 20:12; 22:12); but in addition to their judgment then, they were also punished in the "great tribulation" of AD70 referred to in Mt. 24:21,29. As explained in 2 Pet. 3, these people were 'given space to repent', but did not. Therefore judgment came. Sadly, there must be similarities with the last days. But it must ever be appreciated that God is doing all things possible to bring about that repentance; and we should likewise help these people to repent, so that the Lord's coming will be hastened. The idea of God being unwilling that any should perish but that all should repent must have some connection with the parable of the lost sheep. The efforts of the good shepherd should be replicated, so the context of the parable indicates, by the believers. Thus the parable is summarized: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt. 18:17 cp. 2 Pet. 3:9). The fact that there is /

will be a delay in the second coming indicates that there will be a distinct stubbornness by some to repent in the last days- perhaps the last Christian generation is the lost sheep generation, whose repentance will bring the Lord's return? "*When* the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk. 4:29).

But what exactly does 'coming to repentance' imply? "Longsuffering" on the Lord's part takes us back to 1 Pet. 3:20, where we learn that God's longsuffering resulted in a delay in the flood coming, so that people had the maximum opportunity to repent and enter the ark, representing entry into Christ by baptism. The Greek for "come to" repentance has the idea of a one off act. A glance down a concordance under "repentance" shows that this word is associated with only two things- baptism, or a major repentance by a completely apostate believer. The delay in the second coming is for these two reasons- so that a seriously apostate group within the ecclesia can repent, and so that there can be the maximum possible allowance of time for the encouragement of people to be baptized. In addition to our prayers being able to speed the Lord's return, these two reasons for the delay involve our own effort speeding it. By repentance and encouragement of our weak brethren to repent, this really will happen; and the quicker we spread the Gospel world-wide, "baptizing all nations", the quicker the delay will end and the Lord will come (Mt. 24:14). The latter day Elijah ministry will presumably be after the pattern of John the Baptist- with an emphasis, therefore, on the baptism of Jesus as a means of preparing them for Christ's coming.

3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief*- This is an evident reference to another part of the Olivet prophecy, which has reference to both AD70 and the second coming. The Jewish "house" was "broken up" by the thief-like coming of the Lord. 1 Thess. 5 refers to this same passage, interpreting it as a description of how the Lord will come unexpectedly to the spiritually weak within the ecclesia. It will be a time when they think they are in "peace and safety" spiritually, and will publicly teach this ("When they shall *say* peace and safety"). This is exactly the theme of 2 Peter 3- the false teachers within the ecclesia of the last days will preach that the second coming is far off; that in fact all is in peace and spiritual safety within the household. But as the thief would break the house up, so 2 Peter 3 graphically describes the total dissolution of the Jewish system ("heavens and earth"). Mt. 24:43 indicates that the Lord comes as a thief to those who would be watching over the house- i.e. to the leaders of the ecclesia. The false teachers will therefore be in the leadership of the body- otherwise it would be hard for their ideas to gain the following which these prophecies indicate they did and will.

Then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned

up- "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" may therefore refer to the destruction of this class of leaders, the 'heavens' of the ecclesia. “A great noise" in Greek implies a whirring- perhaps referring to there being a manifestation of the cherubim at the second coming ("the sign of the son of man in Heaven"?). Jer. 30:23,24, in a decidedly latter day context, speaks of God's judgments coming as a mighty whirlwind, associated as it is with the cherubim (Ez. 1:4). "The elements shall melt with fervent heat" provides impressive evidence for the AD70 application of this chapter when it is realized that most of the occurrences of the Greek word for "elements" are concerning the Mosaic ordinances (Gal. 4:3; 5:21; Col. 2:8,20). "Melt" can mean 'to unloose', conjuring up the idea of the law as a burden which was now being unstrapped.

"The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (AV) may refer specifically to the judgments coming on the land ("earth") of Israel, and the ending of the works of the Law through the destruction of the temple in AD70. As Noah's world was destroyed with literal water, so it is not unreasonable to expect a literal aspect to the "fire" here mentioned, although this is not to question the symbolic reference of fire to the anger of God. The temple was destroyed with fire, although interestingly Dan. 9:26 speaks of its end coming with a flood; fitting in perfectly with Peter's connection of the AD70 judgments on Israel with the flood.
The passing away of heaven and earth suggests another link with the Olivet prophecy: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:34). The physical heavens and earth being permanent (Ecc. 1:4; Is. 45:18; Ps. 78:69), our Lord must have been referring to the order of things which would end in both AD70 and the last days. The faithful who came through the figurative 'fire' of those times would do so through their clinging to the Lord's words. We have earlier commented that this is a theme in 2 Peter 3- by God's word the natural and spiritual creation came about, and by it too sinners can be destroyed if they fail to let it act upon them.

The detailed description of all the elements of heaven and earth being destroyed is embedded, as we have seen, in allusions to the Olivet prophecy. It is therefore to be expected that our Lord's talking there about the sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling etc. (Mt. 24:29) should also have some connection with 2 Pet. 3. The Olivet prophecy speaks of these things being obscured and affected- but 2 Peter 3 describes their complete and fundamental destruction. Sun, moon and stars have several associations with Israel (e.g. in Joseph's dream), and 'Heavens and earth' have also been symbolic of the Jews (e.g. Dt. 32:1). Mt. 24:29,30 describe how there will be signs in these things, and then the Lord would come with the clouds of heaven. 2 Peter 3 shows how this refers to the lead up to AD70, and that then the Jewish system was totally destroyed. This means that the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to replace the previous sun, moon etc. would have a limited reference to the system of things based around Christ and his word (Mt. 24:34) which was firmly established in

AD70. But most importantly, the dissolution of these 'heavens' refers to the second coming, with the destruction it will bring upon both the Jewish and Gentile worlds, and also upon the unworthy in the ecclesia. This shows that the signs in the heavens which warn of the second coming are not just in the Jewish and Gentile world- but (even clearer) in the state of the wicked within the "heavens" of the ecclesia, who will meet their judgment in this horrendous destruction of all that is evil.

A number of images found in 2 Pet. 3 also occur together in Nahum 1:4-8: "He (God) rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry (cp. the earth standing out of the water in 2 Pet. 3)... the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence ("the elements shall melt... the earth shall be burned up", 2 Pet. 3:10), yea, the world, and all that dwell therein ("the earth and the works that are therein")... His fury is poured out like fire... with an overrunning flood (cp. 2 Pet. 3:6) He will make an utter end". But all this is prefaced by Nah. 1:3: "The Lord is slow to anger". As God always gave ample time for repentance in His dealings with both Israel and the nations in the Old Testament, so He would with spiritual Israel (and even more so?). All God's past dealings with men, as at the flood, with Israel at the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions, in His judgments of the nations, all these will find their summation in how God will deal with us in the last days. In this fact lies the value of following up the Old Testament allusions which Peter makes. That an appreciation of all this must have a fundamentally practical effect upon our lives is something which cannot be over-emphasized.

3:11 *Seeing that these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be- in all holy living and reverence toward God*- The logic is irresistible; all things of the world as we know it are to be dissolved; only our Godly character will survive the fire; the word which develops this will also last beyond the destruction of the heavens and earth, seeing that it is through the word that they will be destroyed (cp. Mt. 24:34). By developing such a Spirit-formed character, we are "looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God" (:12)- a fair summary of what we have read between the lines of this chapter.

3:12 *Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat*- The earth being dissolved connects with Is. 24:19: "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved". The earth may specifically refer to the land- that promised to Abraham, which is the centre of Bible prophecy. The previous verse alludes to the flood, as 2 Pet. 3 does: "The windows from on high are open (cp. Gen. 7:11) and the foundations of the earth do shake" (Is. 24:18). Is. 24, especially in the Septuagint, appears to have been very much in our Lord's mind during His Olivet prophecy. 2 Pet. 3

being based on the Olivet prophecy, it is to be expected that it will have connections with the same source passages. "The earth" in Is. 24 meaning 'the land' (of Israel) indicates that 2 Pet. 3 is also primarily concerning the troubles that came upon the land in AD70 and which shall come there in the last days.

Frequently the Greek word translated "look for" here is used in the context of the second coming, often translated "waiting" (Jude 21; 1 Cor. 1:7; Rom. 8:19; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28; Tit. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). Our 'waiting' for the Lord is not therefore a passive thing- it is shown by our "holy way of life", something which needs our constant active attention. All too often the impression is given that our 'waiting' is a grim, passive clinging on to a set of doctrines received at baptism. This is certainly part of it- but the quicker we take a dynamic approach to considering "what manner of persons" we ought to be, the sooner the Lord's coming will be hastened. That our spiritual effort, especially in prayer, preaching and pastoral work mentioned earlier, should hasten the coming of that great day should never cease to be a source of wonder and inspiration to us. But do we really want to see the day of Christ? Distractions of family life, the challenge of careers, personal ambition, a desire for a few more years to work on our character- these and many other factors lead us away from an all consuming desire to see the day of the Lord. And if we lack that, then there will be little true motivation for developing a spiritual character and doing the preaching and pastoral work, which we know between them will hasten the day. As if to provide motivation in all this, verse 12 repeats verbatim the language of :10 and 11 concerning the totality of destruction which awaits the present world order: "The day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (= :11)... and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (= :10)". This repetition underlines the fact that every element of the present system will be destroyed- the only common link between this life and the future world order is the spirituality which we now develop. We came into this world with nothing, a naked baby; and all we can leave it with is God's record of our spiritual character. Thus it will be by our real spiritual character that we recognize and relate to each other in the Kingdom, rather than by our present physical characteristics. For this reason even the rejected will be able to recognize (in this sense) giants of faith such as Abraham entering into the Kingdom.

The coming of the Lord is spoken of as being delayed (Mt. 25:5); and yet it is our spirituality which hastens the day of Christ's coming (2 Pet. 3:12). Putting these facts together shows that the day of Christ will not come when planned because the ecclesia are not as spiritual as they were 'expected' to be- or at least, that's how God wants us to see it.

3:13 *But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein*

dwells righteousness- As opposed to the present earth, where "the works that are *therein* shall be burnt up" (:10). For Peter, therefore, the vision of the Kingdom was centred around the fact that goodness and righteous principles would so evidently abound, being almost physically manifested in this planet; it will be a "new earth *wherein* dwelleth righteousness". Psalm 72 stresses the abundance of righteousness in that time, showing that David's picture of that time was similar. Likewise if we truly *love* righteousness, this is how we will perceive the Kingdom- rather than as a glorified tropical holiday.

"According to His promise" shows that Peter is referring to a specific Scripture- surely Is. 65:17, where a picture of the Kingdom is titled "the new heavens and earth". "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens..." contrasts with the words of the mockers: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (:4). This indicates that "the promise of his coming" was not just the simple statement of Jesus that He would return (Jn. 14:3), but it included the details of the Kingdom which He would establish, as outlined in the promise of Is. 65:17-25. Thus the doctrines of the literal second coming and the future Kingdom on earth are inseparable. Thus the slippery slope ran: The Lord is delaying longer than I thought; maybe it isn't important that he comes: therefore the Kingdom on earth is a pipe dream. So "the faith" was lost. There is also a connection with Is. 66:22-24: "The new heavens and the new earth which I will make... it shall come to pass that... they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched". These last phrases are quoted in Mk. 9:44 concerning the punishment of the wicked at the judgment seat. The reference to fire fits the 2 Pet. 3 context, again showing that the 'heavens and earth' which are to be destroyed with fire include the wicked believers who will be punished in Gehenna. Note that the idea of the ecclesia being ultimately purged of false teachers is presented by Peter as a *comfort* to the faithful remnant.

3:14 *Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight*- With sins covered through the blood of Christ. Such a condition, even for these "pure minds" (:1), can only be achieved and maintained through much diligence. If it is our desire to be found acceptable by our bridegroom, our awareness of how near we are to meeting him will motivate us to constant self-examination so that we can be presented to him spotless.

Knowledge of the coming of judgment leads to self-examination: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come... But who may abide the day of his coming?" (Mal. 3:2 cp. Rev. 6:17). Belief in the second coming must provoke the question: "What manner of persons ought (we) to be...", as we hasten towards the day of judgment? "Wherefore,

seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him... without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:11,14). When Israel knew Yahweh was going to appear, they were to prepare themselves against that day by sacrifice and atonement (Lev. 9:4). Jonah simply proclaimed that judgment would come upon Nineveh; as far as we know, he didn't appeal for repentance. But the very knowledge of judgment to come was in itself an imperative, a command, to the Ninevites to repent (Jonah 3:4,5). "Let the bed be undefiled: *for* fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4 RV). Sexual immorality is impossible if we truly believe rather than merely know... that judgment day is coming.

3:15 *And consider, that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you-* 2 Pet. 3:12,15 reminds us that by our prayers and spiritual development, the days before the second coming will be shortened. If they were not, even the elect would lose their faith (Mt. 24:22)- showing how those of us who are alive at Christ's coming will *barely* survive the spiritual traumas of the last days. The virgins were sleeping when they should have been watching; and Peter says that the righteous in the last generation (see context) will *scarcely* be saved (1 Pet. 4:18).

It sounds as if Peter had in mind a particular passage of Paul, the tenor of which is repeated in all his letters. It may well be that he is referring to the idea of there being a delay in the second coming to allow repentance; however, if "these things" is the repeated warning against the false teachers of the last days, and advice on how to live in those times, then this is quite easily discernible. Moreover, there is a connection back to :2,3 where Peter reminds us how warnings against false teachers were a major theme of all the inspired writings of the New Testament. However, Peter writes as if he is referring to a particular passage in Paul's writings. A likely candidate is Rom. 2:3-5, which addresses the weak (Jewish) members of the Rome ecclesia, warning them that there will be a day of judgment, and that they should not despise God's love in delaying that day so that they could repent. "Thinkest thou... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (cp. 2 Pet. 3:15): not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)? But after thy... impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself (cp. “kept in store", 2 Pet. 3:7) wrath against the day of wrath (cp. fire) and... righteous judgment of God" (cp. 2 Pet. 3:7).

Another possibility is Eph. 5:15,16: "Walk circumspectly... redeeming the time, because the days are evil". By 'buying up' the opportunities for spiritual development in the daily round of life, we are effectively "redeeming the time" in the sense of hastening the Lord's return. Paul pleads with us to see the urgency of this principle: "Wherefore be ye not

unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (:17). *Seeing that* they could redeem the time to the second coming in this way, the exhortation is driven home: "Awake! Thou that sleepest!... and Christ shall give thee light" by His early return.

3:16 *As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things. In his letters there are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the other scriptures*- An underlying theme of Peter's argument is the supremacy of the word of God, and how through understanding of and obedience to it, a character can be developed which will pass through the judgments which that word will bring upon the world. Those who are to be destroyed at that time, such as the false teachers, will have failed to understand these things of which Peter and Paul spoke- they were 'ignorant'. But they were not unaware of Paul's epistles- they 'wrested' them through their wilful misunderstanding of them (:5). The beginnings of this sad situation are found in Heb. 5:11, where the Jewish believers are called "dull of hearing" God's word, and therefore found the exposition of Melchizedek "hard" to understand. It is to these same Jewish believers that Peter's letters are addressed. Thus a lack of sensitivity in Bible study and to the movement of the Spirit, resulted eventually in a wilful misunderstanding of basic teaching concerning fundamental doctrine, e.g. the second coming. It takes real faith in the teaching of God's word here to accept that this really can happen, and has done so. The example of the first century is there for our learning. Such wresting of the Scripture was done "unto their own destruction" (:16), using the same word translated as "perdition" in :7, as if their judgment was already working itself out in this life. That verse speaks of how the "ungodly" would meet their perdition in the day when the heavens and earth were destroyed by fire. Thus those within the ecclesia who were so wresting the Scriptures are the same group as those of :3-7 who would be destroyed at "the day of judgment and perdition (s.w. "destruction") of ungodly men".

Jude likewise talks of "ungodly men" who had crept into the ecclesia (:4). The evident similarities between 2 Pet. 2 and Jude are for a reason. 2 Pet. 2 and 3 are a prophecy of what *would* happen in the ecclesia, whilst Jude is the record of their fulfilment; hence his use of the present tense "there *are* crept in... ungodly men". The corrective is hinted at throughout all these prophecies: "Remember... be mindful of the words which were spoken before" (:1,2), meditating on the power of God's word in the past, in creation and at the flood, correctly understanding the teachings of Paul and Peter about the last days (:15,16), bringing our way of life into conformity with our great hope of the second coming (:11,12), and so by all this growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:18).

Ex. 16:20 says that the manna, symbolic of God's word, "bred worms and stank" if it was

not used properly. The Scriptures, we are told, can be "wrested" by those who claim to believe them, until the "unstable" 'believer' is destroyed morally (2 Pet. 3:16). The only other occurrence of the Greek for "unstable" is a few verses earlier (2 Pet. 2:14), where it is used in a sexual context. The implication is that those 'believers' who want to justify a deviant sexual lifestyle will find that they can "wrest" the Scriptures to suite them, but in so doing they will be working out their own destruction. This is the category who turn God's grace into license for sexual sin (Jude 4).

3:17- see on 2 Pet. 1:12.

Therefore beloved, you, knowing these things beforehand, beware; lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, you lose your own stability- In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on to the true grace of God, lest "you *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall..." (2 Pet. 3:17). You *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the law*less* to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world.

"Stability" or 'strengthening' is the essential outworking of the Spirit abiding in our hearts (Rom. 1:11 s.w.; Eph. 3:16). If we are certain of salvation by grace, this is what Hebrews calls an anchor of our soul. The Lord used the same word in telling Peter to strengthen or stabilize his brethren (Lk. 22:32). It was therefore Peter's deep concern that his brethren might lose their stability. His worry about the false teachers was that they would destabilize his brethren and that therefore he would not be fulfilling the commission which the Lord had potentially empowered. But looking at this another way, we could conclude that the Lord may give us commissions to achieve and the power to do so- but that is only in potential, because all the same human freewill is respected by the Lord, and those who wish to call away or listen to false teachers shall do so. And the failure is theirs rather than ours, if like Peter we have done all we humanly can.

The "things" of :14 which the beloved look for are those spoken of in :17: "Beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness". "These things" are therefore not just concerning the coming Kingdom, but also the warnings of the uprise of false teaching, the prophecies of their success, and the fact that the apparent delay of the Lord's return was to give the opportunity for repentance. Peter's double warning is because he knew how prone we are to forget such warnings, and to lose the reality of our love for the Lord's coming. It is as if Peter is speaking to us personally, as the last (?) generation

before the full "day of the Lord". "Seeing ye know these things *before*" (:17) is yet another Olivet allusion- "False prophets shall rise... take ye heed: behold, I have *foretold* you all things" (Mk. 13:22,23) about this apostasy. "Take ye heed" is matched by "beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Pet. 3:17). "The wicked" are the false teachers within the ecclesia, referred to in 2:14,18 as "beguiling unstable souls" (= 3:16) and 'alluring'. It follows therefore that the false Christs and prophets which our Lord warned of, would come, in whatever form, from within the ecclesia. The bizarre claims of the few bogus Messiahs that have appeared are hardly much temptation to us- but how different if they are to come from within the ecclesia?

3:18- see on 2 Pet. 1:5,6.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen- It would be hard to grow in grace if we consider grace as just a static theological concept. The *charis*, gift / grace in view is the gift of the Spirit, connected with the knowledge or relationship with the Lord Jesus. Peter frequently uses 'knowing' in the Hebraic sense of having a relationship with.

Peter's last words in 2 Peter are full of the theme of knowing Christ (1:2,3,5,8; 2:20). Finally, Peter came to really know the man whom he thought he once knew. His very last recorded words urge us all to follow his pattern: to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (3:18). He wrote this with awareness that he had denied the knowledge of the Lord; his very last words reflected his sense of inadequacy and shame at his failures, and yet the sure and certain knowledge that he knew the grace of the Saviour whom he believed.

At the end of Peter's recorded words in Acts, he comes to a climax of understanding in coining the phrase "the Lord Jesus Christ". In 2 Pet. 2:1 he describes Christ as "Lord" using a word which is usually used in the Gospels for God. He saw the extent of Christ's perfection, the height of His exact manifestation of the Father. He was the "Lord" who bought us through His blood, and therefore and thereby He has an almost God-like authority over us. Appreciating the true implications of the cross leads to a true sense of His Lordship. At the end of 2 Peter, Peter reaches an even greater height in the title: "Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18). He brings together in one title all the different aspects of his Lord he had learnt and come to appreciate in the course of his life. And this should surely be the climax of every life of discipleship.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

1 JOHN

1 JOHN

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1

1:1 *That which existed from the beginning, which we have heard*- The Gospels are transcripts of the version of the Gospel taught by e.g. John. The converts learnt or probably memorized the Gospels, and then after their baptisms, the preacher followed up with them by visits and letters. This is what John is doing in his letters, written to the 'Johannine community', the house churches converted as a result of hearing or reading his version of the Gospel which we have in the gospel according to John. It's therefore to

be expected that the letters of John are going to build on his Gospel, and allude back to it constantly.

The prologue of 1 Jn. is an example of this; it is a conscious allusion to and clarification of that of Jn. 1. Consider the following links:

In the beginning was the word	What was from the beginning
The word was with God	The eternal life which was with [Gk. in the presence of] God
In [the word] was life	The word of life
The life was the light of men	God is light
The light shines in darkness	In Him there is no darkness at all
The word became flesh	Seen, touched, handled by the apostles
And dwelt amongst us	
and was manifested to us	This life was manifested
We beheld his glory	What we looked at
Of his fullness we have all received	The fellowship which we have is with
Through Jesus Christ	the Father and with his son
The only Son of God	Jesus Christ

You will note that the parallel for "the word" of Jn. 1 is 'the life' in 1 Jn. 1, the life which Jesus lived, the type of life which is lived by the Father in Heaven, and the life which was manifested in resurrection that it might be further manifested by the preaching of the disciples. That word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14) in the sense that this life was revealed to us in the life and death of Jesus. So the word becoming flesh has nothing to do with a pre-existent Jesus physically coming down from Heaven and being born of Mary. It could well be that the evident links between the prologue to John's Gospel and the prologue to his epistle are because he is correcting a misunderstanding that had arisen about the prologue to his Gospel. 1 Jn. 1:2 spells it out clearly- it was the impersonal "eternal life" which was "with the Father", and it was this which "became flesh" in a form that had

been personally touched and handled by John in the personal, resurrected body of the Lord Jesus. And perhaps it is in the context of incipient trinitarianism that John warns that those who deny that Jesus was "in the flesh" are actually antiChrist.

John begins his first letter with an elaborate prologue. Raymond Brown comments: "Many commentators observe that a Prologue is an extraordinary beginning for an epistle since it violates all the standards of letter format". This 'violation' appears typical of how Scripture so often appears to 'violate' contemporary usages of language. [Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982) p. 176].
The perfect unity within the Lord Jesus, between the person He portrayed and who He really was, is reflected in much New Testament language concerning Him. Thus "life" in 1 Jn. 1:1,2 is personified as Jesus; He was the life (Jn. 11:25; 14:6; 1 Jn. 5:20). The person whom people knew, saw and touched in first century Palestine was the essence of the eternal life, the life God lives, and the life we by grace will eternally live. He wasn't acting human; He was human, genuinely human, and yet that human life which He lived was the ultimate and inner life of the Spirit.

“The beginning” is a term used in John's letters with reference to the beginning of the Lord's ministry, or to the beginning of a believer's conversion. See on Jn. 1:1 *In the beginning*. Seeing His ministry and life is to be ours, there's an appropriacy in this double usage; His beginning becomes the beginning for each believer when they begin believing in Him. He is “the beginning [s.w.] of the [new] creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). John writes of the commandment and message which his converts had "in the beginning"- clearly referring to the beginning of their conversion, when they first began to hear the message of the Lord Jesus (1 Jn. 2:7,24; 3:11; 2 Jn. 5,6). John mentions that the "fathers", the older converts, knew Him from the beginning (1 Jn. 2:13,14); this may simply mean that they had known Jesus as a person, from the beginning of His ministry.

“Which we have heard” is an idea often used in John's Gospel about those who heard the historical Jesus, perhaps with special application to how they first heard Jesus in the incidents recorded at the "beginning" of His ministry in Jn. 1.

Which we have seen with our eyes- A reference to the transfiguration? Their eyes were there "opened" to see Jesus in glory (Mt. 9:30). It is John's Gospel more than the others which records believers 'seeing' the historical Jesus, both literally and in the figurative sense of 'understanding'.

Which we saw and our hands handled- The two Greek words for 'seeing' are different; they had literally seen and also perceived. The Lord had promised that the Comforter would enable them to have His presence ever in their hearts, as really as if He were physically present. John is saying that he not only had literally seen the resurrected Lord, referring to the 'seeing' of the risen Lord and the way they responded to His

invitation to handle Him (Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:39); but had also experienced the "I will see you again" promised in the gift of the Comforter. Note the chronological progression- from first 'hearing' Him at the 'beginning' of His ministry and the 'beginning' of their path with Him; to seeing with their eyes at the transfiguration and throughout His ministry; to seeing and handling Him after His resurrection.

Concerning the word of life- The apostles had seen and known the physical, historical Jesus. They had known Him 'from the beginning'. But 'Jesus' was one of the most common male names in first century Palestine. What was unique about Jesus of Nazareth was the word about Him, the *logos*, the essence, the inner ideas of that Jesus; and His life, lived out in the manifestation of a sinless character. This was the essence of that man, and it was this which the apostles were preaching and fellowshipping in with their converts.

1:2 *The life was manifested*- This is not talking about the Lord Jesus personally, but about His life. His life, sinless and totally Godly as it was, was the life of God. That life, those principles, existed with God and in God; but that life, spirit, essence, *logos* of God was manifested in the person of the historical Jesus who came into existence as a fetus in Mary's womb. It was this life which the apostles were 'declaring'. Therefore verse 5 says that it was "the message" which the apostles were declaring. The message was the life- the life lived by Jesus of Nazareth, seeing it was the life of God. For although human by nature, the Lord Jesus was of perfectly God-like character and personality. "The life was manifested" in the sense that the Lord Jesus "manifested [s.w.] Your Name unto the" apostles (Jn. 17:6). God's Name was declared to Moses in terms of His characteristics and personality; this was the life of Jesus, and it is "the eternal life", the kind of life we shall live for ever, and which we can begin to live now. For in this sense, in John's terms, we 'have eternal life'. Not that we shall never die, but in that we can now live His life, the kind of life we will live in His Kingdom, the essence of the kind of life He lived and lives.

And we have seen and testify and declare to you the life- I suggest there is a chronological progression here. The apostles had 'seen' the life lived by the Lord Jesus, a perfect life, the essence of the life which is with God; they had preached / testified it to the people who had been baptized and were now in the group to whom John was writing; and now he was 'declaring it' to them, *apaggello* meaning 'to show again'. The basis for his pastoral work with this group was to declare again to them the way of life which was in Jesus Christ. The essence of John's preaching and pastoral teaching was the life of the Lord Jesus. This is why such a large proportion of the New Testament is taken up with the Gospel records.

The eternal life, which existed with the Father- John's Gospel is full of reference to the gift of eternal life being available now; not that the recipients shall never die, but in that by living His life, we are living the life we shall eternally live in the Kingdom, and shall

resume living that life at resurrection. "Which existed with the Father" is an unhelpful rendering. The life was *pros* the Father, and the idea is of being with or towards the Father. Thus the prodigal son decided to come 'to [*pros*] his father' (Lk. 15:18,20). The life lived by the Lord Jesus was inclined towards the Father, it was a life lived with God. Notice it was not the literal person of Jesus which is in view here. Rather is John talking about the life, the essence of God which was lived out in perfection in the sinless character of Jesus. There is no hint here at the personal pre-existence of the Lord Jesus. It was the life, not Jesus personally, which was *pros* the Father. We now can come *pros* the Father (Jn. 14:6, AV "cometh unto the Father"); so being *pros* the Father doesn't require that we are personally located in Heaven, nor is it language which can only be used about the Lord Jesus. Paul likewise speaks of himself as being *pros* the Father in prayer- whilst here on earth (Eph. 3:18).

And was manifested to us- It was the life of God which was manifested to the disciples through Jesus; they had received the gift of eternal life as promised by the Lord. They had received it by seeing it manifested in the Lord personally, and accepting the gift of His spirit, whereby His life / spirit would live within them. It was not any pre-existent Jesus who was manifested to them, but an actual life lived in a person. What was manifested was what they in turn declared to others (:3); and they declared the life and message and personality of Jesus, rather than His literal body.

It was so hard for the Jewish mind to conceive that a man walking down a dusty Galilee street was the awesome God of Sinai manifested in flesh. And it's hard for us too. This is why the whole struggle over the trinity has come about; people just can't find the faith to believe that a real man could have been the just as real perfect Son of God. It's our same struggle when we come to consider the cross; that a body hanging there, covered with blood, spittle, dirt and flies, an image as palatable as a hunk of meat hanging in a butcher's shop... was and is the salvation of the world, the real and ultimate way of escape for us from the guilt of our iniquity. The life the Lord Jesus lived was 'the sort of life that was in the Father's presence' (1 Jn. 1:2 Gk.). The sort of life God Almighty lives, the feelings and thoughts He has, were the life and feelings and thoughts and words and deeds of the man Jesus. This has to be reflected upon deeply before we grasp the huge import which this has. That a Man who walked home each day along the same dusty streets of Nazareth was in fact living the sort of life that was and is the life of God in Heaven.

John calls Jesus "the eternal life" (1 Jn. 1:2). The life that He lived was the quality of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom. The personality of Jesus was the living quintessence of all that He preached- as it should be with the living witness which our lives make. To preach "Christ" was and is therefore to preach "the things concerning the Kingdom of God", because that Kingdom will be all about the manifestation of the man Christ Jesus (Acts 8:5 cp. 12). So, Jesus was "the word" in the sense that He epitomized

the Gospel. This is why James 1:18 says that we are born again by the word of the Gospel, and 1 Pet. 1:23 says that the word who begets is the Lord Jesus.

1:3- see on Mt. 28:10; Jn. 3:32; Jn. 20:18; Acts 4:20.

What we have seen and heard, we declare to you also, so that you may also have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ- The Lord Jesus is called "the life, the eternal life, which existed with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (:3). In this lies the importance of a Christ-centred life and mind; *He is the definition of eternal life*. This is what eternity will be like, John is saying: life lived as the Lord lived and lives, the eternal life is a knowing of the Father and Son, a relationship with them (Jn. 17:3). Eternal life isn't defined in terms of sitting under a fig tree in a perfect climate watching the animals living happily together (although we are invited to believe that by God's grace this *will* be a part of our Kingdom experience). It is the life of Christ our Lord; and that's why one of His titles is “the life, the eternal life". He shewed us what eternal life will be about, and invites us to begin that experience, however imperfectly, even now (cp. Hos. 6:3 RV). And it is in this sense alone that "we may know that we have (now) eternal life" (1 Jn. 5:13).

John exalts in the fact they touched and saw “the word of life"; the Lord Jesus personally was and is the voice of God’s word. When John writes that “that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you", he doesn’t mean to say that he is simply giving a transcript of the Lord’s spoken words. He is telling men about the person of Jesus, the man he personally knew, and in doing this he was declaring God’s essential *logos /* word to them. If the very being of the Lord Jesus was the expression of God’s word, it is little to be marvelled at that the cross, being as it is the crystallization of all He was and is, should be in an even more intense sense the voice of God to us. And the same process of the word becoming flesh must be seen in us too.

There are different levels of fellowship; as we actually know from our own observed experience. There are some we are 'in fellowship' with whom we don't feel so close to as others. John says that he wanted to declare to them the depths of the understanding of Christ, “that you may also have fellowship with us" (1 Jn. 1:3), even though they were already technically 'in fellowship'. And so it is with our communal life. A close binding together in the depths and heights of the Lord Jesus leads to ever higher experiences of fellowship. It may be that there are even different levels of fellowship between men and God. Thus God’s original intention was that His presence in the Angel should go up to Canaan in the midst of Israel; but because of their weakness, He went in front of them, somewhat separate from them (Ex. 33:2,3). Likewise the glory of God progressively distanced itself from the temple and people of God in Ezekiel’s time. The basis of our fellowship, both with the Father and His people, is the life and living of the Lord Jesus. It is not a set of theological tenets *per se*. It is common experience of living His life,

sharing His spirit. We sense this fellowship intuitively with others who live and have it, and if we later discover that we have points of difference over some matters of interpretation, this cannot take away from our connection together in the spirit of Christ. And conversely, sharing simply the same theological tenets is no guarantee of itself that fellowship shall be experienced.

Fellowship with each other is predicated upon fellowship with the Father. To deny fellowship to another is therefore to say something about their fellowship with the Father and Son. To break fellowship with His children is likewise to break fellowship with Him, as developed in chapter 4. It is therefore utterly fundamental to our fellowship with the Father to be open in fellowship to all His children, all who are in His Son. If we have His spirit within us, this will happen naturally; we just have to ensure that denominational laws and the fear of what others think of us doesn't lead us to go against the Spirit and deny the experience of unity in the Spirit which is naturally created.

There appears a contrast between 'us' and 'you'. What 'we' see, 'we' declare to 'you'. The 'we' may refer to John and some elders, or even the original disciples, wishing to share their experience of life and fellowship with the Lord with Johns converts.

1:4 *And these things we write, that your joy may be made full*- John saw himself as manifesting to his brethren what the Lord Jesus had manifested to him. John records how the Lord had said: "I have said this to you... that your joy may be fulfilled" (Jn. 15:11), but he then says of himself that "We are writing these things so that your joy may be fulfilled" (1 Jn. 1:4 RV). He saw himself as the face and mouth of Jesus to his brethren; and so are all of us who are in Christ. He wanted them to receive the spirit of Christ, the Comforter, so that their joy might be filled up by having His spirit of joy. Perhaps John felt that his converts were lacking in the spirit, and wanted them to be filled with it as he was.

Note how John repeats his Lord's use of various terms, e.g. "little children"; and how here he appropriates the Lord's phrase "that your joy may be complete" (Jn. 16:24; 17:13) to the way *he* spoke (1 Jn. 1:4). These are just a tiny fraction of the examples possible. We are to speak, think and feel as He did; to *be* as He was and is; to be brethren in Him.

1:5 *And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce to you: That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*- There is a negative attached to all truths; if something is true, then therefore other things or ways of life are not true. There are several Bible passages which bring out this dualism.

	and in Him there is no darkness"
"God is light	(1 Jn. 1:5)
"God is faithful	and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Dt. 32:4)
"God is righteous	and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Ps. 92:16)

It is therefore quite valid to understand that a set of true teachings by their very nature give rise to a set of untrue ones, to be rejected. But more personally relevant for each one of us, each truth we perceive leads to not only things we should do, but things we should not.

The references to light and darkness further allude to the prologue of John's Gospel. The word "was God", and was the light which shone in the darkness of the Jewish world, to which the Jewish world would not come because they preferred the darkness. John's converts were Jews, and the temptation to return to Judaism, or compromise with it, was strong. He therefore presents the light of Christ as being effectively the light of God, and compromise with the darkness was by nature impossible.

"In Him is no darkness" might sound obvious- until we appreciate that the gods could cheat and lie, commit evil, adultery, deceive etc. They were seen as human but on a larger scale. There is an absolute standard of truth and righteousness in the one true God. The Gnostics effectively created gods in man's own image.

1:6 *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and not do the truth*- The immediate readership of this letter were up against Gnostics and others arguing that sin was not important. John's apparent zero tolerance of sin is not saying that we don't sin; rather is he arguing against those who "say" or teach that sin isn't important. Knowledge was what was supposedly needed, rather than righteous personal behaviour. Indeed, the mere possession of knowledge was thought to justify and excuse sin.

As noted on :5, the allusion to the light and darkness of the prologue in John 1 suggests John is warning against fellowship with the darkness of Judaism, which had rejected the light of Christ. The darkness will later be defined as walking in hatred of our brother (2:11). Jewish attitudes to the Lord Jesus and His Jewish followers were indeed a hatred of their brethren. To walk in the darkness of Judaism was therefore to walk in the darkness of hatred of our brethren. There could be no association with any such darkness, if they had the spirit of Christ.

John writes of *doing* the Truth (Jn. 3:20,21; 1 Jn. 1:6)- the truth is a title used for the Lord in John's Gospel, but the knowledge of Him must be 'done'. He and His *logos* cannot be known purely in the abstract, but must be lived. For He is "the life". The Lord Jesus was "the Truth" in His life example as well as in His teaching. This tendency to apparently 'know' the Lord Jesus on a purely abstract level is a serious temptation in this internet age.

1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin-*

Fellowship with God (:6) involves fellowship with one another (:7). The vertical bond affects our horizontal bond with others. It is an automatic experience, not predicated upon any human document, unity agreement or authority from a church decision. Our fellowship with God is a constant experience, and so therefore is the fellowship with others which it creates. Those who continually walk out of fellowship with their brethren need to ask how secure is their vertical bond with the Father. Walking in the light means having our sins cleansed as we walk. It doesn't mean walking without sin. Perhaps John alludes to the teaching he records in Jn. 3:20,21, that the believer comes to the light so that his sins might be revealed. To him, not to God, for God sees them anyway: "Eery one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, in case his works should be reproved. But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be revealed". And in the context of John 3, the light is that of the crucified Lord Jesus, lifted up on a pole as a burning torch is on a piece of wood to give light. To walk in the light therefore doesn't mean to walk without sin, but to walk in the light of the Lord's death on the cross, which reveals our sins. This explains the link here in 1 Jn. 1:7 with how walking in the light is having the Lord's blood [shed on the cross] cleansing us from our sins. The Lord in Jn. 13:10 had likewise taught that our walk does require regular cleansing after the washing of baptism: "He who has bathed / been cleansed does not need to wash, except for his feet".

To walk "in the light" means to be open and up front about our walk with Him, in His Son, whom He has appointed the light of our lives. The tendency for these Jewish Christians was to maintain synagogue attendance, with all its social benefits, whilst being secret Christians. John's Gospel has demonstrated how there were many like this during the Lord's ministry, who either returned to the Jewish world or 'came out' for the Lord, as Joseph and Nicodemus did. Walking in the light is not the same as living without sin; for it is those who walk in the light who are in an ongoing sense cleansed from all sin by the Lord's blood. Rather does it refer to a life lived and oriented around the person of the Lord Jesus, the light which the prologue of John 1 says came into the darkness, and was Him, His *logos*, the essence of Him as He was amongst men. If we live in this orientation, a life lived *pros* the Father (see on :2), then "all sin" that we commit is dealt with on account of our association with the Lord and His blood. This is not to say that

sin is of no moment, but that our focus is to be upon living His life, walking in the light of Him, rather than seeking to avoid sin or endlessly badger Him to forgive it.

The blood of Jesus cleanses us, in the present tense, from all our sins; the Lord Jesus loves us and frees us from our sins by His blood (1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 1:5). The cross is ongoing. It is on this basis that we experience fellowship with each other, that fellowship naturally arises between those who are walking in the light of His life and experiencing their sin dealt with in this way. Fellowship is an experience which arises from these things; it is not created by an agreement to a common set of theological propositions. Even when such propositions are agreed between individuals, severe tensions still occur between them and many do not walk together who are basically theologically agreed. But fellowship as presented here is something which arises naturally and involuntarily. To consciously refuse a brother fellowship is to imply that he is in the darkness, and that the blood of Jesus Christ is not cleansing him from sin. Like it or not, to do so is a serious judgment of him, even if that is denied in words.

1:8 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us-*

"If we say... we deceive ourselves" refers to our own self talk. Although these were the teachings of false teachers, John's concern is that firstly, these were the thoughts within the minds of those teachers: "ourselves we lead astray" (Gk.). We are not to deceive ourselves; rather, the truth is to be "in us". The focus is upon what goes on deep within us, in our hearts and self talk. And this was the psychological root of the false teaching John is combatting- men teaching that we have arrived at a state of sinlessness. That error is not unknown in some extreme versions of holiness theology; and some proponents of it have then been exposed as themselves living in serious sin. "We have no sin" was the false teaching- and elsewhere in John's writings 'to have sin' means to be guilty of sin (Jn. 9:41; 15:22,24; 19:11). The modern equivalent may be the idea that a Christian is never to feel guilt because of sin, we are supposed to buy the narrative that we are awesome people and the guilt for sin is all on others, not on us.

This attitude of "we have no sin" could have arisen from incipient Gnosticism, but it more likely refers [at least initially] to the attitude of Judaism, to legalistic self-righteousness in the Jewish world which was ever tempting the converts to whom John was writing. To do the truth is to walk in the light (:6), but walking in the light doesn't mean being without sin; rather it refers to a life focused upon the light of the Lord's life, in which our "all sin" is dealt with by the Lord (:7). To have "the truth" in us may well refer to the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus, "the truth", through the "Spirit of truth", the Comforter. The Comforter convicts the world of sin, and surely convicts us too. The presence of the Spirit within a believing heart doesn't mean that the person doesn't sin, but rather that they become conscious of sin, and the cleansing process can therefore begin.

1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness-*

To "confess" means literally "to say the same thing, to agree with". We agree with God's view of our sins, the view seen in the light of the Lord's cross. To refuse to see ourselves as sinners is therefore to call God a liar (:10). Repentance needs to be verbalized- it must be “confessed”, which implies a verbal or written statement of the issues. It’s like praying or Bible reading out loud; it makes our minds think not quite so fast. We need to get to grips with all the aspects of our sin. We must face it, in all the ugliness of what we have done. The idea of cleansing from sin differs slightly from forgiveness; we need to be not only forgiven but cleansed so that we do not repeat them. This is the work of the Spirit, which is what sanctifies or cleanses us; there is a major connection between sanctification [cleansing] and the work of the Holy Spirit given to each believer (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). And yet we are cleansed by the Lord's blood (:7), and by His *logos* or word (Jn. 15:3). Our sanctification is by both "the blood of the covenant" and "the spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). These are all terms referring to the same thing. The Lord Jesus, as the sum of His personality, was His word made flesh; His blood, His Spirit, the light of His life, personality, spoken words and actions, His biography... all these things are summarized in His Spirit, which is given to us. As noted on :8, it is the Spirit of truth which abides in us and convicts of sin, and yet also sanctifies.

1:10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us-* It is the indwelling of "the truth" which convicts and then sanctifies / cleanses from the sin which it convicts (see on :8,9). I suggest it is not 'the Bible' which is in view here; it is not every word of that inspired book, including the Chronicles genealogies, which will convict of sin. If 'the Bible' were referred to then surely we would read 'the Scriptures', or at least, some other word apart from *logos* would be used. The *logos* of God is clearly defined in John's Gospel as His Son, and likewise here in :1. It is the indwelling of the Lord Jesus, by His Spirit (see on :9), which both convicts of sin and cleanses from that sin. Those who claimed to be without sin had not received the Lord's spirit, and were "none of His" therefore, as Paul puts it in Rom. 8:9- even if they claimed membership in some form of the Christian community.

Our experience of life, the way God works through our failures, almost overruling even (it seems to me) the *kinds* of sins we commit and their outcome, is all intended to bring us to an increasing realization of our own sinfulness. The more God's *logos* abides in us, the more we will know our sinfulness. Thus Paul speaks as if when Corinth are more obedient, he will reveal further to them the extent of their weakness (2 Cor. 10:6). On a racial level, it could be argued that over history, God has progressively revealed the sinfulness of man to him. Thus the early records of Israel's history in Egypt and in the

wilderness contain very little direct criticism of them. But the prophets reveal that they were corrupt even then, taking the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20). But then in the New Testament, Stephen brings together several such prophetic mentions, combining them to produce a stunning description of Israel's ecclesial apostasy, which culminated in their rejection of the Son of God.

To just have an attitude that we haven't sinned, is read by God as stating that He is a liar- even though we would never dream of saying this. If we don't believe Him, we likewise "make him a liar", we slander or falsely accuse Him, because we call His witness to us in the Spirit / Comforter a lie (1 Jn. 5:10). We may recoil at this language. But it is so– to deny our sinfulness, to disbelieve what God says about it, is to slander God and resist the conviction of His Spirit.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 2

2:1 *My little children, these things write I to you, so you may not sin. And if anyone sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*- Advice how not to sin cannot simply be 'keep the commandments' which follows in :3,4. It could be argued that a spirit of obedience to Divine commandments leads us to progressively greater strength against sin. But I suggest on :3,18 that this is a plural of majesty referring to the one great, new commandment- to love as the Lord loved us on the cross. A total focus upon living like this will be the strength to generally not sin in life. But John accepts we will not fully get there- and in this case, we do have an advocate with the Father.

As explained on 1:8-10, John was teaching that if we are focused on the light of the Lord Jesus and have the Comforter abiding within us, then "all [our] sin" is dealt with in the Lord Jesus. But this is not to say that we will not sin; indeed, it is the presence of the "truth", the "spirit of truth", the Comforter within us which convicts us of sin. And now he alludes to the same thing, saying that we have a *parakletos* with the Father, the Lord Jesus, "the righteous", and we are counted as in Him, His righteousness imputed to us. The Comforter refers to the Spirit of Christ within us which means that we have the Lord's presence with us to more than compensate for His physical absence. The same Lord who is within us convicting us of sin is the same Lord who is now in Heaven to obtain our total forgiveness. This way of thinking and being means that we will find the power not to sin. "These things" John has just written at the end of chapter 1 are the way not to sin; to not as it were worry about avoiding sin, but rather to positively focus upon the presence of the Lord within us, allowing Him to convict us of our sin and deal with it in His own way.

The Comforter passages assure us that we need no mediator because the Father Himself loves us, and the spirit of His Son is within us so that we can directly relate to Him as the Son did and does with the Father. The later NT passages concerning prayer and mediation therefore speak largely in the context of prayer for forgiveness and salvation (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1). This is what the Lord's mediation / advocacy for us achieves, rather than acting as a constant go-between for us with the Father in the context of our regular prayers for other things.

It has been argued that the Greek word for "advocate" is only rarely used for an advocate or lawyer. Rather is it usually used for a friend who appears in court giving a

good character reference for the accused, or simply pleading with the judge for mitigation in view of the pathetic situation of the accused or guilty. The Lord Jesus is here presented as our friend- as well as, elsewhere, our legal advocate and the judge Himself.

2:2- see on 2 Cor. 5:19.

And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world- As discussed above, "our sins" are essentially our failure to keep the "commandment[s]" of loving as the Lord loved us.

As noted on :1, the passages concerning the Lord as our mediator are all in the context of Him asking for our forgiveness, as the High Priest sought Israel's forgiveness on the day of Atonement. On the cross He was there the propitiation for our sins, and yet He is that now, each time we sin (1 Jn. 2:1; 4:10). The cross is ongoing, in essence. The simple fact is that the Lord Jesus died as the antitype of the guilt offering. He died to take away guilt… and he or she who truly believes that has no need to transfer or discharge their guilt in these ways. The guilt of our iniquity was laid upon the Lord Jesus upon the cross, He there was the expiation of our sins (1 Jn. 2:2)… we don't have to vainly try to transfer it onto anyone else, or use any other way of dealing with that guilt, e.g. through repressing it deep within ourselves.

The sins of the whole [Jewish] world are potentially dealt with in the Lord. If only individuals would accept Him, then their problem with sin is resolved. In this lies the imperative to take this amazing message to the whole world.

2:3 *And hereby we truly know that we truly know him: If we keep his commandments*- The idea is not that we are faced with scores of commandments from the Lord, and if we manage to keep them, then we are in a state of knowing or having relationship with the Father and Son. For that was exactly where the Mosaic system failed to be of use to men. Paul is at pains in Romans 1-8 to point out that law, as in *any* legal code, cannot lead to justification. We note that keeping commandments [plural] is paralleled in John with keeping His singular *logos* or commandment [singular]. "His commandments" and "the [singular] commandment" are paralleled in 2 Jn. 6. The plural commandments may be the Hebrew plural of majesty, referring to one specific commandment. And the commandment in view is to love each other, as He loved us, and as His entire *logos* of being is our example: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on [Gk. 'into'] the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 Jn. 3:23). We believe into the Name of Jesus when we are baptized into His Name. We "love one another" perhaps specifically by keeping the *agape*, the love feast, the breaking of bread, with one another. If we refuse to break bread with any of our brethren, then we cannot have a good conscience. I am not saying that simply being baptized and breaking bread can save anyone. For the commandment is to love as the Lord loved us unto death, rather than merely pass bread and wine.

Understanding "the commandments" and the singular commandment / word as loving one another would explain why in the context of the appeals to 'keep' them, we read of receiving the love of the Father and Son. For we love our brother in receipt of His love. His love and our love are connected in that if we do not love our brother, we do not know His love. To know /be in relationship with Him requires us to keep the great commandment of loving our brother as the Lord loved us, unto death. If our self-examination reveals that we do love, then we can have a good conscience, knowing we have kept His commandment[s], and are thus assured of 'being there'.

The Lord states clearly that He has left us one commandment- to love one another as He loved us (Jn. 13:34; 15:12; 1 Jn. 4:21; 5:2). The plural

"commandments" may be a reflection of the Hebraism whereby the plural is used to emphasize the greatness and cardinal value of one singular thing, the plural of majesty. This is perhaps confirmed by Jn. 15:17: "These things [plural] I command you: That you love one another". Love of each other was the great 'thing'. To love should not be grievous; if we are walking in the light of His endless love. Therefore "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (1 Jn. 3:23). The commandment to love as He loved us is only capable of understanding and fulfilment if we have believed into the Name of the Lord Jesus, and experienced that love, having God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit we receive after believing into Him (Rom. 5:5).

2:4 *He that says: I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*- As noted on :3 and :5, the "commandments" is a plural of majesty referring to the one great commandment, to love our brother as the Lord loved us. If we do not, then any profession to "know Him" / have a relationship with Him is hollow. Indeed, we are 'liars', "the truth" of the light of the Lord Jesus, "the spirit of truth", is not in our hearts. I suggested on Jn. 8:44 that the "liar" who committed the first murder was Cain, and not any personal Satan figure. Cain is set up as representative of all who hate their brother (3:12). To lie, in this context, is to claim to know God and hold "His truth", but to not love our brother. The ultimate lie, therefore, is not to respond to the cross in love: "If a man says, I love God, and hates his fellow believers, he is a liar. For he that does not love his fellow believers whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn. 4:20). Sadly these terms, truth, lies, keeping commandments etc., have been applied to knowing theoretical, propositional truth regarding theology- and the entire point has [conveniently] been missed. And it is a misplaced focus on those very things which has led to hatred of brethren.

2:5 *But who keeps his word, in him truly has the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him*- As noted on :3, the singular "word" is parallel with plural "commandments", which I suggest is the plural of majesty referring to the great commandment, to love one another as the Lord loved us. If we keep the 'word' of loving our brother, then God's love has been perfected in us, it has achieved its end result- that we should love as He loved us. And this is our confidence that we are in Him. If self-examination reveals that we do harbour hatred in our heart for our brethren- we really need to urgently do something about it. To love as the Lord loved us in His death may seem an impossible level to aim for, let alone achieve. But John speaks as if we can confidently know that we are in Him because we know we keep that word / new commandment. This is typical of John's black and white, binary approach. We sin, but we do not continue in sin. We are obedient to the new commandment, but we still sin in failing to fully obey it (:1,2). And yet we can be confident that we are in the light and not in the darkness. We conclude that we are asked to live a life dominated by this word of the new commandment, even though perfectionism is not in view, and there will be ample failures which require forgiveness. And we can, according to John, confidently examine ourselves and perceive that indeed, this is the abiding credo of our living and thinking- despite failure.

We can read this as meaning that the love of God is "in" the person who keeps God's word. Verse 4 has just spoken of how God's truth is to be "in" us. The final ultimate truth is therefore the love of God- that God will save me, and I am a sinner.

2:6- see on Mt. 14:29.

He that says he abides in him, ought also to walk even as he walked- "Ought" is not the same as 'must'. The idea is that if we abide in Him, we "ought" or are constrained to walk as He walked.

The reference is to loving as He loved us, which is the "new commandment" of the next verses. We abide in Him insofar as He abides in us, through the gift of the Spirit permitted by us to operate in our hearts. We cannot claim to experience this if we do not love as He loved us. For the love principle will affect our entire "walk" in daily living and thinking. But failure is anticipated all through John's reasoning (1:8-10; 2:1,2). It's as if he is stressing that perfectionism is not in view; but all the same, despite our sin, we can be confident that we are living in love. But as discussed on :5, his idea is that we can 'walk' in love, as Christ loved us, having this as the overall spirit of our lives (Eph. 5:2; walking lovingly is not making your brother stumble, Rom. 14:15). 2 Jn. 6 is clear in connecting 'walk' with the life of love, walking *after* the commandment[s] to love as He loved us, walking a life which is 'after' that principle, having that love as the guiding principle we are following: "this is love, that we should walk *after* His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it". Repeatedly the Old Testament spoke of loving God as 'walking in His commandments' ("walk in all His ways... love Him", Dt. 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; Mic. 6:8). These frequent exhortations are no call for utter perfectionism. They mean that our walk, our overall direction of life, is to be in love of God.

John speaks of Jesus as “that one” in the Greek text of 1 Jn. 2:6; 3:5,7,16; 4:17. I.H. Marshall comments: “Christians were so used to talking about Jesus that ‘that One’ was a self-evident term”. Too often I hear fellow believers talking about their faith in terms of “I believe that… I do not believe that…”. Maybe I’m being hypercritical, but surely it ought to be a case of believing *in* the things of the personal Jesus, rather than ‘believing *that*…’. For example. I believe *in* Jesus returning to the earth, rather than ‘I believe that Jesus will return’. It’s so absolutely vital to see and believe in the Lord Jesus as a person, rather than merely a set of doctrine / teaching *about* Him.

2:7 *Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard*- The singular "commandment" is the "commandments" referred to earlier in this section; the plural of majesty being used to refer to the one great commandment, to love as the Lord loved us. This was "new" in that it could only have been true after the advent of the Lord. And it is that commandment which in another sense is "old" or 'original' in that this was the imperative from "the beginning" of the Lord's ministry (see on Jn. 1:1 for the reference of "the beginning"). The "commandment" was imperative in the whole encounter with the Lord. He was love made flesh, and His whole being demanded and still demands that from all who encounter Him. Love, in this "new" sense, is thereby predicated upon knowing Him; Christian love is therefore of an altogether different order from any secular version of 'love'. The idea of an old commandment being new may be another way of expressing the idea of how we can attain a second naivety, a meeting of Jesus 'again for the first time'. For John now repeats that "new" commandment (:8).

2:8- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

But now, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you. Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines- John is repeating the "new commandment", which was "new" in that it was to love *as the Lord loved us unto death*. I suggested on :7 that the idea of an old commandment

becoming new suggested that there was a "newness" to this commandment; it keeps coming new. And so John can write of giving the new commandment which had in fact already been given in that it was imperative in the example of the Lord Jesus. Living by that new commandment was "the truth" which was in the Lord and comes to be "the truth" in us; it is the final "truth" by which a believer lives. All attempts to read "the truth" here as referring to some set of doctrinal, intellectually-apprehended truths has totally missed the point, putting head over heart to a point where the approach is not at all 'true'. It is true "in" us in that the spirit of truth, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, dwells within us.

The allusion to the prologue of John 1 invites us to interpret "the darkness" as that of the Jewish world. And that was "passing away" as AD70 approached. The true light was that of the personality and personal spirit of the Lord Jesus. That was shining, and the darkness had not overcome it, and was in fact now passing away. :17 has the same reference when we read of "the world" passing away; the Jewish world is in view, as often in John's Gospel and letters.

But darkness is defined in :9,11 as living without love for your brother. The darkness is passing away, in that we are emerging from the loveless life into life lived according to the principle of loving as the Lord loved us, unto death. Just as John keeps stressing that we are imperfect in attaining this, we continue sinning (1:8-10; 2:1,2), so here he likewise accepts that we are still in partial darkness, that darkness is passing away, and we are moving towards the perfect light of living and loving as the Lord loved us. Paul uses the same idea in 1 Cor. 13, again in the context of love- we see in a mirror which is partially darkened, "through a glass darkly, but then face to face". In the context of his appeal for love, I take that as meaning that we have not yet reached the level of total love which was seen in the Lord Jesus. The darkness of the world [a common Bible theme] is therefore in that they are not merely intellectually ignorant, but have never known the love of Christ. The death of the Lord Jesus was the ultimate light, and this occurred in the midst of thick darkness (Mk. 15:33). If we have an evil eye, a mean spirit, towards our brother- then darkness is within us (Mt. 6:23). Again, darkness is lack of love. Being cast out into outter darkness is therefore an appropriate punishment for the rejected (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13- a repeated emphasis), because they lived in the darkness of unlove.

"The true light" is the light that reveals truth. That truth has been explained so far in the letter as walking in the light of the cross, convicted of sin, confessing sin, seeing our sin as God does, and being cleansed of our sins by the blood shed on the cross. If we walk in the light of the cross, we can't hate our brother. If we continue hating our brother, we are not walking in the light of the cross. We can't see the Lord there and experience His ongoing forgiveness in our walk / daily life... and hate our brother. We're not seeing that light if we hate...

2:9 *He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, he remains in the darkness*- The darkness, as explained on :8 refers in the first context to the darkness of the Jewish world. Nobody who claimed to have left Judaism and entered Christ was legitimate if they hated their brother, whilst claiming to be in the light of the Lord Jesus. For walking in His light axiomatically means that we walk in love, and hatred of our brother is not possible in the light of Him properly perceived. The hatred of brothers refers to the Jewish hatred of their brother the Lord Jesus, and of all that were in Him. The initial reference of this hatred of brethren refers to Jewish Christians who were collaborating with the synagogue persecution of Christians. And clearly there were plenty of such agents within the early Jewish Christian communities, false

Jewish brethren who crept in to the early churches. Paul's letters contain many allusions to this major problem (Gal. 2:4 etc.).

There is fair emphasis that the rejected saints will be cast into darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Jude 13). Yet darkness is a common symbol of the world (Eph. 5:11; 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9). And those amongst us who won't love their brother are already in darkness, self-condemned even before the day arrives (1 Jn. 2:9,11).

2:10 *He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him*- Abiding in the light of the Lord Jesus means we will not hate our brother. The Greek here means that before us, there will be no stumblingblock. It is interpersonal conflict within the church, and indeed with those outside of it, which is the most common cause of spiritual stumbling. But if we have sold our souls for love, living in the light of the Lord Jesus, then we will not stumble. The allusion is to how the Lord had spoken of how walking in the daytime means we will not trip over as we are illuminated by "the light of this world" (Jn. 11:9). This refers to the Lord Jesus, the light of the world. Walking in the light of His presence through the Comforter means that we will have no chance to stumble, because love for others is the dominant spirit of our lives.

2:11 *But he that hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes*- This is true in general terms, but the initial context refers to those who were ostensibly within the Christian community, but who were walking in the darkness of Judaism, with its agenda of hatred toward the Lord Jesus and all His brethren. The great commandment is to love as the Lord loved us; if we do not live according to this then we are not in the light of the Lord Jesus. We will have no certain sense that we are indeed on a journey toward the Kingdom, we will not know where we go, and shall wander lost in life. A healed blind man who wilfully returns to his blindness is a tragic picture indeed.

2:12 *I write to you little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake*- The references here and in :13 to children, young men and fathers must be understood in the light of the triple commission to Peter, recorded by John as ultimately applying to us all, to care for the lambs and sheep (Jn. 21:15-17). The little ones would refer to recent converts, who were rejoicing in the implication of baptism into the Lord's Name, by which there sins were forgiven. For there is a clear link between baptism and forgiveness. John is writing to these three groups because he sees the triple commission to Peter about caring for the lambs and sheep as applying to him too. He felt he too had betrayed the Lord, and that His commission here was relevant to him and all in Him. This of course is very far from the Catholic interpretation of Peter's unique role.

2:13 *I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you little children, because you know the Father*- See on :12. The "fathers", the older ones, were those who were the "sheep" and not "lambs", those who had had longer experience in Christ, and who had known Him "from the beginning", a term often used in John for the beginning of the Lord's ministry (see on Jn. 1:1). The younger ones are commended for overcoming "the evil one", initially a reference to the 'satan' of Jewish opposition to the Lord. They therefore loved their brethren and were not guilty of hating them by being part of the Jewish world's persecution program of the Christians. Knowing the Son, whose manifestation had been "from the beginning" of

His ministry, is parallel with knowing the Father. To see / know / have relationship with the Son is to know / see the Father, as often declared in John's Gospel and letters.

2:14 *I have written to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning*- This repeats what is said in :13, perhaps to emphasize that spiritual maturity is in having known the Lord Jesus many years and continuing in that relationship with Him

I have written to you young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one- These new converts had overcome the Jewish Satan or "wicked one" trying to especially subvert young converts, both in years and spiritual maturity, just as it had tried to subvert the disciples during the Lord's ministry (Mt. 13:19 the wicked one catches away the word sown in the hearts of new converts). The Lord clearly described the Jewish world as the evil one in Jn. 3:19; 7:7; 17:15. Their strength was because the *logos* of God, the Lord Jesus, abode in them. Whilst we should love and meditate upon the Scriptures, this is not the reference of God's *logos* in John. The prologues to both the Gospel and the letters make it clear that the reference is to the Lord Jesus. It was the Lord personally who overcame the Jewish world (Jn. 16:33). His victory is counted to all believers in Him; the parallel is between "the evil one" and "the world", rather than to any superhuman personal being called 'satan'. The allusion in this verse is also to the prologue to the Gospel, where we read that the darkness of the Jewish world had not overcome the light (Jn. 1:5). Those in the light, in whom the *logos*, the spirit of the Lord Jesus, abides, had overcome the darkness of their world. The parallel with :13 is perhaps to show that they had not overcome the world in their own strength, but through the Lord's indwelling.

2:15 *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*- "In the world" is the very phrase used of how the Lord was in the Jewish world, but rejected by it (Jn. 1:10; 9:5; 13:1; 16:33; 17:11-13). There could be no compromise between the Jewish world and the Christian; for the Jews hated the Christians, and to be part with them was to be involved in hating ones' Christian brother. And in this case, the love of the Father would not be in them.

2:16 *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world*- The initial reference was to how the Jewish world was full of these things. The Pharisees were covetous (Lk. 16:14), and the Jewish religion was big business; the religious leaders were the wealthiest people in Palestine. The Sadducees had no belief in an afterlife, and were totally hedonistic. This is why later in Revelation, John will later describe the Jewish system as "Babylon", obsessed with wealth and pride, drunk with the blood of the Christian prophets and martyrs. In Jn. 8:44 the Lord had characterized the Jewish world as doing the lusts of their father; these various lusts are summarized as the lust of the [Jewish] world which was in process of passing away as AD70 approached (:17).

John speaks of how we are tempted by "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life", alluding to the very things which were Adam and Eve's temptation in Eden. Adam is set up in Scripture as 'everyman'; on almost every page of the Bible there are allusions back to him. Thus Jezebel's provocation of Ahab to sin is presented in the same terms as that of Adam and Eve; Israel "like Adam have transgressed the covenant" (Hos. 6:7). Paul sensed that as the serpent deceived Eve by his subtilty, so the minds of the Corinthian Christians were being deceived by false

reasoning (2 Cor. 11:3 = Gen. 3:13). The sinner chooses or accepts the words of the "tongue of the subtle" (Job 15:5 – the same word is used about the serpent in Gen. 3:1). The frequent command: "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them.

2:17 *And the world passes away and the lust of it, but he that does the will of God abides for ever*- The Jewish world was fast passing away as AD70 approached. The various lusts of :16 refer to those of the Jewish world; its lust for pride and wealth would all come to an end in the destruction to come. Jn. 9:31 has used the same words in describing the Lord Jesus personally as the one who "does the will of God". But all who are in Him are likewise born of God's will (Jn. 1:13). The Lord is presented in opposition to the Jewish world; just as He is in the prologue of John 1. If ever a man stood with His back to the world, it was the Lord and the Jewish world. But He is the one who "abides for ever", whereas the Jewish world passed away. He "abides for ever" in the sense that the gift of His Spirit, the Comforter, would "abide for ever" with His followers (Jn. 14:16). The Jewish idea that God would "abide for ever" in the Jerusalem temple came to an end when that world passed away (1 Kings 8:13); the eternal abiding was by the spirit of the Lord Jesus in a spiritual temple of believing persons.

2:18 *Little children, it is the last hour- T*his may not necessarily mean that John is expecting the Lord's return imminently, although Paul certainly writes as if he did. And I have elsewhere suggested this is because we are to live in the spirit of expectancy for the Lord's return imminently. But the "hour" which John's Gospel repeatedly mentions is the hour of the Lord's death, which the Lord lived His life expecting and anticipating. So John's idea may be that as the Lord faced His cross, so the faithful community were to realize that they were to meet the crisis of declension, false teaching and persecution in the same spirit in which He faced and anticipated the cross. The next verse (:19) will go on to allude to Judas going out into the night and betraying the Lord at "the last hour". And John sees the parallel in some of his converts going back out into the darkness of Judaism, just as Judas had done; indeed he considers that this is the sign that truly they were in "the last hour" (:19). They were not expecting it, it had come, for them. We too are to face our crises knowing we are fellowshipping the Lord's cross and passion experiences.

This is why John's writings like to use the word "overcome". Although it is the last hour for us, the time to fellowship the Lord's final sufferings, He "overcame" on the cross and even during the "last hour" in the upper room before He actually died ("I have overcome the [Jewish] world", Jn. 16:33; "the Lion of he tribe of Judah has prevailed [s.w. overcome] to open the book", Rev. 5:5, "conquering [s.w. overcome] and to conquer" Rev. 6:2). And we likewise have already overcome the wicked one, the system pressing in upon us which may even slay us (1 Jn. 2:13,14 "you have overcome the wicked one", the Jewish world, "you have overcome them", the agents of the Jewish system, 1 Jn. 4:4). We overcome by our faith in Jesus, faith that His overcoming means our overcoming ("whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith... who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God" 1 Jn. 5:4,5). And yet in the short term, the Lord was apparently overcome by the Jewish world, in

that they slew Him. But it was truly a case of the magnificent defeat; through their temporary 'overcoming' of Him in death, He overcame them. And likewise with us. The beast 'overcomes and kills' the saints temporarily (Rev. 11:7; 13:7); but "they overcame him by the blood of the lamb" (Rev. 12:11) and 'got victory over [s.w. 'overcome'] the beast' (Rev. 15:2), because "the Lamb shall overcome them" (Rev. 17:14). The repeated promises in the opening letters of Revelation to "him that overcomes" are fulfilled in that the Lord overcame. Their faith in His overcoming means that they overcome finally. They are counted as the Lord Jesus, and His overcoming is theirs; so that "He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and... he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7), i.e. shall be counted as the Son of God. We overcome because "you are of God", i.e. born of God, His sons just as the Lord was His Son (1 Jn. 4:4). Therefore "whoever is born of God overcomes the world" (1 Jn. 5:4) in that we are counted as God's only begotten, victorious son.

The events of the Lord's passion are constantly alluded to in John's letters, just as his gospel record is really an account of the Lord's final week with an extended introduction. A significant amount of the gospel is about the Lord's last week. In his letters, John appeals constantly for love of our brethren as the way to overcome. This must be seen in the context of his recording "the new commandment... [to] love one another as I have loved you" in the death of the cross. All John's appeals to love have this in mind. Likewise his many references to the Comforter and the gift of the Spirit are obviously allusive to the Lord's promise of the Comforter in the upper room discourse. John's references to the need to keep the commandment, at times expressed with the Hebraic plural of majesty "commandments", all clearly allude to the new commandment. 1 Jn. 2:7-10 is the most explicit: "I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard. But now, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you. Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light [of living in the same kind of love-to-the-end as the Lord showed on the cross] already shines. He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, he remains in the darkness.
He that loves his brother abides in the light". 1 Jn. 3:23,24 likewise: "this is His commandment: that we should... love one another, even as He gave us commandment. And he that keeps His commandments abides in Him". Note how plural "commandments" and singular "commandment" are parallel, as in Jn. 15:17 "These things I command you, so that you may love one another", the singular commandment. Likewise 2 Jn. 5,6: "not as though I write a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning". The beginning of the Gospel is the love of Christ in dying on the cross, and our need to respond to that in loving as He loved us.

And as you heard that antichrist comes- This would presumably be a reference to the "man of sin" prophecy in 2 Thess. 2. The coming of that individual was to be pressaged by the arising of individuals in his spirit, apparently in the "temple of God", the church.

Even now have there arisen many antichrists. Whereby we know that it is the last hour- These antichrists are those of :19, the "they" who entered the Christian community but were never really "of" it. This surely refers to the Judaist infiltrators of the early church (Gal. 2:4). In John's immediate context, these people were "anti" Christ both in the sense of being against Him, and of false appearing like Him. They were part of the singular "antichrist" system which John felt was to arise in "the last

hour". We wonder if he has in view the uprising of a system of evil just before the Lord's coming, of the kind he prophesied about in Revelation. It could even be that John's epistles were written after Revelation, and it is to that document he refers in writing that they have "heard" about the coming of antichrist. The beasts, whore, false prophet etc. are all capable of application to the Jewish system destroyed in AD70, and this was the "synagogue of satan" which the opening letters of Revelation begin by talking about. This is not to say that Revelation does not have other and specifically 'last days' fulfillments.

John may have in mind 2 Thess. 2, as the source from which they had heard about the coming of antichrist. This envisages a specific individual, similar to Judas, arising from within the community of believers and being enthroned in "the temple". I have noted on that chapter the possible fulfillments of this "man of sin" in a Jewish context. The 'revealing' of the "man of sin" would then connect with the 'revealing' of the specific antichrists (:19).

2:19- see on Mk. 14:68; Lk. 22:31; Jude 19.

They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be revealed, that all these are not of us- This is the language of the Lord in Jn. 17, that we are in but not of the world. Here, the contrary is also true; some can be in the church at some point, but not 'of it'. Clearly John has in mind the Lord's teaching he recorded in Jn. 8:35, that the son remains always in the household, but the servant / slave doesn't: "And the servant does not stay in the house for ever. The son stays forever". The allusion is also to Judas going out into the night to betray the Lord. As noted on :18, the antichrists have some similarities with "the man of sin", who as "the son of perdition" is also based upon Judas. There was a conscious campaign of infiltration of the church by Judaist false brethren (Gal. 2:4). According to many of Paul's letters, they enjoyed fair success in destabilizing the churches Paul founded. But in the community John had founded and is writing to, they "went out from us". Their exit revealed them for who they were. The implication is that those who wilfully leave the community of the body of Christ are effectively leaving Him. It is likewise no less a sin to exclude members of that body from association with it. 3:9,10 use the same word in saying that the revealing of the sons of God and those of "the devil" [the Jewish system] is in whether they love or hate. Going out from the community of believers is not abiding in love. Their exit revealed them; and the revelation is in whether we love or hate (3:9,10). The argument seems to be that anyone who breaks fellowship with the body of Christ is declaring themselves outside of the body- a similar logic used by Paul in 1 Corinthians. The break from the body of true believers is of itself the evidence that they are not "of" the body, and that they are not living in love for their brethren as their Lord loved them. "That they might be revealed" has the sense of 'in order that they might be revealed'. The idea is that God arranged this as the supreme sign of who is fake and who is true. Because the context of John's letter is a concern with true and false teaching. And in practical terms, those who are fake leave of their own accord over the long term of church life, and their lack of love is the litmus indicator of their apostacy.

"All these are not of us" can be rendered "they were not all of us" (AV), and this makes the reference to the Lord's words about Judas even clearer. He said that "not all" of them were cleansed because of Judas being the one amongst the "all" who would betray Him (Jn. 13:10,18).

2:20 *And you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all these things*- The grammar here means that the "anointing" is the thing anointed with, as it

were the oil used in the anointing. But literally, it means 'a Christ-ing', for "Christ" means 'anointed'. The reference is to the Spirit. John in his gospel has recorded how the Lord promised the gift of the Comforter, to the point that the disciples would feel His personal presence as if He were physically present as He had been in the brief years of His ministry. Note that John applies this allusion to the Comforter to "you", his converts, who had not met the Lord. The promise of the Comforter was therefore not just to the original disciples but "for ever", to all subsequent believers. This presence of the Spirit was effectively the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ personally in their hearts. And by this "you know all these things", referring to their knowledge of the Judas-like individuals who had entered their community and then gone out from them- presumably, because they "knew" them. Perhaps the allusion is to how the Lord through His spirit "knew from the beginning" those such as Judas who didn't sincerely believe and should betray Him (Jn. 6:64). His spirit had been given to the believers; the "anointing" was the means by which He abode within them and taught them "all things" (:27), and He abides in His people by His Spirit (3:24; 4:13; Jn. 14:17). The "things" immediately in view here are about the Judaist plot to infiltrate the fledgling churches. Paul had the same revealed knowledge, but seems to have been less successful in stamping it out than John was in his community.

We read in :20,27 that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see this as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense by the gift of the Spirit. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism and the empowerment of the Spirit to achieve it. The Comforter passages are in the specific context of promising empowerment in obeying the great commission of preaching the Lord to all nations. And it is that same commission which is in view here. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father. There is some historical evidence that candidates for baptism in the early church were anointed with oil. References- uninspired of course, just for historical interest- are Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 7.1,2; and various references in the 'Didascalia', the Acts of Judas Thomas, and the Pseudo-Clementine epistles. It could be that in the house ecclesias to whom John was writing, there was already this practice in place, and the initial readers would've understood this clearly. Paul, writing to a different audience, uses a different figure when he speaks of being "sealed with that holy spirit of promise". We are after all baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So the anointing which we've received would in my view refer back to our baptism. It was the initiation of us into service, just as the priests and tabernacle parts were anointed. The question we much each sort out is, what are our specific talents, our gifts, the potential uses for which the Father and Son intend us, the paths of service they potentially mapped out for us and initiated us for at our immersions?

2:21 *I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it! And because no lie is of the truth*- I have suggested that "truth" in John's Gospel refers not simply to abstract "truth" in a general sense, or in terms of correct interpretation; but specifically to the Lord Jesus as "the truth". This statement that

they know the Lord Jesus ["the truth"] then leads in naturally to the warning in :22 that there are those who deny the Lord Jesus. Such a "lie" cannot be part of those who are "of the truth", of the Lord Jesus. Those who were stating untruths about the Lord were therefore not to be considered Christian. They knew the truth in that they knew the Lord Jesus, and could therefore discern that the false teachers were not teaching correctly about Him. This is the context both before and after this verse.

2:22 *Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist: he that denies the Father and the Son*- The antichrist has been defined in our notes on :18 as Judaist infiltrators to the fledgling church. They were denying that the Lord was the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. But the faithful had received the anointing (:1), the presence of the Christ within, as real as He was once amongst His people "in the flesh". By denying Him as the anointed one, they were declaring themselves not to be of Him, to not have received His Spirit, and those who had received it could see clearly that they were not His. They were denying the Son, as Peter had, but without repentance. And for all Judaism's much vaunted focus upon God, they were denying the Father by denying His Son.

We deny Jesus is the Christ if we don't preach Him (Mt. 10:33). As explained on :20, the context here is of having been anointed with the commission to preach Christ to the world. It follows that if we really believe that Jesus was not just Jesus of Nazareth but the Christ of God, therefore we won't deny Him but will preach Him. This is why there is connection between confessing Jesus as Christ and preaching Him (Jn. 9:22; Acts 18:5; Phil. 2:11).

2:23- see on Mt. 10:32.

Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father. He that confesses the Son has the Father also- The Judaists were arguing that they were loyal to the Father, but His Son was not the Christ / Messiah. And yet they thereby were denying the Father, and did not 'have' the Father. "The Son" had to be 'confessed'. This is a theme of John's Gospel; that some claimed to believe in the Son, but would not "confess" Him for fear of the Jewish world around them (Jn. 12:42), seeing that any who "confessed" Jesus as Christ were excluded from the synagogue system (Jn. 9:22 s.w.). John the Baptist is held up as an example to be followed of confessing and not denying the Lord (Jn. 1:20); and Joseph and Nicodemus are presented as parade examples of Jews who progressed from secret faith to open confession. Confession of the Lord is essential for final salvation; denial of Him before men results in His denial of us (Mt. 10:32,33). The infiltrators would not openly confess the Son, and therefore remained in the synagogue system; but they were thereby effectively denying the Son, and yet they claimed some association with the church, appearing to be "of us" (:19).

It was of course known to the entire church that their early leader Peter had denied his Lord. Denial of the Son therefore cannot refer to temporary failure, such as caving in to Saul / Paul's torturing of Christians to deny the Messiahship and Divine Sonship of Jesus. It surely refers to those who lived lives denying Him, despite having once known Him. For the whole idea of 'denying' the Son does allude to Peter's denials, and the sense clearly is that they are consciously lying by denying the Son when they do in fact know Him. Again we have yet more comfort that despite temporary failure, and the ongoing experience of sin, we can be confident that we are walking in love.

2:24 *As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you*

heard from the beginning abides in you, you also shall abide in the Son and in the Father- John strongly links belief in Christ as the Son of God with a life of true love. They had heard from "the beginning" of their contact with the Gospel that Christ was the Son of God; and yet also the need to love one another. The "message" which they had heard from the beginning was that Christ was the Son of God (1 Jn. 2:24); and yet it was also that we should love one another (1 Jn. 3:11). Encounter with Him, living in the light of His personal example and the receipt of His spirit / mind, results in love. This is why in the context of teaching the need for love, John warns against false teaching regarding the nature of the Lord as Son of God (1 Jn. 2:22,23; 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 7-11). "The word... from the beginning" was the *logos* of Christ, the essence of Him and His spirit, which was love unto death (Jn. 1:1-3); and yet in John's letters, the word from the beginning was that we should love each other (1 Jn. 2:7; 3:11). This is the essence of belief in the Lord: love for each other. "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (3:23). "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves him that begat loves him also that is begotten of him" [i.e. your brother]. "If we love one another, God dwells in us... whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him" (4:12,15). But why is there this link between love, and belief in Jesus of Nazareth being the begotten Son of God? Theologically, it could be said that if we accept Him as God's Son, then we must likewise accept all God's other sons, begotten as they are by His Spirit. But practically, are we not being taught to see the *pure wonder* of the way in which *Almighty God had a Son* and gave that Son, so freely and so painfully, for us...? The *pure wonder* of God having a Son of our nature, a child and then a man who showed us the essence of God displayed in human flesh and temptation; and then giving Him to us... If we see this, we will naturally show love to our brethren. So it isn't just a case of thinking yes, we believe the Lord was Son of God, not God the Son- and period. No. There's infinitely more to it than this. This faith and understanding can tear down every barrier between men, and provide the inspiration for a life of true, self-sacrificial love. The true *wonder* of it all simply must be meditated upon. That God's very own son should begin so small, as an ovum, "a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and redivide until a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager".

The Lord speaks of us abiding in His word (Jn. 8:31) and yet also of His word abiding in us, and us abiding in Him (Jn. 15:7). That *logos* is not the whole Bible, but the *logos* of Him, the essence of His personality, recorded words, character and, in a word, His spirit. That word abiding in us may indeed refer in the first instance to the illiterate new Christian converts reciting over and over in their minds the Gospel accounts. In all situations they were to have the 'word of Jesus' hovering in their minds. To abide in Christ was and is to have His word abiding in us; but not just His recorded words. The very essence of Him should be the spirit which takes over our entire life and thinking. Paul's evident familiarity with the Lord's words is an example of how one of our brethren lived this out in practice. We have to ask how frequently in the daily grind the words and person of the Master come to mind, how close they are to the surface in our subconscious… for this is the essence of Christianity. It's not so much a question of consciously memorizing His words, but so loving Him that quite naturally His words and being are never far from our consciousness, and frequently come out in our thinking and words. No wonder it seems the early church made new converts memorize the Gospels. And perhaps too 1 Jn. 3:9 has similar reference- the seed of God [the Gospel- of John- which the converts had first heard] must abide in the convert, so that he or she doesn't [continue

in] sin. The continual meditation upon the Lord's words and person as we have them in the Gospels will have the same effect upon us. *This* is the real way to overcome sin and to achieve genuine spiritual mindedness, to know the mind of Christ; in this way the Lord Jesus abides in us by His Spirit (1 Jn. 3:24). Abiding in the word of Christ, His words abiding in us, abiding in love, abiding in the Father and Son, the Spirit and anointing abiding in us (1 Jn. 4:16) are all parallel ideas.

But we are to "let" or allow His *logos* / Spirit abide in us. It is not just a matter of psychological steel will to recite His words to ourselves. We are to allow Him to fill us with His Spirit, to make His abode or dwelling with us.

2:25 *And this is the promise which he promised us- everlasting life-* The promise of eternal life in John's gospel refers to the present give of the eternal life right now; it is a reference to the spirit of the life of Jesus which is given into us now. It is "eternal" in that this is the kind of life and spirit which we shall eternally live, resuming living it seamlessly at the resurrection of the body.

2:26 *These things have I written to you concerning those that would lead you astray-* The reference has been to the Jewish infiltrators of the churches (Gal. 2:4), teaching that the Lord was not in fact "Christ". "Lead you astray" is the term used in the Olivet prophecy of how false Christs [cp. "antichrist"] would lead many astray, and this would be a sign of the last day approaching (Mt. 24:24). AD70 was clearly approaching as John wrote this; and we wonder whether there will be a similar collapse of faith due to infiltrators in the last days before His return. Mt. 24:24 predicted the success of these people; they would "lead many astray", and John is clearly up against this problem.

2:27 *And as for you, the anointing which you received of him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you all things and is true and is no lie and even as it taught you, so you are to abide in him-* As noted on :1, the anointing refers to the gift of the Spirit, of the Christ in them and with them. The Comforter passages had explained that one role of the Comforter would be to replace the personal presence of the Lord on earth as their teaching Rabbi (see on Jn. 14:18). In this sense they needed no human teacher. And all those who have received the Comforter will likewise not be at the mercy of teachers within the church system they are involved with. The abiding of the Lord in us is through His spirit (3:24; 4:13; Jn. 14:17). The function of this is to actively teach us. This is the way to avoid being led astray by false teaching. What is taught, that which we hear and read, must be compared against the spirit of Christ within us. And we will soon sense what is right and wrong; not of our own natural intuition, but in comparison with His spirit within us. This is the sense behind Jn. 7:17: "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know of this teaching, whether it is of God, or I speak from myself". The will of God is to believe on who He sent; and this belief will result in the gift of the Lord's Spirit. This is why the most simple, illiterate folk who are filled with the Spirit can so easily detect false teaching about their Lord.

"You do not need any man to teach you" alludes to the promise of the Spirit within the new covenant, which applies now to all who have entered that covenant by baptism into Jesus: "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jer. 31:31-34). Those who have the Spirit will not be endlessly listening to this or that teacher for teaching. They are led by their own Spirit-filled relationship with God through His word.

Eph. 4:21 AV says that we are "taught by Him". The Lord "began to do and teach" things (Acts 1:1), and continues. Multiple times this word is used of the Lord's

teaching people in His ministry. And that now continues. He teaches us. And He specifically says He will give us the Comforter, His teaching Spirit, to effect this. The Comforter will teach us "all things", and the "all things" are the things about Jesus (Jn. 14:26). 1 Jn. 2:27 alludes to this, saying that the anointing we have received "teaches you all things" and abides within us, in our hearts, so that we don't need any man to teach us. And any human teacher we do listen to must be judged against this teaching from the Comforter. This is why any man who does God's will through the Spirit will intuitively know if a human teaching ["doctrine", same word as 'teaching'] is of God or not (Jn. 7:17). Whoever leaves the teaching of Christ doesn't have God (2 Jn. 9). These Johannine passages use the same word for "teach" which we have in Eph. 4:21. . Paul himself says the same when he claims that he was taught the Gospel by none other than Jesus Christ and not by man (Gal. 1:12). Heb. 8:11 may have the same idea- under the new covenant, which includes the gift of the Spirit, men shall not teach their brother to "know the Lord" because all shall know Him through His direct teaching. We see here the active nature of the Lord's work now, teaching as well as mediating, forgiving and seeking to guide our life path towards eternity with Him. He teaches us, and Paul says that thus we "learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20). He teaches us about Himself. And there's nothing better than reading the Gospel records with the Lord Himself explaining Himself to us, as an individual tutor. We are taught "Christ" (:20), or "according to the truth which is in ['which consists in'] Jesus". Those lessons, that learning, is of the final truth- which is "Christ" Himself, "Jesus". Knowing Him, being in relationship with Him, is "the truth", as John's writings make clear. Understanding these things makes us review the passages which speak of our having received a teaching / doctrine [s.w.], and needing to remain faithful to it. At first blush we may assume this teaching is from the person who taught us the Gospel. But perhaps the idea is rather than this teaching was given us by the Lord Jesus: "That form of teaching that was delivered to you... the teaching that you learned [from Jesus directly?]... holding fast the faithful word he has been taught [by Jesus?]... abide in the teaching of Christ" (Rom. 6:17; 16:17; Tit. 1:9; 2 Jn. 9). Once we are secure in this relationship, we will not be blown about by every wind of human teaching / doctrine. We will be able to easily discern teachings.

2:28- see on Lk. 6:46.

And now, little children, abide in him- The appeal was to abide in Him by letting Him abiding in them by the Spirit (3:24; 4:13; Jn. 14:17). There is an element of our permitting Him to dwell in us; being possessed by the Spirit does not remove our freewill in allowing Him to be a guest within us.

That, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming- The "boldness" at the day of judgment is only possible if we have the "eternal life" within us now, having received and having lived the spirit of the life of Jesus in our mortal life. To forsake that Spirit would leave them naked and thereby ashamed before Him.

"Before him" is literally 'from before Him'. After the rejected start to perceive the reality of rejection, there will be an ashamed slinking away from the judgment. It would appear that the wicked will argue back in protest against their rejection at the judgment ("When saw we thee?... Thou art an hard man"), and will desperately try to find acceptance. All this has to be reconciled with the silent dejection and grim acceptance of the 'goats'. 1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of them as being "ashamed from before him at his coming", the Greek suggesting the idea of slinking away in shame, after the

pattern of Israel being *carried away* into captivity (2 Kings 17:6,11,23,33- Heb. 'to denude, make naked'). Another foretaste of this was in the way the condemned world of Noah's time [the flood was a clear type of the final judgment] were to 'pine away / languish' (Gen. 6:17; 7:21- AV "die"). The wicked will melt away from the Lord's presence (Ps. 68:2). Rejected Israel are described as being "ashamed away" (Joel 1:12)- the same idea. This is the idea behind Heb. 12:15 RVmg: "…man that falleth back from the grace of God". What they did in this life in slinking away from the reality of pure grace back to Judaism will be what is worked out in their condemnation experience. Note that Jesus Himself will be likewise ashamed of His unworthy followers (Lk. 9:26); there will be a mutuality in the natural distancing between the two parties. This is the scene of Rev. 16:15- the rejected being made naked in shame. This slinking back in shame will fulfil the prophecies of Is. 1:24,29 and Jer. 2:35,36, which speak of the rejected being made ashamed, becoming ashamed, of their idols; which is all that legalistic obedience amounts to. They will be made ashamed by the judgment process. Thus we have the picture of them initially arguing with Jesus, growing less and less forcible, giving way to a pleading with tears for a change of mind, finally followed by a silent slinking away in shame. There seems a certain similarity between this and how the combined Gospel records imply that men initially mocked Jesus on the cross, and then eventually slipped away in silence (Heb. 6:6). Adam attempted to hide from God's presence, the Hebrew implying 'to drawn oneself back'. Judas went away (Gk. he retired away) to try to hang himself, once he knew his condemnation (Mt. 27:3-5). See on Mt. 27:5. Speechlessness is a characteristic of the rejected (Mt. 22:12); the brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence (Gen. 45:4), as the rejected will.

1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of our being able to have "boldness" at the day of judgment; but the Greek *parresia* means literally 'a saying of all'. This free telling of all will be when we list our sins to the Lord; and yet, in the greatest paradox, this will be our confidence before Him. That 'freedom of speech' in His presence will be the sign that we are accepted; and yet the freedom of speech begins with our free confession to Him of our unworthiness.

The 'manifestation' of the Lord is paralleled here with His *parousia* or second coming. But John has used this word of how the life and person of the Lord is manifested to believers in Him through the Spirit (1:2; 3:8) as He was manifested in His life (Jn. 1:31; 2:11 etc.), just as His physical life and presence was manifested at His literal resurrection (Jn. 21:1,14). The Comforter enables us to experience the Lord's presence just as real as He was physically present with men during His ministry. This is not at all to devalue His second, literal coming; but the essence of His manifestation is already experienced by those who have His Spirit.

2:29 *If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also that does righteousness is begotten of him*- This is in the context of discerning false teachers. The New Testament always associates false teaching with false behaviour; for by fruits a tree is known. Hardly ever is abstract false teaching mentioned, genuine misunderstanding of Bible verses and so forth. Always the false teachers are known by their immoral fruits. The litmus test as to whether a person is "of Him" is whether they do righteousness, as He is righteous. "You know..." is the way to discern. The spirit of Christ within us will feel an intuitive disjunction with those who lack that same Spirit. We are begotten of Him through receipt of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). The key issue in false teachers is that they are not born again by the Spirit, and their lack of

personal righteousness reflects that. The parallel in 1 Jn. 4:7 says that loving our brother is proof we are born of God. The lack of righteousness in view here is therefore in practice, a lack of brotherly love. Likewise 3:10 parallels not loving our brother with not doing righteousness.

But "you know" is an imperative, i.e. "you must / ought to know / recognize...". The idea may also be that the audience are being commanded to accept that whoever acts ["does"] like the Father is of the Father; whoever bears good fruit is in the vine. There was the equal danger of refusing good living brethren because of some theological foible or from guilt by association. To recognize God's begotten children is a duty, a binding imperative; lest church life become a mere social club comprised of our own ethnic and cultural circle. The basis of fellowship in practice is being together in God's family, and showing His characteristics. It is certainly not merely an on paper theological agreement.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Look what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. And we are! For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him*- This continues the theme of 2:29, that we have become God's children by being born again through receipt of the Spirit at water baptism (Jn. 3:3-5). This is all of His grace, His love. And our response is to be in love. The idea of the Jewish world not knowing us because they do not know God [for all their talk about monotheism] alludes to the prologue to the gospel of John. The world did not know the Lord Jesus in the sense that they did not accept the message that was in Him (Jn. 1:10); but those who did receive Him were given power by the Spirit to become God's children (Jn. 1:12,13). Those in Christ would be persecuted by the Jewish world as He was, because they did not know the Father (Jn. 16:3). The Jewish world did not know or recognize / have relationship with God's children, because they did not know God. But rejection by those around us, even in the name of God and their religion, should never take away from the wonder that we really are His children, begotten by the Spirit.

3:2 *Beloved, now are we children of God; and it is not yet revealed what we shall be. We know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him*- The same Greek word is used in Heb. 2:17 of how the Lord in His life and death was "made like His brothers". Here we read that finally, we shall be "made like" Him. His experiences of life, of our humanity, brought Him into identity with us- so that we might reach final identity with Him. Our identity with the Lord is not complete and total, despite all the very exalted language John uses for our current status in Christ. The promise that we shall be made like Him at His return is a great comfort when we ponder the question of how far we shall be changed. For if our nature alone shall be changed, and spiritually we shall be left as we are, then we feel the burden of knowing that our characters are not as transformed as they ought to be. Yet if character is going to be changed overmuch, we personally shall not be saved, but turned into someone whom we are not. Yet in the end, we do need to be changed to be "like Him". More thoughts about this on 1 Cor. 15:51,52.

For we shall see Him even as He is- This 'seeing' of God in His Son was and is possible in this life; for whoever has 'seen' the Son has seen the Father (Jn. 14:9). Especially was the essence of the Father and Son upon the cross, and 'seeing' / perceiving Him there leads to a transformed life. And yet He will be manifested / appear [AV] at the Lord's return; and through seeing Him as He truly is, we will be transformed into an existence like Him. Yes, our natures will be changed in a twinkling of an eye. But have you ever asked *how* this will happen, putting meaning into words? John says that it will be through our 'seeing' of Jesus in that actual and new way which we will then. Seeing Him fully as He is will mean that our very natures are changed; and this is exactly what is going on now in a moral sense as we see the essence of Him manifested in His life, in the cross and in the manifestation of His life now through His resurrection. As noted on 2 Cor 3:18, even now we are changed from glory to glory, the more we perceive Him. Our change will not therefore simply be at the flick of a switch, as it were, in some mechanical way. The change will indeed be instantaneous, but will be predicated upon our mental perception of Him as He is in the fullness of His moral and personal glory.

The idea of being able to "see" God must be understood in the context of how John uses the word "see". It carries not only the idea of physical vision, but also of believing and understanding. If we can't love our brother, another human being who on some level we *can* comprehend; how then can we love God, who in this life we cannot comprehend (1 Jn. 4:12,20)? Yet John says that ultimately, we will see God (1 Jn. 3:2). Perhaps the implication is that seeing God in our brother and loving him, having a relationship with him, is the prelude to seeing God Himself and relating with Him eternally.

3:3 *And everyone that has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure*- The purification or cleansing is by the Spirit; 'purify' and 'pure' are from the same word translated "Holy" as in "Holy Spirit". The function of the Holy Spirit is to purify / cleanse us. Our purifying of ourselves according to His purity is impossible in our own strength; it can only be achieved by allowing His spirit to purify us towards His own purity. As noted on Jn. 15:2, the Father cleanses or purifies us through the work of the Spirit. This process comes to its final term when we are made completely "pure" in the change of nature and total personality envisaged in :1,2.

3:4 *Everyone that keeps on committing sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness*- The Judaist false teachers were characterized by personal sinfulness, living in sin (see on 2:29). In fact, for all their much vaunted attention to the Jewish law, they were lawless. The "keeps on committing..." is in contrast to the ongoing process of purification by the work of the Spirit we have just read of in :3.

3:5- see on Mk. 15:20.

And you know that he was manifested to take away sins; because in him is no sin- Or as stated in :3, "He is pure", and we are being purified toward the complete reflection of His sinlessness. His work of taking away sins therefore is ongoing. It was achieved in one sense by His death, but that death released the Spirit (Jn. 7:39) which is as water of purification, washing and transforming us from sin. The language here could suggest that in His atoning death, 'He' was manifested. There God set forth Jesus in His blood, for all to see and respond to (Rom. 3:25 Gk.). There the real essence of Jesus was publicly shown forth. And there we come to know what love is (1 Jn. 3:16).

3:6 *Whoever abides in him does not keep on in sin. Whoever keeps on in sin has not seen him, nor truly knows him*- The true knowledge / seeing / relationship with Him has to have an impact upon us. If we abide in Him, if the whole sphere of our living and thinking is Him, then His Spirit abides in us (3:24; 4:13; Jn. 14:17). And this will indeed transform us. Intellectual knowledge of itself does not cleanse from sin; the knowledge in view is clearly the Hebraic idea of relationship with. John stresses how he had 'seen' the Lord's crucifixion (Jn. 19:35), and he later says that anyone who has truly 'seen' Jesus will not commit sin (1 Jn. 3:6). Holding the vision of Him there as He was, really 'seeing' and perceiving Him and continuing in relationship with that crucified Lord, will hold us back from sinning. This is the power of the cross.

3:7 *My little children, let no one lead you astray. He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*- John repeats the warning noted on 2:29, that the false teachers who were leading them astray could be told by their fruit and lack of righteousness. And the teachers criticized by the Judaist infiltrators could be told as true because they were righteous as the Lord is righteous. Those who have His Spirit will be able to intuitively tell who is righteous, because they have the same spirit.

3:8 *He that keeps on in sin is of the Devil. For the Devil sins from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil*- The Biblical 'devil', the false accuser, is indeed a parable for 'sin'. But it also often refers to sin manifested in an individual or system. The system immediately in view here is the Jewish world. The false teachers, the Judaist infiltrators, were sinful people in their personal lives, without the fruits of righteousness, and without love for their Christian brethren. They wilfully continued in that life, and were untransformed by the Spirit, which they resisted being filled with. I suggest that here and even in Revelation, John portrays the whole Jewish world as the false accuser, the devil; the great adversary or satan to the cause of Christ, as we see historically exemplified in the book of Acts. The Lord clearly called the Jewish opposition to Him the children "of the devil" (Jn. 8:44), in contrast to those born again in Him, who are here called the sons of God (3:1). These Judaist infiltrators (Gal. 2:4 etc.) were "of the devil" in that they were part of the larger Judaist system.

The purpose of the Lord's work and death was to unloose [NEV "destroy"] the works which "the devil" trusted in; the works of legal obedience which were characteristic of Judaism. Eph. 2:14 uses the same word for how the Lord unloosed the wall of partition enforced by the Jewish law. And the word is used about unloosing the law of Moses (Jn. 5:18; 7:23; see on Jn. 10:35). The need not to break or unloose the Law was a common Rabbinical saying found often in the Talmud. It was through the Lord's removal of this works-based legal system that He removed our sins (:5).

3:9- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

Whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on in sin, because he is begotten of God- The seed of God is His Son, the Lord Jesus, born by the Spirit. This is a huge Bible theme. The seed of God also begets us as God's children (Jn. 3:3-5). The begetting of God's only begotten Son refers also to us in outline principle. So long as we remain God's begotten children, the Spirit will work within us to purify us against sin (see on :3). We will not continue in sin as the Judaists did; we will be transformed; see on 2:1. But as is made clear in 1:10, the work of the Spirit is to reveal sin to us, to convict us, and also to cleanse us from it. That is a process; so this teaching does not mean that at any point in time, we are without sin. We are a work in progress, and even then, we shall have to be "made like Him" (see on :2).

3:10 *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he that does not love his brother-* The allusion is to the Lord's words in Jn. 8:44, where the children of the devil clearly refer to the Jewish leadership. The doing of righteousness is epitomized in loving our brother, which is presented as the one great commandment which is imperative in the very person of the Lord. To walk in His light is to become like Him, bit by bit. The Judaist infiltrators were controlled by the "devil" of the Jewish system. They did not love their Christian brethren but worked against them; and they did not love God's only begotten Son.

3:11 *For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another-* The message pronounced from the beginning of the Lord's ministry (see on Jn. 1:1 for this definition of "the beginning" in John) was, in a word, love. From the beginning of His ministry, the Lord's very being pronounced His love for the world, and supremely for the Father. This is the essence of the Lord Jesus; the imperative is ever in any encounter with Him to love as He loved, to the death of the cross for others.

3:12 *Not as Cain, who was of the evil one, who killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous*- The allusion to Jn. 8:44 continues (see on :10). The hatred of Cain for Abel is used in Jn. 8:44 as typical of the Jewish hatred for the Lord Jesus. As Abel's sacrificial obedience provoked an awareness in Cain of his own evil works, so with the Jewish darkness around the Lord. Cain's evil works do not refer to his vegetable sacrifice, but to the fact that his conscience of his unrecorded "evil works" was prodded by the observation of Abel's righteousness. The Lord in John's gospel explained that the darkness hates the light (the Lord Himself and those in Him, who are "the light of the world" as He is); and this is because their works are exposed as evil by the light. This is another way of saying that their consciences are prodded by the very existence of the light. And therefore they hate the light and want to destroy, obscure or extinguish it. The world hates all those who testify of its evil (Jn. 7:7). It is too simplistic to say that Cain killed Abel, as the Lord was killed by the Jews, just because of jealousy. Rather is the reason because the goodness of the righteous exposed the evil deeds of the wicked, simply by reason of their being righteous.

3:13- see on Jn. 5:28.

Marvel not brothers if the world hates you- As explained on :12, it is the unconscious exposure of others' sin by our example which will lead to hatred. The Jewish converts were apparently surprised that the Jewish religious world would hate them. John is explaining that such hatred is completely to be expected. But in this very context, John warns about *some brethren* who hate their brethren, and who thereby abide in darkness (1 Jn. 3:15; 4:20). John's simple logic is evident: if you hate your brother, you're in the world, you've put yourself into darkness, you've condemned yourself. The place of the rejected believers is in the ranks of the world- nowhere else.

3:14 *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He that does not love abides in death*- Again, the litmus test of the Lord's indwelling through the Spirit is if we love our brethren in Christ. If we have received the promised gift of eternal life, which is the life and spirit of the Lord Jesus, then we shall not hate our brethren. For He loves them. If we have His spirit, His mind, His love- then so shall we. John implies that we should be able to enquire of ourselves as to whether we love our brothers, and to find a clear answer. Harry Whittaker was fond of seeing the *agape*, the love feast, the breaking of bread, as implied in references to showing *agape* to our brethren. That is indeed one implication, and those who refuse to break bread with their brethren can hardly claim to have *agape* for them. But much more is implied- for the *agape* of the new commandment is to love unto death as the Lord did, passionately wishing salvation for all our brethren.

Having eternal life and passing out of death is spoken of in Jn. 5:24, where it is predicated upon hearing the Lord's word: “He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life”. To hear the word of Christ and believe the Gospel of God *must* issue, if it is valid and credible, in something practical- loving our brethren. It is only John who records the Lord speaking of “my word” [*logos*]. To hear Christ’s word or *logos* is not merely to believe that the Bible was written by Divine inspiration, or to intellectually assent to doctrinal truth; it is to discern *Him*, to know Him as a person in truth. And this simply has to lead to loving the brethren. This is the real result of knowing / being in relationship with the Lord.

3:15- see on Mt. 5:22.

Whoever hates his brothers is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him- The allusion to Cain and Jn. 8:44 is continued; he was "the murderer from the beginning", the archetypical murderer. The Lord of course taught that hate is tantamount to murder. But the great murder in view was the Jewish murder of the Lord (Mt. 22:7; Acts 7:52). "Eternal life" in John's Gospel is a present gift, received now and abiding in our hearts, "in him"; the life of the Lord Jesus, His spirit, the ability to live now as we shall eternally. This cannot abide in us if we hate our brother. For murder is related to death; and we have life abiding in us. The Greek for "hate" carries the idea of 'to detest'; we must ask ourselves if we detest any of our brethren. It seems apparent that many cannot answer that question very well.

“Eternal life" should be read as referring more to the *quality* of that life, rather than its eternal duration being the fundamental construct behind our conception of the Kingdom. This is how the phrase "eternal life" seems to be used in John's letters (1 Jn.1:1-3; 2:24,25; 3:15; 5:11,13). We must not be like the rich young man who desperately asked: "What must *I do* that *I* may have *eternal life*?", as if he saw having eternal life as the ultimate possession to get under his own belt. Notice how our Lord's reply described 'having eternal life' as 'entering into life', 'having treasure in heaven', 'entering the Kingdom of God', rather than personally possessing eternal life (Mt.19:16-23).

3:16 *Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers*- The message from the beginning of the Lord's ministry was of love, in that the light of His person was an imperative to love unto death. But the supreme definition of love was given in His life; that enables the new commandment to be real, to love as He loved us, unto death.

The same *must* which led Him to His passion (see on Mk. 14:49; Lk. 2:49) is the very same compulsion which “behoves" us to preach that passion which we have witnessed

and benefited from. In His ministry, He had taught that we *must* be born again, and in the same discourse spoke of how He *must* be lifted up in crucifixion (Jn. 3:7,14). His cross, His will to die in the way He did, must be our inspiration. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and *we ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I Jn. 3:16). We must carry the cross if we are to know His salvation. Yet we can be caught up in the spirit of a world which seeks obsessively to save its life rather than give up life. Through popping pills, exercise, healthy living... we can seek to extend our days. We use insurance to seek to cushion us against the harder knocks of life. We seek our lives to be as free as possible from hard work. And none of these things is wrong in themselves. It is quite right that we should make use of these things in the Lord’s service. But we can be caught up in the spirit of life and thinking of which they are part, and *this* is the danger. For the spirit and desire that gave rise to them is that which is exactly the opposite of the sense of *must* which the Lord possessed. He knew that He *must* suffer, He *must* crucify His flesh. And so *must* we. This is a solemn and eternal compulsion. Yet we live in a world which believes that we *must not* suffer anything negative, and we *must* seek to save our lives rather than give them out for others.
If we are to show the love of God to the world, this will primarily (but not exclusively) be in terms of our spiritual help towards them, rather than a social gospel. Our response to God's love in Christ will also be expressed by laying down our lives "for the *brethren*". The next verse helps define this as material, practical help (1 Jn. 3:16,17).

3:17 *But whosoever has the world's goods and sees his brothers in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*- The Lord Jesus personally, His word, His *logos*, the love of God, the Spirit... are all referring to the same thing. The indwelling of the Spirit of Christ means that we shall love as He loved. If we do not show love in practice, then quite clearly His Spirit, which has love as its essence, is not within us. We cannot claim to have His Spirit in a purely intellectual sense; and our lives not show love. I have argued throughout John's Gospel and epistles that "the world" usually refers to the Jewish world; and on 2:16 that the Judaist movement was wealthy. The false teachers of Rev. 3:17 were increased with goods and had need of nothing. They had the goods of the [Jewish] world; but refused to help needy Christians. For they were after all just infiltrators into the Christian churches (Gal. 2:4) and wouldn't want to 'waste' any money helping their poor.

The principles arising from the first century context which John wrote in do of course apply to us in any age. The early church was the parade example of giving to brothers in need (Acts 2:45; 4:35; 6:3 s.w.). The psychology of being mean is well expressed here; we see / notice the need, but close up our hearts lest we make an emotional response from the "bowels" [Gk.]. Emotion and pity are therefore quite normal motivations for generosity, and we should not close them down lest we be left out of pocket.

3:18 *Little children, let us not love in word, nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth*- Every religion and indeed every person on earth talks of "love". But John has radically redefined love as being what is done motivated by the "new commandment", to love as the Lord loved us unto death. This is the love which is not in theory or spoken about in pious language, but the love which is reality and which is "truth" in the sense that the Lord Jesus was "the truth". The word [*logos*] is to be made flesh (Jn. 1:14); that seems the idea here. The word of love, the love as the Lord loved, is not to remain as mere language, but to become deed and reality.

The commandment to love, as Christ loved us, is made new "as it is made true" (1 Jn. 2:8 Gk.) both in the person of Jesus, and in all who are truly in Him. This means that the principles we receive in theory are to become 'truth' in us as they were in the Lord; they are to become applied in the very person and fabric of our beings, and not remain merely part of our shadow selves. It is truth that makes us pure (1 Pet. 1:22,23), good deeds are produced by truth (1 Jn. 3:18). No amount of correct theory can make us pure; surely the reference is to the life of transparency to God, of 'truth' in the sense that there is no divide between our inner convictions and our actual lives. Then will come true in us the connection which John perceives between truth and love (1 Jn. 3:19).

3:19 *Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him*- "The truth" as often in John refers to the Lord, who is "the truth". The "Him" before whom we assure our hearts at the last day is the Lord; "the truth". The extent to which we are intended to be Christ-centred is reflected in how John speaks of Him as “the truth”. Indeed, He appears to refer to the Name of Jesus with the same sensitivity with which a Jew would refer to the Name of God, and uses a similarly wide range of titles for Him. John seems to use *aletheia*, ‘the truth’, as a kind of periphrasis for “Jesus”; *en aletheia*, in the truth, appears to match Paul’s *en kyrio* [‘in the Lord’] or *en christo* [‘in Christ’]. John refers to missionaries being sent out “for the sake of the name”, when the other records say that they were sent out in the name of Jesus. The exalted Name of Jesus was therefore, to John, ‘the truth’; the person of Jesus, which the Name encapsulates, is to be the deciding, central truth in the life of the believer.

We can know whether we are living in love; and if we are, then we come to judgment day with stable hearts. All those who uphold exclusive policies against fellowshipping their brethren need to ponder long and hard what they are doing, and whether they can face the Lord in that day with an assured heart... as they see brethren they have excluded entering His Kingdom. If we have a good conscience that we have lived in love, then we shall assure, or calm down, our fluttering hearts before Him at the last day. To live in love, with the spirit of the Lord Jesus, is to live the eternal life, the kind of life we shall

eternally live. If we know we are living in love, we shall be assured when we meet Him that we shall seamlessly continue that life.

3:20 *Because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things*- The preceding verse has spoken of being able to assure our hearts before the Lord at judgment day, if we have lived in love. The context here in :20 therefore specifically refers to the question of whether or not we can say we live in love. If it does, then God is greater than our various feelings of bad conscience concerning those we do not love. He knows all things- if we know we have not lived in love, then this will be symptomatic of yet more sins, which He knows all about. The same Greek words for "knows all things" are used about the Lord Jesus knowing all things that are in men (Jn. 2:24).

3:21- see on Lk. 6:46.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God- As noted on :19,20, the context here is specific to the question of whether we know that we live in love toward the Lord's brethren or not. John assumes that we can in fact know the answer to this question, and that our heart reliably reveals whether or not we are living in love. The "boldness" is the 'assurance of heart' at the last day which we shall have if we know we have lived in love (:19). But we can have that boldness right now; we can come in prayer boldly before the throne of grace, and boldly enter the holiest (Heb. 4:16; 10:19). This is why John's thought goes on from the day of judgment to our standing in prayer now before the Father and Son (:22). Because our attitude toward them now in prayer shall be our attitude at the last day. Through the ministry of the Comforter, we are now in the Lord's presence, we have His presence just as really as when He lived amongst men in Palestine.

3:22 *And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight*- As shown on :21, the thought has developed from having love for each giving us boldness before the Father and Son in the day of judgment, to now being bold and confident in prayer before them now. Because our attitude toward them now in prayer shall be our attitude at the last day. The theme of being confident because we live in love is also continued. The "commandments" in view are I suggest a plural of majesty, referring to the one great commandment- to love as He loved us. Indeed the next verse (:23) rather makes this clear. See on 2:3. And this is 'to do the things pleasing to God', a phrase lifted directly from Jn. 8:29 "I do always those things that please Him". So effectively, we shall have our prayers answered, we can have boldness in prayer, if we obey the commandment to love ["because we keep his commandments"], which is to live as He lived, loving as He loved ["and do the things that are pleasing in His sight"]. And this fits perfectly with the context of the preceding verses- that we can have boldness before the same Father and Son, if we live in love.

3:23- see on Jn. 17:11.

And this is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment- The plural "commandments" of :22 are the singular commandment, to love as He loved because we have believed into His Name. See on :22 and 2:3. If we "believe in the name of... Jesus Christ", then we will love one another. To believe the name and to love each other are "his commandment" - singular. They are one and the same thing. This is how direct is the link between truly believing in the name of Jesus, and loving each other. One cannot truly believe in Him, in all that He was, all that He stood and died for, and all that He is... and not articulate this in some form of love for the brotherhood. Belief in Him can never therefore be a purely intellectual matter of mastering certain doctrines. Belief in Him is to love one another; one cannot believe in Him, truly encounter Him and accept Him, and not live in love.

3:24- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

And he that keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave us- As noted on :23 and 2:3, the "commandments" here refer effectively to the one great commandment, to love as He loved us. To have His Spirit abiding in us is parallel in effect to living in the spirit of love as He loved us. The indwelling of the Spirit is therefore connected to our living in love. The Lord's spirit could be summarized in that word, "love". Into our hard hearts there comes His heart, His spirit into our spirit, His word / *logos* / essence of being into ours. And the most essential spirit of Jesus was love for the Lord's people, unto death for our salvation. Here then is real help and hope for those who have been so bruised by life that they feel they can never love. And indeed, who can seriously think that in their own strength, they could love as Christ loved us, unto the death of the cross? The fact is, we have been given His spirit, and this is how He abides in us; and He abides in us if we keep His commandment to love. It's not that we get the Spirit as a reward, as it were, for being loving. We are given the Spirit when we are baptized, when we first believe. It is the empowerment to keep the great commandment of love. For His spirit in the end is the spirit of His love, in a word. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Hence we read of "the love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30); and love is *the* singular fruit of, or brought forth by, the Spirit.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world*- In John's Gospel and letters, the defining feature of true believers and teachers is that they have received the spirit of the Lord Jesus, the Comforter. The authenticity of teachers / "prophets" was to be demonstrated according to whether they had the fruits of the Spirit, which are summarized in love for our brethren as the Lord loved us unto death. This is the test of the spirits.

There were other tests of these prophets- if they didn't accept that Jesus was Lord, they didn't have the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). If they held false teaching about whether Jesus came in the flesh, and walked in hatred of the other Christians, they also were to be rejected (1 Jn. 4:1-10). When Paul says that God and the Holy Spirit witness to the truth of what he is writing, he is presumably referring to how those with the gift of discerning spirits had tested and approved what he was saying (Rom. 1:9; 9:1 cp. 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7). What all this means is that as soon as a genuine New Testament prophet gave a prophecy, it was *immediately* recognized as such, because all these methods of 'testing the spirit' had been followed. This, by the way, explains the very 'dogmatic' and self-assured tone of some of the writers. They insist that their commands have God's authority (1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Thess. 2:15), and therefore must be obeyed (2 Thess. 3:14). They can insist that what they are saying is actually the will and command of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37); and their inspired preaching was "of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). These claims would have come over as arrogant and baseless- unless there had indeed been the process of confirmation of their words explained above. The writers can ask for their letters to be read at the gatherings of the early church- which initially would have been based around the synagogue practice of reading from the Old Testament Scriptures. Their writings were clearly accepted on a par with those writings- as soon as they were issued (1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3). The testings of the various claims to Holy Spirit inspiration are to be found in Gal. 1, 1 Cor. 14 etc. But the letters of John, written at the end of the New Testament period, have the most warnings about the need to test the various claims of Holy Spirit inspiration- understandably, as John was writing towards the end of the period when inspired writings were being given (1 Jn. 4:2,3; 5:6; 2 Jn. 7). See on 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Tim. 5:18.

4:2 *Hereby do you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God*- The Judaist infiltrators claimed to have the Spirit, as the true Christians did. For being without the spirit of Christ makes a man "none of His". So exactly what "spirit" they claimed to have needed to be tested. People here are called 'spirits' because of the close identification between a person and their 'spirit'. True Christians would have the spirit of Christ at their core and would thereby be personally, openly identified with Him. John's Gospel has spoken of the difference between claiming faith in Christ, and confessing or professing Him before men. The cross elicited open and total confession of Him before men. John the Baptist is presented as an example of a man who confessed and did not deny the Lord (Jn. 1:20), and Joseph and Nicodemus are presented as examples of men who went from secret faith to the open confession required of a true Christian. Many Jewish 'believers' refused to confess Jesus as Christ because the penalty for such confession was exclusion from the synagogue system and the Jewish world (Jn. 9:22; 12:42); see on 2:23.

So firstly, a person filled with the spirit of Christ, the Messiah, would actually confess Jesus as Christ, as Messiah. The Judaist infiltrators would not openly confess Him in this way. But they must confess that He "came in the flesh". They had to openly accept that Jesus was a real person; for already incipient ideas of Docetism ['seeming'] and Gnosticism were being advocated by the Jews as a way of clouding the whole issue- that a man born of Mary was Son of God and Messiah, having a perfect character, and now risen, was able to share His spirit with believers in Him. I demonstrated in *The Real Christ* that much false teaching about the nature of the Lord began with Jewish attempts to cloud the true Christian teaching about the Lord; and these attempts later morphed by further extension into the absurdities of Trinitarian doctrine.

The idea of "Christ comes..." cannot be pressed to support any idea of pre-existence. It was a standard Jewish phrase to refer to the arrival of the Messiah (so used in Mt. 24:5; Jn. 4:25; 7:27,31,41,42; 11:27). So the idea would be that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah who should "come"; and He came as an actual human being, "in the flesh". He was the manifestation of God "in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). Already Judaism was beginning to suggest that Messiah was just some abstract, idealistic personification rather than a literal person. That idea is popular in reform Judaism to this day.

There is another possibility. The Lord had promised that despite His physical departure, He would "come" to the disciples, in that the gift of His Spirit in their hearts would make His presence as real [and moreso] as when He was literally with them (Jn. 14:18). His 'coming' to His people was therefore through His Spirit indwelling their flesh. The very same Greek words are used when Paul explains that the life of the risen Jesus, His Spirit, is made manifest "in our mortal flesh" right now (see on 2 Cor. 4:11). The Spirit gift would be given to "all flesh" (Acts 2:17 s.w.). Hence Paul could say that "Christ lives in me... in the flesh" (Gal. 2:20). In this case, the "spirit", the person claiming to have the Spirit, would confess that the spirit of the Lord Jesus had entered them, their "flesh".

4:3- see on Jn. 12:42.

And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is not of God, and they are proved to be of the antichrist; of whom you have heard that it comes, and now is already in the world- "Of God" suggests 'born of God'. The believer is born "of the Spirit", not of the will of man but "of God" (Jn. 1:13; 3:5). There were false claims of Spirit possession in the first century; as I have noted on 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy [regarding the claims made in Ephesus]. The Judaist infiltrators claimed to have the spirit of Christ, and even did false miracles to support their claims, in Corinth they were talking in glossolalia, "mumbo jumbo", and falsely claiming this was the gift of tongues / languages. Those who had been truly born again, of the Spirit, would openly confess the Lord Jesus as Messiah, as a real person "in the flesh". By refusing to do so, they demonstrated that they were "antichrist", the fake, imitation Christ. "You have heard that it comes" must refer to the Lord's predictions that there would be false Christs. These false versions of Messiah refer to the ideas being pushed in the Jewish world and spread into the churches by the Judaist infiltrators. They were specifically entering the [Jewish] world.

4:4 *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world*- By being born of God by the Spirit (Jn. 1:13; 3:5), what was in them (the Spirit) was greater than the supposed 'spirit' in the Jewish world. The believers were "little children" of God, having been born of Him

by the Spirit. The Spirit is personified ["he"] not because the Holy Spirit is a personal being, but because the presence of the Spirit would be as real for the believers as if the Lord were physically present with them as a person.

John makes such a fuss about believing that the Lord Jesus came in the flesh because he wants his brethren to have the same Spirit that was in Jesus dwelling in *their* flesh (1 Jn. 4:2,4). He wants them to see that being human, being in the flesh, is no barrier for God to dwell in. As He was in the world, so are we to be in the world (1 Jn. 4:17 Gk.). *This* is why it's so important to understand that the Lord Jesus was genuinely human.

John's writings like to use the word "overcome". Although it is the last hour for us, the time to fellowship the Lord's final sufferings, He "overcame" on the cross and even during the "last hour" in the upper room before He actually died ("I have overcome the [Jewish] world", Jn. 16:33; "the Lion of he tribe of Judah has prevailed [s.w. overcome] to open the book", Rev. 5:5, "conquering [s.w. overcome] and to conquer" Rev. 6:2). And we likewise have already overcome the wicked one, the system pressing in upon us which may even slay us (1 Jn. 2:13,14 "you have overcome the wicked one", the Jewish world, "you have overcome them", the agents of the Jewish system, 1 Jn. 4:4). We overcome by our faith in Jesus, faith that His overcoming means our overcoming ("whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith... who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God" 1 Jn. 5:4,5). And yet in the short term, the Lord was apparently overcome by the Jewish world, in that they slew Him. But it was truly a case of the magnificent defeat; through their temporary 'overcoming' of Him in death, He overcame them. And likewise with us. The beast 'overcomes and kills' the saints temporarily (Rev. 11:7; 13:7); but "they overcame him by the blood of the lamb" (Rev. 12:11) and 'got victory over [s.w. 'overcome'] the beast' (Rev. 15:2), because "the Lamb shall overcome them" (Rev. 17:14). The repeated promises in the opening letters of Revelation to "him that overcomes" are fulfilled in that the Lord overcame. Their faith in His overcoming means that they overcome finally. They are counted as the Lord Jesus, and His overcoming is theirs; so that "He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and... he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7), i.e. shall be counted as the Son of God. We overcome because "you are of God", i.e. born of God, His sons just as the Lord was His Son (1 Jn. 4:4). Therefore "whoever is born of God overcomes the world" (1 Jn. 5:4) in that we are counted as God's only begotten, victorious son.

4:5 *They are of the world. Therefore speak they of the world and the world hears them*- The world of the first century didn't generally hear the Jewish false teachers; but the Jewish world did. This confirms that we are correct in viewing "the world" here as the Jewish world. The message of these people, their teaching / 'speaking', was of the Jewish world, and therefore attractive to the Jewish world.

4:6 *We are of God. He that knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*- Being "of God", born of Him by the Spirit (Jn. 1:13; 3:5), is presented as being in opposition to being "of the [Jewish] world". John himself was a Jew and was not at all personally anti-Jewish; but he clearly presents the world of Judaism, with their conscious denial of Jesus as Messiah, as being absolutely opposed to the things of God. Those who were not born of God by the Spirit would not "hear" the teaching of John and his team. Yet they surely had the Spirit; to refuse their teaching, which they had been taught by the

Comforter, was another proof that these hearers were not "of God". There is an intuitive bonding between all who have the Lord's spirit. Those who were out of step with the teaching of spirit-filled teachers like John were thereby discernible as of "the spirit of error". "Error" is more 'deceit' in the Greek, the same word used of the spirit of deceit which the Lord would send upon the Jewish world (2 Thess. 2:11; see note there).

4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone that loves is begotten of God and knows God*- Another proof of having been born of God through the Spirit (Jn. 1:13; 3:5) is whether we love one another. The love in view is not of a secular nature; but the love of the new commandment, to love as the Lord loved us, unto death on a cross. To be born "of God" is to have the love which is "of God", the love which came to its ultimate term in the gift of His Son for the sins of the world (Jn. 3:16). Although John's audience were all born of God, they still had to be exhorted to "love one another". The love between us is not as it were imposed by the Spirit against our will; the work of the Spirit requires our willing partnership. Knowing God means living in the sacrificial love of the Father and Son. Clearly we do not 'know' God simply by perceiving the correct theologies about Him and placing a mental tick of agreement against them.

4:8- see on Jn. 3:3.

He that does not love, does not know God. For God is love- As noted on :8, to know God in the Hebraic sense of having a relationship with Him will issue in love- His unique, self-sacrificial love which led to the events of the cross as their acme. To 'see' or 'know' both the Father and Son is to become like them; beholding their glory results in the glory of their person and Name shining off from our faces (see on 2 Cor. 3:18). So a litmus test of false brethren is whether or not they have love. And so often those who appear the most conservative in their teaching totally fail the *agape* test.

To experience God is to know Him. So often the Hebrew prophets speak of 'knowing God' as meaning 'to experience God'. Because God is love, to love is to know God. Quite simply, how deeply we have loved [and I am speaking of 'love' in its Biblical sense] is how deeply we have known God- and vice versa. And that love is worked out in the very earthliness and worldliness of human life in practice.

4:9 *Herein was the love of God manifested to us, in that God has sent His only Son into the world that we might live through him*- The allusion is again to Jn. 3:16. The manifestation of God's love was in the cross. He was "manifest [s.w.] to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). "He was manifested to take away our sins" (1 Jn. 3:5), which He did through death on the cross. He was "manifest [s.w.] in these last times for you" in that He was the sacrificial Passover lamb without blemist (1 Pet. 1:19,20). We live through Him in that He gives to us the gift of His life, His spirit, the kind of thinking He thinks and life He lives, breathing it into every open heart through the gift of the Comforter. As the Father sent the Son into the world, so we are sent into the world in obedience to the great commission (Jn. 17:18). Our mission likewise is to manifest His love and to give others the gift of His life, acting as a channel for the movement and gift of His life / Spirit. The life He has given us is ongoing, and starts now. That is the force really of the aorist subjunctive behind "that we might live". We were dead in sins, but were then given life (Eph. 2:1). The gift of God's son was not simply so that we might have a card to play by which we escape the consequences of death; but rather are we given life now, life in Him, which by its nature and quality is eternal, and shall be eternally resumed in our experience at the resurrection. It is life motivated by His love for us on the cross; in this sense His death

gave us life, and His spirit is given by His death. We live lives of love, the spirit filled life, because His death inspired that (Rom. 5:5).

4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*- The love of the Father and Son is not "love" as the world understands it; but the love of the cross, which was "the propitiation for our sins", that men might be eternally forgiven and saved. One dimension of that love is that it totally takes the initiative; it is not a kind, positive response to those perceived to have loved us. It is the initiative of dying for ones' enemies, in the hope they shall come over to your side- as Romans 5 expresses it. The Judaism which John was up against had much to say of their boasts to "love God"; but it is not our love of Him which is to be the focus, but His love of us whilst we were sinners, and His supreme gift of His Son for our sins and weaknesses, rather than to complement our supposed righteousness.

John seems to purposefully make the point that the Lord *was sent* [as a one time act in the past] “to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). In His blood covered body, He was the place of propitiation, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat (s.w. "mercy seat" Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5). And yet: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: for He *is* [right now, each time we sin] the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 2:1,2 s.w.). In obtaining forgiveness for us He in some way goes through again the essence of His sacrifice. It is too simplistic to say that we repent, and God forgives. He does, but only on the basis of Christ’s atoning act that must come ever before Him in the granting of forgiveness. The Mosaic offerings of blood “before Yahweh" all pointed forward to this fact. Awful as His actual physical sufferings were 2000 years ago, we should not separate them from the work He came to do- of obtaining our redemption. He worked this work in His life, on the cross, and continues it until this day. The daily morning and evening sacrifice had to be of a first year lamb without blemish- the identical specification for the Passover lamb. His death on the cross at Passover was the same as His daily life of sacrifice.

We note that the sending of His Son to die for us was because God loved us. It is therefore simply not the case that God as it were hated us, but Jesus made Him love us. He loved us from the start.

4:11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*- The allusion is clearly to Jn. 3:16; God "so" loved the world in that He gave His Son. He loved the world "so", in this way, that He gave His son. Typical of John's letters, we have here the practical interpretation of the well known phrases in the Gospel of John. This sets the standard so high. For the love of God toward us is not "love" as the world understands it, but the love of utter, total self-sacrifice expressed on the cross (:10). It is with that love that we "ought to love one another". Anything which may damage the path to salvation of the other must not be done; and every effort and sacrifice is to be made to help others on the path toward salvation. For "ought", see on :12.

4:12 *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us*- The allusion is to the prologue of John's Gospel; we have not seen God, but the Son has revealed Him in who He was (Jn. 1:18). And thereby we who have seen the Son have seen / understood / believe in the Father for all the Father is.

"Seen" is *theaomai* , from whence "theater". It is not the word used in Jn. 1:18, and so John is interpreting that passage more specifically in the context of people going off to wrong religious views. God is not theater, mere religion, a show that we go to see in theater at the weekends. The mentality of church life is often no different

to that of going to the theater at the weekend- dressing up the same way, conscious of the image we cut with other attenders, and certainly going for coffee with others in the pub or cafe before or after the show. John's audience were very familiar with 'theater' and would immediately have seen the idea. 'Seeing' Him is not possible physically and literally, but we see Him through His Son and specifically through the cross. The immediate context may be John's answer to those who claimed they had received some mystical revelation of God, and had 'seen' Him, perhaps at a shrine or hill top or other holy place; and on that basis, they loved Him. John is saying that nobody has had such meetings with God, you don't go somewhere to see Him, there is no sacred space or holy place where you go to get a view of Him; but we 'see' God in His essence in the love shown to man through the cross. And what we do see is our brethren (:20). It is them we are to get on and love, rather than going to some shrine to supposedly 'see' God. Our response to the love of the cross is to love others, and not just be satisfied with claiming to personally love God. This scenario in its essence is not dissimilar to some claims of postmodernism in our age. When probed about God, many will claim they personally know God on the basis of vaguely defined private 'meetings' with Him, and have a private relationship with Him; claiming 'spiritual not religious'. John's message is that this is not ultimately true. For relationship with Him is reflected in our relationship with His children. And we meet Him, or He meets us, in the cross, which is a public reality to which all are invited. The allusion to John's Gospel here is to Jn. 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son... he has made Him known". The making known of God by the Son was through the cross.

"If we love one another..." is a conditional clause, implying that not all within the "we" did "love one another", and of course nudging "us" all towards greater love for one another. Although John speaks in black and white terms of category throughout his letters, he constantly builds in hints that he accepts we can be in the "light", confident of salvation by grace, although we also sin (1 Jn. 1:8-10; 2:1,2). He comments in 1 Jn. 2 that the darkness is passing away for us, and the true light of Christ's love is growing stronger. But he defines the darkness as unlove, failure to love our brethren. He accepts that we still have that darkness, but it is decreasing. But by category, we are "in the light". And here too we have the tacit acceptance that we do not love as we ought, in the light of the cross. And so likewise in :11 "we ought also to love one another"; "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" as the Lord did for us (1 Jn. 3:16). Because the Lord washed our feet, in an act which looked ahead to His servant like death on the cross, "you also *ought* to wash one another's feet" (Jn. 13:14) as the lowest slave. We "ought" implies we are not fully compliant. For who can perceive the love of the cross, and claim to have responded adequately? Paul had the same sense in Eph. 5:28; as the Lord died for us, "so *ought* men to love their wives as their own bodies". In these passages, "ought" is the word for debt. We have a debt which is huge and can never be repaid, according to the Lord's parables (Mt. 18:28,30; Lk. 7:41).

The abiding of the Father within believers is through the indwelling of the Spirit in our hearts (3:24). The litmus proof of that is that we will love one another within the believing community; for we are to love as the Lord loved us and died for us to save us.

The idea of "perfected" is of an ongoing process. John writes often in absolute terms, according to our status "in Christ"; as if it is simply so that those who know the Father therefore automatically live in and with the kind of love exhibited by Him in Christ. But we know from observed experience that this is a process and doesn't

happen instantaneously; even Paul felt he had not yet been "perfected" (Phil. 3:12 s.w.). Love, the love unto the death of a cross, is developed and "perfected" in us; this results in the Christian community being "perfected" into a profound unity, unseen in any other human social relationship (Jn. 17:23 s.w.). Our life paths are therefore directed towards the development of that love; and when our lives are over and the next we know we stand before the Lord at the judgment, our love should have been perfected, matured and developed to such a point that we assure our fluttering hearts before Him and find boldness there. We shall then have reached the point the Lord did, who was "perfected" until the very point when He died- for that was the ultimate term and maturity of the process of love being "perfected" in a person (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28). We note from His example and path that whilst the process of 'perfecting' is still in operation, we may be not fully mature, but lack of full maturity is not sinful. For the Lord never sinned. It is the Spirit which 'perfects' us, until on death we can be spoken of as being amongst the spirits of just men who were perfected (Heb. 12:23). It is by keeping the word of the Lord Jesus ever before us that this love is perfected in us (2:5).

4:13 *Hereby we know that we abide in him and He in us, because He has given us of his Spirit*- This complements the statement in :12 that we know He abides in us if we live in love. The presence of the Spirit will produce love, the love of Christ, which is the cardinal feature of His entire Spirit. The Spirit is a gift, given- and not cultivated by our own steel willed effort or felicity in Biblical exposition. The Spirit was given when the Lord was glorified (Jn. 7:39); there is a specific gift given to each believer at the time of water baptism. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). In the context of :12, God abides in us if we know His love. Which is supremely showcased on the cross.

4:14 *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*- This continues to comment on the result of the gift of the Spirit (:13), which was given through the cross, and perhaps John himself had literally "seen" the crucifixion and the outflow of blood and water [representing the gift of the Spirit]. Jn. 19:35 says as much: "blood and water came out of his side. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth". But John says that "we have seen...". We all as it were have beheld the cross just as John did literally. For it was the Comforter who would "testify" of the Lord, "and you also shall testify" (Jn. 15:26,27; 1 Jn. 5:6). The power to witness is given in the strength of the Spirit we are given; otherwise shy individuals somehow find the power to bear major witness, circumstances are arranged whereby the most reserved of us have meetings with others who are searching for the truth of Christ we have encountered and can share with them. John and his fellow apostles had testified of what they had seen, in the preaching which the Gospel of John is a transcript of (s.w. Jn. 3:11; 19:25; 21:24; Rev. 1:2). John sees himself as following the example of the Gentile Samaritan woman, who 'testified' that the Lord was the saviour of the world (Jn. 4:39,42 s.w.).

"Saviour of the world" may at first blush appear a statement and belief that was harmless. But we must appreciate that this very term was exclusively used of Caesar. "The world" was effectively the Roman empire, and within the cult of emperor, the "saviour of the world" was Caesar, and this term could not be applied to anyone else. It was thereby to proclaim that "there is another king, one Jesus", another Emperor with another, eternal, Kingdom / Empire. The apparent reality of the surrounding empire was in fact transient and soon to be overthrown, indeed it had already been

superceded and shown to be a pathetic fake compared with the ultimate truth of the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom. It is no less radical for us today, in the world of postmodernism, to declare that there is only One Saviour, and there is salvation in no other. John's writings, Revelation especially, are full of such deconstructions of the cult of empire- to the point that his writings would have been banned as illegal material. And the counter-cultural spirit of true Christianity is no less radical today.

4:15 *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God*- As noted on :2 and :3, confession was required, not just secret 'belief'; and such confession meant being put out of the synagogues and thereby out of the Jewish world / society. Therefore many 'believed' but would not "confess" (Jn. 9:22; 12:42); see on 2:23. God's abiding in a person is through the Spirit (:13). And yet the Comforter passages promise that the indwelling spirit will empower our witness or confession. This therefore is another evidence of having received the Spirit; that we shall testify, in the power of the Spirit. The false teachers and infiltrators didn't do so; and were not therefore "of God" and their claims to Spirit possession were false. The abiding of God in the believer is through the Spirit. But the receipt of this is predicated upon confessing Jesus as Son of God. I take that 'confession' to therefore refer to water baptism, through which the gift of the Spirit is given.

There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father is essentially *mutual*. For example, we dwell in God (Ps. 90:1), and He dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). And here too: "God abides in him and he in God". We work out our salvation, and God in response works in us both to will and to work (Phil. 2:12,13 RV). This is the mutuality which arises from the Spirit.

4:16- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

And we know and have believed the love which God has toward us. God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him- The love God has toward us is supremely in the gift of His Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16). This love is an essential part of God, and for Him to abide in us and we in Him means living in the sphere of self-sacrificial love, with that love touching every part of our thinking and doing. And this is empowered by the action of the Spirit within us, which is the means through which He abides in us and we in Him (:13). This speaks of nothing less than a complete psychological takeover of the natural spirit and personality. If we are open to it, we shall be filled with "the fruit of the Spirit", which is finally just one thing- love, in its various manifestations.

The fact the Lord Jesus didn't pre-exist as a person needs some meditation. The kind of thoughts that come to us as we stand alone at night, gazing into the sky. It seems evident that there must have been some kind of previous creation(s), e.g. for the creation of the Angels. God existed from infinity, and yet only 2,000 years ago did He have His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans- only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000 year time span. In the spectre of infinite time and space, this is wondrous. That the Only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawled on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time. He died so that God could work out our salvation; and the love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Is. 62:5). Almighty God, who existed from eternity, is likened to a first timer, with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this. The Jesus who didn't pre-exist but was like me, died for *me*, in the shameful way that He did. Our hearts and minds, with all their powers, are in the boundless prospect lost. His pure *love* for us, His condescension, should mean that we also ought to reach out into

the lives of all men, never thinking they are beneath us or too insignificant or distant from us. No wonder 1 Jn. 4:15,16 describes believing that Jesus is the Son of God as believing the love that God has to us.

4:17 - see on 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Jn. 4:4.

In this way is love made perfect with us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment- As discussed above, the love of God through the cross, and the Lord's love there, is to motivate us to love others with that same love. This is the work of 'perfecting' or 'developing towards an end'. This however doesn't mean that we will respond by reaching the level of love that the Lord had. The darkness of unlove is still "passing", we are not totally dominated by the Lord's love. But His love in dying for us can perfect our faith that He wants to save us, and so the end result of His love on the cross is that we can be confident of acceptance as we come before Him at the day of judgment. And so we will not live in fear of rejectiton by Him, because fear is associated with condemnation. Belief in His love means that we are assured of acceptance and therefore not being condemned.

In the grace of Christ, we can have a certain "boldness" in prayer (Heb. 4:16); but we will have "boldness in the day of judgment" (1 Jn. 4:17) in the sense that the attitude we have in prayer now and the experience of the Lord we know now will be that we have in the day of judgment. If He is no more than a black box in our brain we call 'God' or 'Jesus', if for all our Christianity we haven't known Him, so it will be then as we face Him.

The connection is with how Jn. 14:2,3 taught that through the gift of the Comforter, we can be with the Lord "where I am", or "as he is", where He was and is in His relationship with the Father. He prayed for this in John 17; that His relationship with the Father might be ours. And this is effected by the gift of the Comforter, as often noted on John 14-16.

As explained on :12, the work of the Spirit is to perfect or develop our characters towards an ever deeper love, approximating progressively closer to the love of the Lord for us on the cross. By the end of our lives we will have reached the maturity of love intended for us, and thereby we shall be confident in the day of judgment. We shall know that we have the spirit of Christ, which in simplest essence is love like His love; and in this sense, we will have received the eternal life, the spirit of living as He lived, and we can confidently expect to resume living that eternal life through the process of resurrection and glorification.

Because as he is, even so are we in this world- There is a major theme in the NT: that we are living the life of Christ, and thereby His life becomes ours. In this sense we have and live the eternal life. “As he is, so are we in this world”; we will be persecuted as He was persecuted (Jn. 15:20); we fellowship His sufferings, being made conformable to the image of His death, and thereby will fellowship His glory (1 Pet. 4:13; Phil. 3:10; 2 Cor. 1:7). Paul had this idea ever before him: “It is now my joy to suffer for you; for the sake of Christ’s body, the church, I am completing what still remains for Christ to suffer in my own person” (Col. 1:24 REB).

4:18 *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; because fear has punishment*- If we reach the level of love intended for us, then we will have no fear at the day of judgment, but rather "boldness" (:17) and assured hearts (see on 3:19). John writes in such black and white terms, but this does not mean he expects perfectionism. He freely recognizes that we will continue to sin (1 Jn. 1:8-10; 2:1,2). He writes of how we are "in the light", and yet the darkness of unlove is still 'passing' and we are not fully in the light (1 Jn. 2:8). And so despite our imperfection, we can still live "in

love", walking after or toward the commandment of loving as Jesus loved us (2 Jn. 6), and therefore have "no fear" because of God's perfect love toward us.

Murderers often reveal that their psychological motivation was not merely hatred, but often fear- fear of what that person might do, or who they might show them up to be. Fear, therefore, is at the root of all lack of love and respect for our brethren. We fear the poor image of ourselves which they reveal by their actions or examples; and so slander and hatred of them in the heart [Biblical murder] develops. If only we can cast away this kind of fear, then love will take its place; for perfect love comes when fear has been cast out (1 Jn. 4:18). The Greek for 'drive out' is that used in Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 to describe how the wicked are driven out into darkness at the last day. If we now in this life can cast out or condemn our own fear of rejection, then we will not live in fear... because fear has, or is, its own condemnation (1 Jn. 4:18 Gk.). If we are still consumed by fear, in whatever way, in this life- then this, according to John's logic, appears to be a sign that we will not be accepted in the last day. Fear as a purely nervous reaction is not what he is speaking of. Rather is it the crippling moral fear of which we have spoken.

We are saved by grace, already, we are elevated to the heights of heavenly places on account of being in Christ. A perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:16,18), fear is associated with bondage rather than the freedom of sonship which we enjoy (Rom. 8:15). Yet all this can in no way erase the very clear teaching of many other passages: that we ought to fear God, really fear Him. What's the resolution of all this? It may be that *ideally,* we are called to live a life without any fear in the sense of *phobos*- in the same way as we are asked to be perfect, even as God is (Mt. 5:48). Yet the reality is that we are not perfect. And perhaps in a similar way, we are invited to live a life without *phobos*, but in reality, it is necessary to have it if we truly realize our weak position. We ought to be able to say with confidence that should Christ come now, we will by grace continue to be in His Kingdom. Yet in the same way as we always assume a future, so we inevitably look ahead to the possibility of our *future* apostasy; as we grow spiritually, there is an altogether finer appreciation of the purity of God's righteousness. The risk of rejection, the sense of the future we may miss, and the faint grasp of the gap between God's righteousness and our present moral achievement, will *inevitably* provoke a sense of fear in every serious believer. And yet fearing God, unlike fear on a human level, is a motivating and creative fear. Our fear of and yet confidence with God is a strange synthesis.

Psychologists suggest that there is something within the human psyche that needs to fear, that wants to fear. Just look at the huge success of terror stories, movies, images, Stephen King novels; and the way that the media realizes that their global audience laps up fear and sensationalism about terror. One common thread throughout all the pagan forerunners of the ‘personal Satan’ idea is that the pagan concepts all involved the generation of fear and terror. True Christianity aims to “cast out” such fear through its revelation of the ultimate love of God (1 Jn. 4:18). So many control systems have played upon fear of the Devil – to bring children into subdued obedience, flocks into submission to pastors, etc. It’s now high time to realize that this is not how the true God works. “For fear has torment” (1 Jn. 4:18), and this is exactly what true understanding of the cross of Christ saves us from. God isn’t a psychological manipulator, and He doesn’t coax us into submission through fear. And yet it could be said that humanity is increasingly addicted to fear. People may mock fearing a Loch Ness monster, werewolves, funny sounds at night... but they still buy

in big time to fearing a personal Devil. There's something in us that wants to fear something; that just loves the popular idea of a personal Satan. This is why it's hard to budge this mentality.

And he that fears is not made perfect in love- The connection is with 1 Jn. 2:5, where for the man who keeps the new commandment to love as the Lord loved us, "in him the love of God has truly been perfected". The idea of 'perfection' is that the Lord's love in dying for us has worked its intended process to full term; it has done its work, in that we love others with that same crucifixion love with which we have been loved. When that process comes to its ultimate term, we will have no fear of any kind. And yet here again we have an obvious challenge, in that none of us has yet perfectly responded to it. Just as the darkness of unlove is "passing" but is not fully passed. This, then, is a window onto the nature of our eternal existence in the Kingdom. Then, the Lord's love will have worked its intended work. And we shall then fully love as we have been loved. 1 Cor. 13, the classic poem about love, has the same idea. Despite the ideal, we see through a glass darkly, still with some of the darkness of unlove obscuring our vision. But then, face to face.

4:19 *We love, because He first loved us*- The love in view is the love unto death of the cross, the "new commandment". The 'first love' He showed us was in the death of the cross; and it was this death which enabled Him to give His life spirit to us in the gift of the Spirit (Jn. 7:39) which provokes love within us (Rom. 5:5) because love to the end was the dominant aspect of His Spirit. Again we are reminded that this "love" is the love that takes the initiative, in dying for others whilst they are yet alienated from us- rather than being kind and generous to those we perceive as having first been that to us. Love elicits love, as is seen from the response of infants to those who show love to them. And the supreme display of God's love is in the cross. But to love God means to love His children (:20).

4:20 *If a man says, I love God, and hates his fellow believers, he is a liar*- Again the allusion is to Jn 8:44, where the Jewish opposition is likened to Cain, the first liar and murderer. His first lie was in relation to his covering his hatred for his brother. This exactly fits the Judaist infiltrators; their religion had slain their brother, the Lord Jesus, and they were out to slay His brethren. Yet they were trying to hide that fact by slipping into the churches as false brethren (Gal. 2:4). The "liar" is the antichrist, which in John's first context was the Jewish system (see on 2:22).

For he that does not love his fellow believers whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen- These Judaists, for all their talk about 'loving God' [a very Jewish monotheistic term], in fact did not love Him because they did not love His children. We cannot literally see God, but we can 'see' Him insofar as we 'see' His Son. For the Son alone has fully 'seen' the Father (Jn. 6:46). To love the Father is to have His Spirit abiding in us, which elicits sacrificial love for His children, our fellow believers. Any hatred of those begotten by His Spirit therefore reveals that we lack His Spirit, and do not love Him.

Our attitude to others is simply so eternally important. John's writings are characterized by seeing everything in terms of dualism, black and white, good and evil. He describes those who do not love their brethren as having not seen God, as not being a child of God. Martin Hengel has observed: "How one behaves towards a Christian brother at one's own front door is the deciding factor over faith and unbelief, life or death, light and darkness". John demonstrates with piercing logic that hating our brother means that we hate our God. But it is so easy to adopt the position

of the man whom John sets up. We can even think that our love of God is articulated in a hating of our brother, for the sake of God's Truth. It is relatively easy to love God, apparently, anyway. But it's hard to love all our brethren. And yet this means that a *true* unfeigned love of God is not quite so natural and easy as we think. 1 Jn. 5:1-3 make it clear that it is axiomatic within loving God that we love all His children. If we don't love them, we don't love Him. So if we think that loving God is easy, think again. Think who He really *is*, of the inclusive and saving and seeking grace which is so central to His character, and the imperative which there is within it to be like Him.

Biblically, it's impossible to have a relationship with God without relating with His children. This point is hammered home by John, writing as he was to ecclesias riven with factionism and accusation. The result of believing that Christ laid down His life for us, is that we lay down our lives for our brethren (3:16). All believers are the children of God. If we love God, we will love His children (5:1,2). God and His children, the believers, are inseparable. And yet within our human nature is the tendency to try to make a distinction between them. John was fully aware of this: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (4:20,21). Loving our brother is therefore the litmus test as to whether we are "of God", whether we have "passed from death unto life" (3:10,14). It is simply impossible to claim to love God but politely disregard His children. It's not that we must love God *and also* our brother. If we love God we will love our brother, by loving our brother we love God. These things are axiomatic. The intimacy this implies between the Father and His sons is so deep. As those "in Christ", all that is true of the Son of God, Jesus our Lord, becomes true of us. We share His relationship with the Father.

4:21- see on Lk. 10:28.

And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God, loves his fellow believers also- The "commandment" is to love our brethren as He has loved us on the cross (Jn. 13:34). Here the implications of that are unpacked further. That love of our fellow believers is part and parcel of our love of God, as noted extensively on :20. John keeps on repeating the same things from different angles and slightly playing with the words- in a desperate attempt to get us all to perceive the utterly fundamental importance of love for all our fellow believers.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 5

5:1 - see on Jn. 3:3; 8:42.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; and whoever loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him- The language of "begotten of" implies the initiative was with the begetter. The begettal is through the Spirit, which becomes effective by water baptism and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah / Son of God (Jn. 3:3-5). So I would read this as meaning that belief in Jesus as the Christ precedes the begettal of the Spirit. And yet admittedly the grammar he can be read as meaning that the begettal of God (by the Spirit) results in our belief in Jesus as Christ. Whatever, He is the prime mover in our spiritual begettal; and we are the objects of the begettal, rather than the prime movers in it. Being God's begotten children makes us brethren of His only begotten Son. We have a natural love for the

Father who begot us; and yet we cannot love God, vertically, as it were, without horizontally loving those others begotten by Him. For His Spirit has worked in many other lives apart from our own, bringing even the most difficult and awkward of our brethren to be likewise God's begotten children. And as explained throughout chapter 4, we cannot claim to have love for God if we don't love His children.

Chapter 4 began this whole section with guidance as to how to spot false teachers. The appeal is not made to compare their teaching against Scripture; perhaps because the converts were largely illiterate and without access to the scrolls of the Old Testament, and the New Testament was hardly in circulation. The questions to be asked were, and still are: Does this person have the spirit of Christ? Have they clearly been born again? Do they love all God's children? Do they confess openly their faith in Jesus as Christ? Do they hate their brother? For false teaching is far more than genuinely misunderstanding some Bible verses. It is more essentially a way of life.

5:2 *Hereby we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and do His commandments*- As noted on :3 and elsewhere, I suggest that "His commandments" refer to the one great commandment, to love God's children as the Lord loved them, unto death on a cross. This is why 'doing' or 'keeping' the commandments is always associated in John with love, often love of God. For as he has been at pains to extensively point out in chapter 4, love of God and of His children are interrelated. "This is how we know..." (GNB) and similar language elsewhere suggests that although John so often speaks in absolute terms of our living in love and in the "eternal life", he recognizes that there are going to be major doubts within us as to whether we really have reached that level of love. John by all means seeks to comfort and encourage. He looks at the equation of loving God and loving His children from the perspective of asking us to enquire whether we love God.

Or the Greek could simply mean that loving God and do His commandment[s] to love as the Lord loved is the same as loving God's children.

5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous*- The plural "commandments" is a reference to the one great commandment- to love our fellow believers as the Lord loved us in dying for us (Jn. 13:34). I have elsewhere suggested that the plural "commandments" is a plural of majesty, referring to the one great commandment: to love our brethren as the Lord loved us. And that fits the context here; for keeping that commandment "is the love of God". God's love and our love for our brethren are mutual and reciprocal experiences.

The Lord's commandments are "not grievous"; it is not that we have been given a whole set of detailed regulations similar to the 613 given by Moses. It is not hard to be obedient to His commandments, 1 Jn. 5:3 implies. The Lord states clearly that He has left us one commandment- to love one another as He loved us (Jn. 13:34; 15:12; 1 Jn. 4:21; 5:2). The plural "commandments" may be a reflection of the Hebraism whereby the plural is used to emphasize the greatness and cardinal value of one singular thing, the plural of majesty. This is perhaps confirmed by Jn. 15:17: "These things[plural] I command you: That you love one another". Love of each other was the great 'thing'. To love should not be grievous; if we are walking in the light of His endless love. Therefore "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (1 Jn. 3:23). The commandment to love as He loved us is only capable of understanding and fulfilment if we have believed into the Name of the Lord Jesus, and experienced that love, having God's

love shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit we receive after believing into Him (Rom. 5:5). This alone is what makes self-sacrificial love "not grievous", not "heavy" and burdensome as the commandments of Judaism were (Mt. 23:4,23 s.w.). The apparent ease of achievement is because we have been "begotten of God" (:4), which is by acceptance of the gift of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5).

5:4 *For whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith*- As noted on :1, the language implies that the begetting of God is something done to us, something received rather than of our own volition. It is the birth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). The language of 'overcoming' is used elsewhere in John about the overcoming of the Judaist false teachers and infiltrators (see on 2:13,14; 4:4), just as the Lord overcame the Jewish world (Jn. 16:33). The overcoming of that world was on account of faith in the Father and Son. Again we see pointed up a colossal conflict between the Jewish and world and those in the Lord Jesus.

"Whatever" uses the neuter rather than the male gender to describe all believers. Most contemporary writers would likely have used the male gender here. The New Testament is in fact sensitive to the gender issue.

5:5 *And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God*- The "faith" spoken of in :4 is now defined as faith that Jesus is the Son of God; the confession of which led to being cast out of the synagogue and active persecution from the Jewish world (Jn. 9:22). This faith was both what provoked the opposition of the world, and what overcame that opposition. The Lord Jesus was the one who had overcome the world (Jn. 16:33); perhaps the implication is that whoever believes that He is God's Son, and thereby identifies with Him, will have His overcoming of the world counted to them. His spirit becomes theirs, so that His overcoming is also theirs in practice and not simply counted to them by grace.

5:6 *This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood*- The Lord Jesus "came" that the in water and blood flowing from His side represented the gift of Spirit; for by this He 'comes' to us (Jn. 14:18). He still testifies by three things- His Spirit [making alive the believer], the water [baptism cleansing us] and the blood [atoning for our sins]. The choice of 'three' things doesn't refer to a trinity- rather is it the principle of Dt. 19:15, requiring two or three witnesses. The water and blood are mentioned together, and then the Spirit is added; as if "two or three". And note how inanimate things are spoken of as giving witness (Gen. 31:45-48; Dt. 31:28)- the three that bear witness don't refer necessarily to three persons, as the trinity wrongly states. Those things which the Lord enabled, witnessed through us today, provide the witness to the fact that He 'came' in the past and 'comes' to us today, in the sense that He 'comes' to us through the gift of the Spirit (Jn. 14:18). "Not with the water only" may be a reminder that water baptism alone will not save; we must be born of water and spirit (Jn. 3:3-5).

The witness of the Lord and of His disciple were one and the same. The witness on earth was a reflection of that in Heaven (1 Jn. 5:6,7).

5:7 *And it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth*- This is included in :6 in some manuscripts. The water and blood are joined by the Spirit as a witness. John began in 4:1 writing of how to tell whether a teacher was a genuine Christian, but he moves on to discuss how we personally can be assured that we are of God. The Comforter was given to empower individual Christian witness (Jn. 15:26,27). If we perceive that our witness to the Lord is empowered and backed up the action of the Spirit, we know that we are of God and have truly received the Spirit by which He abides in us. The outflow of water and blood from the Lord's pierced

side spoke of the gift of the Spirit towards His followers; for the Spirit was given because He was glorified (Jn. 7:39). John himself was an example of this; for having made his testimony about the outflow of water and blood, he adds: "And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe" (Jn. 19:35). This testimony was by the Spirit gift, for the Comforter testified and the disciples also testified; their testimony / witness was the witness of the Spirit (Jn. 15:26,27). Thus John there linked together the water, blood and the testimony of the Spirit. "The Spirit is truth" is a clear reference to the Comforter gift as "the spirit of truth" (Jn. 16:13). In 4:6 John has spoken of discerning "the spirit of truth" and "the spirit of error"; all true Christians had "the spirit of truth", and the Judaist infiltrators with their false claims of Spirit gifts had "the spirit of error".

5:8 *For there are three who testify, the spirit and the water and the blood; and the three agree in one*- As noted on :7, this alludes to how John personally had recorded the testimony of spirit, water and blood in his account of the crucifixion and the outflow of water and blood from the Lord (Jn. 19:34,35).

Beholding the cross and the water and blood that flowed from it, John struggled with the inadequacy of human language: “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true" (Jn. 19:35). Years later he described himself, in allusion to this, as he “who bare record [in the past tense] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2). He had earlier commented here that the Spirit, water and blood of the cross bore witness. John seems to be saying that the Lord’s final death which he had witnessed was the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ. And in Rev. 1:2 (see note there) he is saying that as he had been a faithful witness to this, so now he would be of that further revelation he had now seen in the Apocalypse.

5:9 *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For the witness of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son*- "The witness of men" refers in the context (see on :7 and :8) to the account of John and others about the outflow of water and blood from the Lord, an account or witness that was testified by the Spirit, which backed up the testimony of the disciples (Jn. 15:26,27). And although those who had believed John's gospel record had received that witness, the greater witness was that of God, the witness of the Spirit within the believers (:10). God's testimony concerning His Son was not just in the words of those who had visibly, personally witnessed the Lord's death and the outflow of water and blood which symbolized the gift of the Spirit. The greater witness was in the fact that that gift of the Spirit within the believer also testified within them (:10). This was the more essential witness which God had testified of His Son. For it was the Comforter who would make that witness, confirming the faith initially exhibited in the crucifixion record (Jn. 15:26,27).

This experience of an acceptive mutuality between God and man is surely at the very core of our spirituality; it should be part of an inner spiritual shell that nothing, *nothing* can shake: aggression from our brethren, disillusion with other Christians, persecution from the world, painful personal relationships... Israel were to give their hand to God, and His hand in turn would give them a heart to follow Him further (2 Chron. 30:8 cp. 12 A.V.mg.). "This is the witness of God... He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness *in himself*... the (i.e. this) witness of God is greater" than that of men (1 Jn. 5:9,10). The ultimate proof that the Truth is the Truth is not in the

witness of men- be they archaeologists, scientists, good friends or who. The real witness of God is deep in yourself. "Taste and see, that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8) is the most powerful appeal. John is using a legal word for "witness". There is, of course, something intentionally contradictory here. For a witness must be independent of yourself. You can't really be a valid witness to yourself. But the Lord said that He was a witness of Himself, and this witness was valid (Jn. 8:14-18). We, too, John is saying, can be a valid witness to ourselves that our faith is genuine. Our personal experience of the Lord Jesus *is* valid. Paul proves the resurrection of Jesus by saying that "he has risen indeed" exactly because he (Paul) has seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15). This is the kind of 'evidence' we tend to fight shy of. But our personal experience of the Lord Jesus *is* a valid prop to our faith, according to the passages considered.

5:10- see on 1 Jn. 1:10.

He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He that does not believe God has made Him a liar; because he has not believed in the witness that God has given concerning His Son- As noted on :9, the witness in ourselves is that of the Spirit, confirming our faith in the word about the cross which we initially heard. The 'liars' are associated with the Judaists (see on 2:22). They refused to believe the witness which God gave of His Son during His ministry through the miracles; and the witness they now refused to believe was the witness of the Comforter, witnessing through the lives of those transformed by the Spirit (Jn. 15:26,27). The internal witness within every believer creates a witness to the world that the Lord is indeed alive, and is the Son of God. To disbelieve that witness is culpable; for every one who comes to faith because of the witness of the spirit of Christ in a believer, there are many who see the same witness and refuse to believe. This is making God a liar; He has made a witness / legal testimony that His Son is alive and living through those in Him; and those who disbelieve it have placed themselves in the role of judges, and chosen to dismiss His testimony as fraudulent.

We have the witness within ourselves; for the witness is the word and life of Christ, His eternal life, which lives in us (5:10,11). The Lord Jesus didn't witness to His word by giving out bits of paper or teaching a catechism; He was, in person, the constant exhibition of the word He witnessed to. And with us too. I'm not saying don't write books, give out literature, speak words from platforms... but the more essential witness to men is that of our lives, that witness which wells up from the word and life of Christ within us. The way God's word is made flesh can be seen in Hosea. His going and marrying a worthless woman is prefaced with the statement that this was the beginning of the word of the Lord (Hos. 1:2). The command to go and marry her was not so much "the word of the Lord" to Israel as his marriage and example of true love to his wife. Hosea's example in his marriage was the word of the Lord to Israel. He made the word flesh. The Lord did this to perfection, and yet like Hosea we in principle must do the same.

We each have the witness of the Lord's resurrection in ourselves; we are witnesses, both to ourselves and to others, in that the life we live is a witness that He is within us; the testimony of the Spirit is our testimony to the world (Jn. 15:26,27). But a witness in a courtroom isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth or press for a verdict; but rather to simply report what actually happened in their experience. This is where I personally see little point in 'apologetics'- trying to prove there is a God or that the Bible is true. These are matters of faith in the end. We are called not to apologize for God but rather to be witnesses from ourselves of the work of the Father and Son.

If we are real witnesses, testifiers to the reality of the Lord's death and resurrection, we *must* therefore, by the very nature of our experience, be witnesses of these things to the world. The resurrection is the witness that God has given of His Son. Whoever believes that witness, will have within themselves the witness- they will be witnesses to God's witness. The witness of the Gospel is within ourselves in the sense that it is our Christ-like life which is the essential witness to Him. Hence Peter says that a woman can win her husband to Christ "without the word", i.e. without formal, conscious preaching. Paul parallels his preaching with God 'revealing' Jesus through him (Gal. 1:9).

The souls under the altar cry out (Rev. 6:10). But those men and women of Heb. 11 are then described in Heb. 12:1 as themselves "witnesses". Who they were is their witness, the testimony which is given of them in the court of Heaven and upon which God's judgment is decided. We have the witness in ourselves, and yet it is a witness which is in fact God's witness / record to us (this is the context of 1 Jn. 5:6-11). The Spirit itself bears witness with our Spirit, that we really are the Sons of God (Rom. 8:16); the Holy Spirit testifies, and we also testify (Jn. 15:26,27). In this sense Paul's conscience bore him witness in the Holy Spirit, i.e. his testimony was that of the Spirit (Rom. 9:1). The rejected are witnesses against themselves (Is. 44:9; Mt. 23:31).

We labour and strive in the preaching of the Gospel "because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10 RV). The certainty of our hope is the basis of our witness. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life… he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 Jn. 5:10,11 RV). We will witness from a sense welling up within us, that we have in prospect been given eternal life. If we have ourselves believed that the good news of the Gospel really is good news, we will inevitably share that message. Good news can't be kept to oneself. News of engagement, marriage, child birth… is spread somehow and yet urgently by those affected by the events. Even the most retiring of people can find a way to communicate the good news of their first child or grandchild. Sometimes I find my e-mail clogged up with big attachments of baby photos- from people I scarcely know! But their sense of good news compelled them to make contact with me. And so it will be with us in the round of encounters and conversations which make up our daily lives. We will get the word out, somehow. We will break barriers and boundaries in order to engage people in conversation about the one thing that really and essentially matters to us. And, believe me, passively, beneath the show of casual indifference, people *are* interested. And Bill Hybels claims from surveys that "about 25% of the adults in the US would go to church if a friend would just invite them".

Not believing in God and not believing in His word of the Gospel are paralleled in 1 Jn. 5:10. God is His word. The word "is" God in that God is so identified with His word. David parallels trusting in God and trusting in His word (Ps. 56:3,4).

5:11 *And the witness is this: that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*- Our witness is a life lived, the kind of life we shall eternally live in the Kingdom. That life given to us is the life of the Lord Jesus, His Spirit. That life is the life now lived in His Son, within the mind of the exalted Jesus now. The Gospel of the future Kingdom was therefore explained in terms of parables about how life should be lived now; the "eternal life", as John puts it, the Kingdom life, lived in us now. But this life is a gift, the gift of the Lord's spirit, living and thinking as He does; the life which is "in His Son". This is so true to observed experience; that it is not the exposition of doctrinal truths which in itself makes a powerful witness, but rather of the Kingdom

life, the eternal life, the life which was and is in Christ, being lived in human life before the eyes of our fellows.

5:12 *He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life*- John is at pains to stress that the gift of life (see on :11) is the life of God's Son. Hence the Greek reads literally "*the* life"- the life of Jesus. There can be no legitimate spiritual life or spirituality outside of Him. And he writes this against the background of the Judaist infiltrators arguing that there was spiritual life to be had from legalistic obedience, even if the Lord's Divine Sonship was denied. The Lord Jesus and His life are intimately connected; "the Son has life in Himself" (Jn. 5:26). To have Him is to have His life. And to 'have' the Son is to 'have' the Father (2 Jn. 9).

5:13- see on Mt. 16:16; Jn. 20:31; 1 Jn. 1:3.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life- Clearly there were some who had believed into the Name of Jesus, demonstrating it through baptism into that Name, who doubted their salvation, and whether they had in fact received the promise of "eternal life" as a present experience. In this we find John addressing so many of us. John has flanged out from discussing how to recognize a true Christian and thereby reject false Christians into the more personal application to ourselves. We who have believed in the Lord have received the gift of His Spirit, His life, which is an eternal life.

5:14- see on Mt. 18:19; Jn. 15:27.

And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us- If His Spirit and life abides within us (see on :13), then His will is within us, and the Spirit teaches us directly, revealing "all truth" to us (Jn. 16:13). This "truth" is here spoken of as knowing His will. As noted on Jn. 15:7, if His Spirit, His *logos* abides in us, then we shall ask what *we* will and receive it. Our spirit is His Spirit; and so we shall perceive better over time what is His will, and our prayers will be for those things. And they shall be answered. This increasingly positive experience of answered prayer, which comes about from progressively knowing His will, is another evidence that we are indeed indwelt by the Lord and can be confident that we have "eternal life", His Spirit; for the context of :13 is encouragement to those who have believed and received the Spirit and yet still have their doubts. The Lord's Comforter discourse said as much- He there taught that answered prayer means that our joy will be full (Jn. 16:24).

Eph. 3:12 uses the same word about our "boldness" in access to God in prayer on account of Christ. The same Greek word is used about our "boldness" in the day of judgment (2:28; 4:17). Our attitude to God in prayer now reflects our general attitude toward Him (3:21; Heb. 10:35). We cannot clothe ourselves in some special spirituality when we come before Him in prayer nor at the day of judgment; who we are in our hearts with Him now is who we are in prayer and who we will be at the last day. We come "boldly [s.w.] before the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16)- both before God now, and before Him at the last day. Each time we pray to Him, we have a foretaste of the judgment experience- if only we will take prayer seriously enough to perceive it. The word is used about the generally "bold" attitude we can have in witnessing before men in this life; for if we can be bold before the holiest of all, the very judgment presence of God, we can be bold before men right now in our preaching (Phil. 1:20; 2 Cor. 3:12; Acts 2:29; 4:13,31; 28:31), just as the word is used about the "boldness" of the Lord's own preaching which is the pattern for ours (Jn. 7:26; 11:14; 16:29; 18:20).

For as He is and was, so are we to be in this world (4:17). But these are ideals; even Paul had to ask others to pray that he might preach as "boldly" as he ought to (Eph. 6:19). The reality of the judgment seat will likely be somewhat different, with many staggered in unbelief by the Lord's positive recital of all our good deeds.

But we must add a caveat. God indeed answers prayer as a result of the fact that we believe and as a token that we are acceptable before Him. But there are examples of where God answers the prayers of those who don't believe with a full faith, and even of those who later will be condemned (Zacharias; the believers praying for Peter's release; Mt. 7:21-23). The relationship between faith and answered prayer is not so simple as it appears in some passages. God is working with us at a higher level than simply responding to our words as a token of His acceptance of our faith.

5:15 *And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we obtain the requests we have asked of him*- John has just cited answered prayer as a proof that the Spirit dwells within us, progressively revealing His will so that our prayers are not so much hit and miss but coincide with His will. But there can still be a residual doubt as to whether prayer is being answered as we envisaged and requested. John therefore parallels "He hears us" with 'obtaining the requests we asked'. It is through possessing the Spirit, the Comforter, that we have the Lord 'doing' things in response to what we ask (Jn. 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23-26- all a major emphasis). But the Lord's 'doing' in response may not be articulated in the terms we expected. The request [literally, 'the ask'] asked will be 'done'; but not always as we expect.

5:16 *If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life for them that sin not to death*- The 'asking' here must be understood in the context of teaching about 'asking' and definitely receiving in :15; it is through possessing the Spirit, the Comforter, that we have the Lord 'doing' things in response to what we ask (Jn. 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23-26- all a major emphasis). For those who sin not unto death, it seems that our prayers definitely can 'work' in recovering them; for this is the Lord's will, and all we ask according to that will shall be granted. This is a phenomenal challenge to our prayerfulness, rather than observing others slipping away and shrugging our shoulders, or politely lamenting it to others. In response to such prayers, God will "give life" to the person prayed for; the life in view is the life lived by and in the Lord Jesus, His life, His Spirit. It is of course true that in some ways, we are ultimately responsible for our own salvation; our brethren can't really help us, if we wilfully chose to rebel against our calling. And yet there is reason to think that up to a certain point, our prayers and pastoral concern for our brethren can save them, whereas without our effort they would not be saved. James 5:15,20 say the same: "...the prayer of faith (uttered by faithful friends) shall save the sick (struck down with sickness as a result of his sin, which seems to have happened in the first century, cp. 1 Cor. 11:30; Acts 5:5) ... and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed... he who converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins". Behold the power of freewill effort for others: For the sake of our prayers, in some cases sins of others can be forgiven when otherwise they wouldn't be. For the sake of our conversion of our erring brethren, they can be saved from eternal death and have their sins covered. The Lord's prayer says as much- we ask God to forgive us *our* sins; not 'me my sins'. Likewise only once Israel had passed a certain level of sinfulness was Jeremiah told to cease prayer for them (Jer. 7:16 cp. 11:14). Until that point, God seems to have been willing to read Jeremiah's prayer for them as their prayer (his "cry" was seen as theirs). And Ez. 14:14,18 imply the same- Noah, Daniel and Job could have delivered Israel up to a

certain point, but they were *so* hardened in sin at Ezekiel's time that even those men wouldn't have saved a nation which otherwise, for a lower level of sin as it were, they could otherwise have saved. If we have any grain of love in us, we will likewise dedicate ourselves to fervent prayer for our brethren, seeing it does have effect and validity within certain boundaries.

There is a sin unto death. Not concerning this do I say that he should make requests- The allusion is to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mk. 3:29). In the context, John is up against the problem of Judaist infiltrators who falsely claimed to have the Holy Spirit, but who did not openly confess the Lord as Messiah and Son of God, and who were consciously trying to destroy the Christian movement (cp. Gal. 2:4). Paul was up against these same blasphemers of the Spirit in Corinth and Ephesus (as per 1 Timothy). These men were not to be prayed for in the same sense as weak but genuine believers were to be prayed for.

5:17 *All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death*- John urges them to accept that although sin is sin, not all sins lead to death; and the reason they don't is because other believers can pray for the sinners, and they shall receive the gift of life, the Spirit, the life of Jesus, to strengthen them (see on :16). The onus upon us to pray for others is huge.

5:18 *We know that whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin; but he that was begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one touches him not*- The One begotten of God was the Lord Jesus; the "evil one", the devil / satan, both of the flesh and of the systemic Jewish opposition to Him, did not touch Him. The prince of this world had nothing in the Lord (Jn. 14:30), and He was untouched by the temptations of 'the devil' in the wilderness. But all believers have been begotten of God through allowing the Spirit to birth them (Jn. 3:3-5). This active process of the Spirit means that whilst they are still committing sins (1:10 etc.), they do not continue in the life given over to sin, for the Spirit changes and cleanses them. We are kept from falling, but we must also 'keep ourselves'; there must be some willing response from our side. The Spirit does not zap a man and force him to transformation and salvation against that man's will and volition.

5:19 *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*- We know that we are born of God because that begettal was of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). The Spirit abiding within us is the proof that we are His. The whole Jewish world [not just the more visible or aggressive parts of it] were in the power of "the evil one", a phrase earlier used about the 'satan' / adversary of the Judaist system of opposition to Christianity (see on 2:13,14; 3:12; 5:18). In the wider application of these words after the first century, we take from this the impression that there are two 'spirits' operating; that of God, the Holy Spirit / spirit of Christ, and that of the world. There is a 'spirit' in and of the age / world where we live, a ghost in the machine, a principle of thought and being which can be summarized as "the flesh", or the Biblical 'devil'.

5:20 *And we know that the Son of God came, and has given us an understanding so that we truly know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ*- The coming of the Son of God is through the gift of the Spirit, the Comforter, whereby we feel His presence even more really than when He visibly lived amongst men (Jn. 14:18). John is saying that we can be confident that we have received of His Spirit. We have been given "an understanding", or literally, 'a mind'. The same word is used elsewhere of how the Lord through His Spirit enlightens our mind (Eph. 1:18); the gift of the Spirit envisioned in the new covenant is of God's way being put into

and written in our mind (Heb. 8:10; 10:16), and of "the mind" purified by the Spirit (2 Pet. 3:1). A mindset is given us; we do not develop it solely by our own mental effort. And that mind / disposition is given *so that* we might know / have a relationship with Him that is true. For "the spirit of truth" would "teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26 and see note on 1 Jn 2:27).

This is the true God and eternal life- This whole verse is allusive to Jn. 17:3, which defines the eternal life which we are now given as knowing / being in living relationship with "the true God". John is not saying that the Lord Jesus is "the true God". The allusion to Jn. 17:3 cannot be doubted, and there we have "eternal life" defined as 'knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent'.

William Barclay (*New Testament Words*) has a very interesting section on the word *aionios*. He cites examples in contemporary literature where it is used not of indefinite continuance, but simply of that which is beyond time. "To attach eternity to the created was impossible. So He (God) made time as a moving image of eternity... the essence of the word *aionios* is that it is the word of the eternal order as contrasted with the order of this world... the word can be properly applied to no one other than God... the life of God". This helps us understand how 'eternal punishment' is not in fact punishment of unending continuance. And yet eternal punishment is set as the antithesis to eternal life (Mt. 25:46); this itself shows that "eternal" is not to be understood as unending continuance. For the wicked will not be punished for ever-they will die and cease existing. The Lord Jesus *is* eternal life (1 Jn. 5:20); this alone points us to see "eternal life" as more a description, a quality of life, rather than indefinite continuance. Those who "seek for glory, and honour, and immortality" are granted eternal life, as though "eternal life" comprehends all these things for which they seek (Rom. 2:7).

5:21 *Little children, guard yourselves from idols*- Idols were anathema to Judaism. But the temptations to return to Judaism were no more than idols. The statement at first blush is unusual. John's letter uses a very limited vocabulary, and recycles the same word families and ideas. But now, as the last statement of the letter, we have a new word and concept introduced: "idols". We expect the thought to be developed further, but it is not. It seems a new idea is introduced right at the very end, and left hanging. And there is no sign off to the letter. We are left with "idols" as the last word. But this is all intentional. The truth that we now have the eternal life, the spirit and presence of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the life we shall eternally live, and are thereby assured of salvation... all this is such a wonderful truth that John has kept repeating it from different angles. But with such an ultimate truth in view, he pleads with us not to be distracted from it by anything. Absolutely anything else, be it the Judaism of the first century Jewish world or the materialism of our age, is nothing but a false god, idols, a distraction from the ultimate truth of the cosmos.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2 JOHN

2 JOHN

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 JOHN CHAPTER 1

:1 *The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth*- John saw the faithful churches to whom he was writing as those who had been faithful to the Gospel he had preached to them, as outlined in the Gospel of John. He had recorded there the promise that "You will know the truth" (Jn. 8:32), and he writes in his letters to a community "who have come to know the truth", i.e. who had fulfilled and obeyed the Gospel of Jesus which he had preached to them initially. For "the truth" is a common Johannine title for the Lord Jesus. "In truth" is equivalent to how Paul might write "in the Spirit" or "in Christ". For it is John who has told us of the gift of the Spirit to every believer, calling it "the spirit of truth", or as Paul would say, "the spirit of Christ". "Know" likewise is understood in John not as theoretical, doctrinal knowledge, but as perception and relationship of and with a person, the Lord Jesus, and not a set of theologies.

"Lady" is *kyria* and I suggest this refers to an actual sister, Kyria. It is not the usual word for "lady". Her "children" referred to her converts. John was her "elder" in that he had converted her; and she now had developed her own house church. Her "house" (:10) refers to her house church; the "your" in :10 is grammatically female. John passes on greetings from another chosen sister, left anonymous, and *her* converts (:13). So John's preaching of the Gospel had led to the development of house churches, those who had read or heard his preaching of the Gospel which we have transcripted in the Gospel of John. And two of them were run by women; 3 John is addressed to another house church, led by Gaius. These women may have been like Lydia, women of wealth who were converted and their household members followed suit. There are various frescoes and other archaeological evidences of female house churches, with wall paintings of women distributing the bread and wine at communion services etc. Such things were radical in first century society, and led to Christianity being characterized by its critics as a woman's religion. The Gospel today likewise appeals to the marginalized and those deprived of meaning and significance by society.

:2 *For the truth's sake which abides in us, and shall be with us for ever*- In John's thought, "the truth" is the Lord Jesus in the form of His Spirit, "the spirit of truth", and he uses the term in the same sense as Paul often uses the term "in Christ" or "in the Spirit". "The truth" is what "abides in us", but it is the spirit ["of truth"] which abides in us (1 Jn. 3:24). It will be with us "for ever" in that the gift of the Spirit "abides with you for ever" (Jn. 14:16). That promise had been made when the Lord was about to physically leave the believers, yet He promised that the gift of the Spirit in their hearts would mean that in fact they had His presence, through the Spirit, ever with them. The allusion to the Comforter promise yet again indicates that the Comforter, the gift of the Spirit, was promised not just to the first disciples but to all who should afterward believe, even though the Comforter had special relevance and manifestation in a unique way to the eleven disciples who first received the promise.

:3 *Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love*- "Grace" is a term often associated in the New Testament with the gift of the Spirit, and peace is peace with God through His mercy upon our sins. But this was no standard greeting; it comes not in the first verse as we might expect if that is all it is. It follows on from the reminder that they had received the Spirit, through which all these things are mediated. And John includes himself in the blessing alluded to- "with us", not "with you" as we would expect were this just a standard greeting.

:4 *I rejoice greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father*- This is a case of seeing the glass half full rather than half empty; he rejoices that "some" of her converts were walking "in truth", or

as Paul puts it, "in Christ". Some had fallen away; but some had remained, and that for him was wonderful.

John's greatest joy was that his converts, and his convert's converts, 'walked in truth', they 'walked after [the Father's] commandments' (2 Jn. 4,6). Paul likewise speaks of how his converts are his "joy and crown". They walked in life honest to themselves and to the Father, and walked "in truth" in that they walked in "the spirit of truth", in step with the leadership of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit as Paul would out it (Rom. 8:1; Gal. 5:16,25). Walking or living 'in truth' is thus put for living a life pleasing to God as guided by the Spirit within us. It surely doesn't mean that we simply live our lives holding on to the same intellectual understanding of doctrines which we had at our baptism. We 'keep' the commandments by 'doing' them (1 Jn. 2:3 cp. 5:2), not by merely holding to a true theoretical definition of them. There is so much more to walking in truth than this. We rightly emphasize the need for true doctrine; but the issue of this in practice is that true doctrine leads to a true life, a life true to God, to our brethren, to ourselves, in the power of the Spirit of truth. John parallels walking in the light with walking in the truth (1 Jn. 1:7; 2 Jn. 4); and yet Jn. 3 defines the true light as ultimately the light of the crucified Christ and the Spirit given as a result of that death (Jn. 7:39). To live life self-analytically in the shadow of the cross, of Him as He was there, is the only way to walk in the spirit of truth. This is the true life; to merely hold certain interpretations of Scripture in intellectual purity is not all there is to 'walking in truth' or 'in the light'. This kind of truth sets us free (Jn. 8:31,32); for where the spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free (2 Cor. 3:17). Discerning the correctness of sound exposition will not of itself bring any freedom. But living a life that we know broadly corresponds to the image of the crucified Jesus and under the influence of His Spirit will give a freedom unknown in any other sphere of human experience.

:5 *And now lady, I urge you not as though I write a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another*- The newness of the commandment was to love one another as the Lord has loved us (Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 3:23). We wonder why she needed 'urging'; the need to love each other as the Lord loved us is so huge, that it is unsurprising that exhortation was required to remember how fundamentally important it was. This was what had been heard "from the beginning", a phrase used in John's Gospel for the beginning of the Lord's ministry (see on Jn. 1:1). Or perhaps John refers to the beginning of his encounter with Kyria; the commandment to love as the Lord loved was characteristic of the message he first preached, and which had first been preached right at the beginning of the Lord's ministry. The loss of such *agape* love was a problem in Ephesus, where the first *agape* had been lost (Rev. 2:4). Life hardens people, and we constantly need that call back to the spirit of the Lord's love, rather than allowing familiarity with the body of Christ to lead us to disrespect them.

:6 *And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it*- This speaks of the commandment which we readers received "from the beginning". But "the beginning" in John frequently if not always refers to the 'beginning' or [Gk.] 'first association' which the twelve disciples had with the Lord Jesus. Again, we are spoken of as if we are them, and their experiences were ours. Those twelve men who walked around Palestine with their Lord are symbols of us all. There is a continuity in Luke-Acts between “the disciples” who followed the Lord, and “the disciples” as a title for all the Christian believers. We are their continuation. Or John could also have in view his first preaching of the Gospel to Kyria; whereby we can understand that the up front bottom line of John's first preaching of the Gospel was a call to self-sacrificial love. Not theology but the call to love as the Lord loved His people in the death of the cross.

The "commandments" plural are comprehended in a singular commandment; and as noted elsewhere (see on Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3), the reference is to the singular, fundamental commandment to love as the Lord loved us. This was what the Lord had preached from "the beginning" of His ministry (see on Jn. 1:1), and what John had likewise preached up front at the "beginning" of his preaching to Kyria. It is this principle of loving as the Lord loved us, to death on the cross, which is the light in which we should walk, deciding all issues in the light of His example and its imperative to us.

:7 *For many deceivers have gone out into the world, especially those that do not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist*- The "for" connects the warning against false teaching with the call back to *agape* love in :5,6. The end result of understanding that the Lord was of our nature is love, love as He loved. I suggested on 1 Jn. 4 and 5 that John's communities were up against the problem of Judaist infiltrators (also in Gal. 2:4 and in the churches Paul founded). They did not "confess" Jesus as Christ, lest they be put out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22). Yet they had entered into the Christian churches, with an agenda of bringing them to Judaism and destroying their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. They had come up with the idea that the Lord was not really fully human, or that the Jewish Messiah was not to be a person "in the flesh". The ideas of deceit and "antichrist" are elsewhere associated by John with the Judaist system. These people were not therefore sincere Christians who genuinely misunderstand some Bible verses. These deceivers were out to deceive, and had gone out into the [Jewish] world as part of a conscious program of deception of Christians. Heb. 10:5 uses the same phrase for how the Lord 'went out into the world'. They were false, imitation Christs, which is the idea of 'anti' Christ.

That we can’t be secret believers is brought out here. Anyone who does not confess publicly that Jesus came in the flesh is described by John as a deceiver and even anti-Christ. The French [Segond version] is clearest: “ne declarent pas publiquement”. Whilst the passage is open to a number of interpretations, in our context the point

perhaps is that to secretly believe in Christ isn't possible- it must in some way be declared publicly or else we are "deceivers". The Judaist infiltrators did not confess Jesus as Christ publicly lest they be cast out of Jewish society (Jn. 9:22); and this was the evidence, John says, that they were not of the Spirit of Jesus and were frauds, false Christians.

We may wonder why John is at such pains to point out that Christ "came in the flesh", and why he pronounced anathema upon those who denied that (2 Jn. 7-9). It seems to me that his converts had come up against Jewish attempts to re-interpret Jesus in terms of apostate Jewish thinking about Angels and the whole nature of existence, the kind of heresy battled against in Hebrews and Colossians. Take Jewish views of the Angels who appeared to Abraham. Josephus says they "gave him to believe that they did eat" (*Antiquities* 1.197); Philo claimed that "though they neither ate nor drank, they gave the appearance of both eating and drinking" (*Abraham* 118). The Bible states simply that they ate. And that Jesus likewise ate after His resurrection. John emphasizes that the Lord Jesus had been fully tangible, the disciples touched and felt Him (1 Jn. 1:1-4); and that His death was equally real (1 Jn. 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; 5:6-9). And he presses the point that this is what had been believed "from the beginning", indicating that already new ideas were coming into the Christian communities about the nature of Jesus. This of itself shows that the whole issue of who Jesus is *does* matter; that the Christ was and is the *real* Christ was for John crucially important, as it is for me. Hence this book. The inspired apostle didn't simply shrug off these new ideas as well meaning misunderstandings. He speaks against them in the toughest possible terms.

:8 *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose the things which we have done but that we receive a full reward*- The letter is addressed to Kyria personally, the hostess of the house church; and she is asked to look to her converts, that they do not lose the spiritual position to which they had attained. We see here how a woman has pastoral responsibility, especially over her "children", her converts. The "yourselves" and "we" are different. The things "done" by John and his preaching team were the spiritual creation, under the Lord's influence, of Kyria and her house church of converts. This is our work for the Lord, what a man should 'do' in his life, the only labour that abides beyond our graves, the only career worth anything eternally.

But 'the things done' could also refer to their faith in the Lord Jesus. To believe in Him is described by John as a 'work' that has to be laboured at- with even more effort than that expended by the crowds who walked around the lake to get to Jesus and the free bread He appeared to be offering (Jn. 6:27; 2 Jn. 8). It is this 'labour', this hard mental effort to know Him and believe in Him, which will have a 'full reward' (2 Jn. 8). John here is alluding to the LXX of Ruth 2:12, where a 'full reward' is given to Ruth for working hard all day gleaning in the fields. It may be that this allusion was because "the elect lady"

addressed by John was in fact a proselyte widow, like Ruth. But the point is, we have to *labour*, as much as one might work hard walking around a lake or gleaning in the field, in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ and bring others to that knowledge. The "full reward" may be reference to the fact that if we ourselves are saved but our converts or spiritual children fall away, then we have as it were lost the fullness of reward which there could have been for us. The fullness of reward is that not only we are saved, but our spiritual children too.

:9 *Whoever goes ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. He that continues in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son*- "Goes ahead" is a challenging term to translate. The idea is to step *pros*, beyond or around. The idea could be that the Judaist false teachers were suggesting that they had a new, more advanced teaching about the Lord; what is called the supposed 'depths' of the Jewish satan (Rev. 2:24). But I prefer the sense of stepping around, in that they were ignoring, sidestepping, the fundamental teaching of Christ that He would be their teacher through the Spirit; in this sense they were not left orphaned, without a teaching Rabbi after His departure. He was just as really with them, actively teaching them and guiding them into all truth through the Spirit (see on Jn. 14:18). This would read "the teaching of Christ" as a verb rather than a noun; they sidestepped the whole idea of Christ as our teacher, teaching us. Grammatically, the reference is to the teaching which He taught (as in Jn. 18:19; Rev. 2:14,15), rather than the doctrine which teaches about Him. John is writing to Jews as a Jew, and he is using a popular Jewish phrase, "the doctrine of the King Messiah", or the Messiah's Talmud (*Bereshit Rabba*, sect. 98. fol. 85. 3), the teaching by Messiah.

Those who abide in Him are those in whom His Spirit abides, as John has emphasized throughout all his letters. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth which teaches us in the place of His personal presence as Rabbi of the early disciples during His ministry. Those who abide in Him have Him, and thereby His Father. So the idea is not so much that we receive a body of theology, of doctrine, at baptism- are to hold on to it until our deathbeds. Instead we are to abide in Him, whereby His Spirit shall be our teacher, ever opening new truths to us as we are guided by this "spirit of truth" into "all truth". This is a subtle but fundamental difference, and the usage of the word "doctrine" in the AV has confused it.

And yet the more traditional reading of the passage still has some merit. John writes that to confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, to acknowledge His true humanity, is related to walking after His commandments (2 Jn. 6,7). And this perhaps is why John can say that it is a 'going ahead', a sin, a “transgression” according to some translations, to not abide in the doctrine of a human Jesus (2 Jn. 9). Why should it be ‘sinful’ to hold a theological misunderstanding? Surely God cannot hold people morally culpable for genuine misinterpretation? Perhaps the answer lies in looking at it from a different

angle. The purpose of doctrine is to elicit a Godly way of life. To refuse to believe in the real, human Jesus is actually a way of justifying our wrong behaviour, of hiding away from the challenge that *His* humanity is to *us* as His fellow human beings- to transform our personalities after the pattern of His. To believe the doctrine of a human Jesus who was nonetheless God manifest in human flesh empowers us not to sin; through this real and human Christ we have forgiveness and inspiration in the life that is in Him. This is why doctrine about Him matters- because if believed properly, it empowers a Christ-like life. This perspective helps us likewise understand what is fundamental doctrine, and what isn't. Any idea or theory or interpretation that doesn't have the potential to change our lives in practice just... isn't worth arguing about. See on 1 Jn. 5:5.

:10 *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your house and give him no greeting*- The Judaist infiltrators were itinerant preachers, turning up at Christian house churches and wanting to teach. The whole of 1 Jn. 4 has warned about these people, with their false claims to Holy Spirit possession, who did not openly confess the Lord as Messiah and God's Son; see notes there. Kyria was to not let these people influence her house church.

:11 *For he that gives him greeting partakes in his evil works*- As explained on :7, the people in view are not sincere Christians who misunderstood things here and there in their theology. For that is true of us all. Instead, the reference is to the Judaist infiltrators who had a specific mission to destabilize and destroy the Christian churches. These are the "evil works" in view; and not genuine misinterpretation. That sort of thing is not appropriately described by the term "evil works". The implication is that *good* works are inspired by a true understanding of the Lord's humanity, and evil works by a refusal to accept this teaching. The tests of genuineness which John commanded centred around two simple things: Do those who come to you hold true understanding of the nature of Jesus; and do they love as He loved us to death on a cross. The two things go together. And they are a fair test even today. For where there is no love, the true doctrine of Jesus is not truly believed, no matter how nicely it is expressed in words and writing.

:12 *Having many things to write to you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full*- Paul's use of letter writing was perhaps analogous to our use of the internet. He says time and again that he's writing a letter, but he sees it as a poor substitute for the face to face contact he would prefer (Rom. 15:14-33; 1 Cor. 4:14-21; Gal. 4:12-20; 1 Thess. 2:17-3:13). John here says the same (2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 14). The fullness of joy envisioned upon their meeting is clearly a reference to the fullness of joy which was to result from possessing the Comforter (Jn. 15:11; 16:24). Perhaps John had the power to give the Spirit, to fill up other believers with it, maybe by the laying on of hands.

:13 *The children of your elect sister salute you*- John passes on greetings from another chosen sister, left anonymous, and *her* converts, who would have felt close to the church of Kyria, who were also converts of a woman. See on :1.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 3 JOHN

3 JOHN

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

3 JOHN CHAPTER 1

:1 *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth*- The "beloved" may refer to how Gaius was beloved by the Father and Son, just as John has referred to himself in his Gospel as the disciple whom the Lord loved. John says that God's love for Gaius is his love for him; John loves Gaius "in truth", "in Christ" or "in the spirit" [of truth], as Paul would put it, as a reflection of the love which God had for Gaius. So John was practicing the theory he had taught in 1 Jn. 4; that we are to love our brethren with the love of the Father and Son for them. Gaius was John's convert, for he says he is the "elder" of Gaius.

:2 *Beloved, I pray that in all things you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers*- Gaius was John's convert (see on :1), and John believed that by praying for him he could influence his spiritual progress; see on 1 Jn. 5:16. John's prayer for the physical health of Gaius could imply he was sick- and at the very time he needed brotherly support, he had been excluded from his local church (see on :9,10). The question is whether the "all things" refer to secular things [contrasted apparently with "as your soul prospers"]; or whether "even as" [*kathos*] simply means 'according to', 'in so far as'. In which case, the fervent prayer [AV "I wish above all things that..."] is that Gaius is in good spiritual health. In this case, the typical opening of a letter is being subverted: for instead of wishing good health and material prosperity, John wishes "above all things" [AV] that Gaius is having spiritual health. For the constant concern for secular health and prosperity should not be what we "above all things" are interested in. The only health and wealth worth anything are in spiritual terms.

:3 *For I rejoiced greatly, when brothers came and testified to the truth which is in you, even as you walk in truth*- The brothers appear to be a group of itinerant mission workers who went forth from John's home church, and visited converts like Gaius, bringing back reports to John as to how his converts were progressing. We see the huge importance attached to the spiritual growth of converts, rather than simply baptizing people and bragging about numbers. What was "within" believers and what they walked in was "the spirit", here called "the truth". The reference is to the Lord Jesus, "the truth", and more exactly to "the spirit of truth", the spirit of Christ, His living, thinking and breathing, which is given to all believers. The 'holding firm in the truth' which was in view is therefore not a retaining of some set of theologies; but rather continuing to allow "the spirit of truth", of the Lord, to abide within them, and having this as the guide of daily 'walking' and thinking.

Daniel speaks of repentance and obeying God's voice as being a result of 'having discernment in thy truth' (Dan. 9:13,14 RV). To grasp the endless depth and height of the fact we are in touch with ultimate truth inevitably affects our lives. 3 Jn. 3 in the AV speaks of "the truth that is in thee"; but the Greek can also mean, as in the RV, "thy truth". There is to be a close personal identification between us and the "spirit of truth",

of the Lord Jesus personally. His spirit becomes our spirit, His truth is our truth. The outcome elicited by this is repentance, and our being truthful at the very least. Our contact with God's truth results in our being truthful not only to others but to ourselves, and this, as Daniel observed, gives rise to true repentance.

Paul can speak of “the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5) and again of “the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:5). He refers to “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation” (Eph. 1:13). It’s quite Biblical that we refer to our faith as “the truth”. But truth is clearly a way of describing or summing up the leading of the indwelling Spirit in a way of life which the doctrines of the truth should elicit in us. Thus “the new man... is created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph. 4:24). We obey the truth in unfeigned love of our brethren (1 Pet. 1:22), not just by intellectual assent at a baptismal interview; we ‘do the truth’ in loving our brother (1 Jn. 1:6); if the spirit of truth is in us then we walk in it (3 Jn. 3).

:4 *I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth*- John’s greatest joy was that his converts, and his convert's converts, ‘walked in truth’, they ‘walked after [the Father’s] commandments’ (2 Jn. 4,6). Paul likewise speaks of how his converts are his "joy and crown". Joy in the Kingdom will not be a selfish thing; our joy will be in seeing the results of our labours for others in this brief life. We therefore need to give our all to such labour, for it has eternal consequence like nothing else we may put our hands to.

:5 *Beloved, you do a faithful work in whatever you do toward those that are brothers and especially to strangers*- As noted on :3, "the brothers" refer to the messengers of John's church who went around visiting his converts and spreading his gospel record, now found in the Gospel of John. The idea may be that he did well in entertaining the brothers, especially because they were strangers, unknown to him; or perhaps Gaius was a Jew and these visiting brethren were "strangers", Gentiles, and yet he still had them under his roof. This [as we learn from Acts 10] was quite contrary to Jewish culture. Gaius had materially supported them; and Diotrephes disfellowshipped those who did this (:10). So, Gaius was excommunicated for showing support to missionary workers from an individual [John] with whom Diotrephes had an issue. Such absurd behaviour is not unknown today. It is the power of the deadly evil of 'guilt by association'. "Especially to strangers" could mean 'bearing in mind that these brethren are strangers to you'; or it could refer to the fact that Gaius was generous and hospitable to strangers generally, including 'strangers' in the sense of Gentiles. Showing hospitality to Gentiles was not much done in Judaism, and it may have been another reason why Diotrephes so hated Gaius. No good work goes unpunished, that is the lesson; and when we experience it, we are not alone. There is likely an allusion to Mt. 25:35, where the Lord taught that He was manifest in the "stranger" (s.w.) and to assist them was to assist

Him. The Lord was manifest in these brethren; and likewise the way Diotrephes refused to assist them and excommunicated those who did was to be the ground of his condemnation at the last day. For he had not 'known' the Lord, and the Lord would tell him this at the last day. Our attitude to our brethren is our attitude to Him; and that truth must radically affect our positions, even if it involves being sanctioned because of them.

:6 *Who testify of your love before the church. You will do well to set them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God*- "The brothers", the mission workers sent forth by John to see his converts such as Gaius, had returned and testified to John and his home church of the love which Gaius had shown them, materially supporting them when Diotrephes and the former home church of Gaius had refused to do so, and had not fellowshipped them (:10). Setting someone forward on their journey suggests provision of material help towards them, which resulted in Diotrephes disfellowshipping those who did (:10). But Gaius is encouraged that he 'does well' in so doing, regardless of the position of Diotrephes. "A manner worthy of God" supports the suggestion on :5 that attitudes to these brethren was attitude to the Father and Son.

:7- see on 1 Pet. 4:14.

Because for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentiles- The brothers sent forth by John in pastoral and missionary work were obeying the great commission, to which this language clearly alludes; for that commission was a being sent forth to preach in the Lord's Name (Lk. 24:47). This is yet further evidence that the great commission applied not only to the eleven disciples. For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help from unbelievers to enable this. The itinerant Judaist false teachers did take such support. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord’s Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

:8 *We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth*- 'Welcoming' implies material support, in the context here. I have suggested that "the truth" in John is a reference to the Lord Jesus and His "spirit of truth". The gift of the Comforter / Holy Spirit was particularly to empower the spreading of the Gospel. And yet the Spirit does not as it were zap people against their will. There needs to be an exercise of the human volition; we work together with the Spirit, and with the Lord Jesus who gives it. We are labourers together with Him (1 Cor. 3:9). The idea was that although the believers could not all do travelling missionary work, by materially supporting those who did, they were counted as their fellow-workers. They were part of the work even though they remained at home.

:9 *I wrote somewhat to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not welcome us*- The picture is of Gaius being a member of a church which had shunned Gaius because of the evil influence of Diotrephes. Gaius welcomed "the brothers" from John (:5,8), and so therefore would have been excommunicated for doing so (:10). It is the Lord who is presented in the New Testament as having "the pre-eminence". It is a lack of focus upon Him and His greatness which leads to the human tendency toward *personal* pre-eminence. "Whoever wishes to be first shall be last of all" (Mt. 20:28) is surely in view. We should wish to be last of all, that we might be exalted in due time. Diotrephes, the conservative elder who had enough power to excommunicate whole blocks of people from his church, is being presented as at the very bottom of the scale of spirituality. We need to recognize such brethren as such, and seek to treat them as the littlest of the little ones. "Welcome us" is parallel with welcoming the brethren sent from John (:10). Attitudes to brethren in Christ are our attitudes not only to Him but to all other brethren. Hence in writing to Philemon, Paul argues that to receive Onesimus was to receive him personally (Philemon 12).

:10 *Therefore, if I come*- A visit to Gaius would mean John could also visit Diotrephes; they lived nearby to each other, which makes sense when we realize that Diotrephes had disfellowshipped Gaius from his local church.

I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, prating against us with wicked words, and not content therewith, neither does he welcome the brothers; and those that would, he forbids and throws them out of the church- Bringing to remembrance could imply some exercise of Spirit judgment against Diotrephes which required John's personal presence. Or it could just imply that he would confront Diotrephes over his behaviour.

John has just commended Gaius for receiving "the brothers", the mission workers from John's home church (:3). But the local church which had expelled Gaius would not receive those same "brothers", and in turn excommunicated any who would fellowship and support them. Neither would that church "welcome" John himself (:9). It was all the picture of daisy chain fellowship; if Diotrephes was against John, he was against the "brothers" from his church, so he was against Gaius who supported them, cast him out of the church, and then drove out any others who supported their missionary work. It was guilt by association; and it is all called "evil" in :11.

His "malicious words" were *poneros*, evil, the same term used in speaking of the Judaist system of opposition to Christianity as "the evil one" (see on 1 Jn. 2:13,14; 3:12; 5:18). Diotrephes was therefore likewise also a Judaist. He was "not content"; and it is only the grace of Jesus which makes man "content" [s.w. 2 Cor. 12:9 "my grace is *sufficient* for you"]. "Forbidding" is likewise a word associated with how the Judaists sought to "forbid" preaching to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16), and the legalistic forbidding of littles

ones to come to the Lord (Mt. 19:14; Lk. 11:52; Acts 8:36; 10:47; 11:17). To 'cast out' of the church was to reflect in Christian terms how the Jews cast out from the synagogue those who accepted the Lord as Messiah (Jn. 9:22,34,35), just as they "cast out" the Lord Jesus from the vineyard of Israel (Mt. 21:39 s.w.). Diotrephes had the mentality of Judaism and was seeking to turn the Lord's church into a Judaist dominated synagogue. Casting the Lord's brother out of the church is to cast Him out; this should act as a sober warning to those well-respected church leaders who act in this way to this day. The same word is used about the 'casting out' to condemnation in the last day (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). No matter how much nice speak is used, to cast a brother out of the church is to condemn him. It is God's intention that "there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:25). If we refuse to break bread with validly baptized, good living brethren- then we are working against God. And if we then go on to disfellowship anyone who will not agree with our opinion on a brother, we are doing just what Diotrephes is condemned for doing.

"Throws them out..." is a term often used in contemporary literature about the exclusion of individuals from the clubs and societies which were common in Roman cities. Diotrephes was treating the church as if it were his personal club; and he was acting as if it were just a secular organization. This is at the root of so much dysfunction within churches; they are treated by their elders as if they are human societies. When the whole nature of the body of Christ is so different and unique in human experience. The contemporary literature repeatedly uses the term "throws them out" in the context of commenting that this is necessary for unity. John is taking the term and deconstructing it; for he has taught that unity is not uniformity, and is predicated upon the Lord's death and the presence of the Spirit in individual hearts. Not upon excluding those who differ in policy about things like missionary work and supporting missionaries.

It could be that there is a chronological progression here. Prating against John personally, i.e. gossiping about and slandering him, left Diotrephes not content until he had done something worse; and so he refused to welcome or materially support "the brothers" who were mission workers for and with John (:3,5,7); and then he forbad [Gk. 'hindered'] others in his church from supporting them; and finally he threw out of the church those like Gaius for doing the good work of giving support to missionary workers. This is where the mania about disfellowship leads. And it happens so often to this day. It should not be presented in respectable spiritual terms as merely a case of being overzealous for God's truth. John calls such behaviour "evil", and it is. And the final absurdities, of disfellowshipping sincere believers for materially supporting the sincere missionary workers of a sincere apostle, all come about from a psychological and spiritual slide downhill. Hatred is as a darkness which blinds the eyes of such men, so that they cannot see where they are going (1 Jn. 2:11).

A fair case can be made that he received the Apocalypse *early*, well before AD70, and wrote his gospel and letters *afterwards*. In this case, the similarity of wording would partly be explained by the fact that the language of his Lord rubbed off almost unconsciously [as well as consciously] upon John's style of thinking, speaking and writing. Thus "If I come, I will bring up the things he is doing" (3 Jn. 10) reflects the Lord's style: "If you do not repent, I will come to you" (Rev. 2:5). There are many other examples- finding them is good homework for the enthusiast. Now the practical point is surely that we are living the essence of the Kingdom life now; we 'have eternal life' in the sense that we are experiencing the nature and quality of the spiritual life which by grace we will eternally live. And that life is the life of the Lord Jesus; in His life on earth we see a picture of the nature of the eternal life which we hope to life for evermore. Therefore understanding Him personally is to understand the good news of the future Kingdom of God.

:11 *Beloved, do not imitate such evil, but imitate that which is good. He that does good is of God. He that does evil has not seen God*- The "evil" in view was the guilt by association disfellowshipping of brethren and sincere missionary workers noted on :10. In the light of 1 Jn. 3:6, we could say that we see God insofar as we see the Lord Jesus, and live in His love. The doing of evil arose from not 'seeing God' which in turn meant that Diotrephes was not Christ-centered. He had not 'seen' the Lord Jesus, possibly connected with his Judaist leanings. We may well ask why Gaius would need to be warned not to "imitate such evil", when he had himself suffered from it. It is simply so, that the abused tend to abuse. This is a fact of observed human experience; and John urges Gaius not to practice the evil excommunication policy that he had suffered from. It is so easy to treat others as we have been. Instead of copying Diotrephes, who had "not seen God", Gaius was to imitate the "good", the One who "does good", who is '[born] of God', and who has "seen God". For we are to imitate or mimic [s.w.] the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1). That One to be followed / imitated is primarily the Lord Jesus. Instead of psychologically being dominated by our abusers, we are to look not to them as role models, but to the Lord Jesus. Many of us were taught implicitly and explicitly that the harder line taken on matters of disfellowship, the more likely we were to be close to God. But here such behaviour is called "evil". And it is. Those who do these things have not seen God, Paul says.

But perhaps Demetrius is the one in view. Exhortation to imitate good spiritual examples is quite common: Heb. 13:7 "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and... imitate their faith"; 1 Cor. 4:16 "Be imitators of me"; 1 Thess. 1:6 "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord"; 1 Thess. 2:14 "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea"; Heb. 6:12 "that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises".

This helps us understand 3 John- it is a letter about three men, Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius. And Gaius is bidden follow Demetrius and not imitate Diotrephes. "Gaius" was one of the commonest names in the Roman empire, and there are three believers of this name mentioned in the NT; but it's quite possible we are simply intended to see him as a 'common John', every man in Christ who wants to do the right thing.

If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11). To have the true knowledge of Jesus Christ means we will not be barren [Gk. 'idle'] nor unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8). When Zacharias wanted to have grounds for faith, he was simply told: "I am Gabriel...", the man like God (Lk. 1:19). The declaration of God's Name in Ex. 34:6,7 doesn't include statements like 'Trust in God! He'll help you!'. Instead we read of the grace, mercy, justice and inevitable judgment of God. Knowing and experiencing these more abstract things will lead us to a practical faith in God. Because David remembered God's Name, *therefore* He kept His law (Ps. 119:55 RSV). This is why the Bible uses the idea of 'knowing' God in the sense of knowing Him by experience, not just 'knowing' the right theory. Likewise John uses 'the truth' in the sense of not just correct knowledge but the way of life it brings forth.

:12 *Demetrius has the witness of all and of the truth itself*- As discussed on :11, Demetrius is set up as a parade example of who should be imitated, as opposed to Diotrephes. There is a strong tradition that John wrote from Ephesus; he says he is going to visit them, so this was clearly before his exile on Patmos. Irenaeus writes of "the church of Ephesus, founded by Paul, with John continuing with them until the times of Trajan". There has always been a grave memorial to John in a village near Ephesus. Patmos, to where John was exiled (Rev. 1:9), is just off the coast of Ephesus. We must therefore give full weight to the fact that the only other Demetrius mentioned in the NT is the chief silversmith at Ephesus (Acts 19:24). It could be that he repented and that is why he is set up as such a parade example; and why he "has the witness of all [men]". This makes sense if he was the silversmith, once so opposed to the Gospel, who openly repented. "And of the truth itself" is a strange phrase; unless we understand it to mean that the 'spirit of truth', or the Lord Jesus personally, made some special statement or witness to show that the conversion of Demetrius was indeed sincere. That to me is the only interpretation that makes any sense of this reference to a special witness to Demetrius "of the Truth it[him]self". Change is possible.

Yes, we also testify, and you know that our witness is true- This language of testimony being confirmed recalls how John has spoken and written at Jn. 19:35-37 and elsewhere. "The truth" refers to the spirit of truth, the Lord Jesus who is "the truth". "All" the Spirit filled brethren with John, and he himself, could testify that Demetrius was indeed genuine. This may have been thanks to a specific statement from the Spirit; but it likely refers to the way that there is an intuitive sense of another's sincerity when the

spirit of Christ is in that person and also in those whom he or she meets. Presumably Gaius was unsure about Demetrius, and he is being assured that he does indeed have the spirit of Christ.

:13 *I had many things to write to you, but I am unwilling to write them to you with ink and pen*- The context of :12 speaks of the fellowship between persons created by them each having the same spirit of truth, that of the Lord Jesus. Written communication was one thing, but the synergy and nexus achieved by the meeting of spirit-filled persons was far superior to that. And that after all is why we still have the concept of church meetings and personal fellowship in our age, despite all the electronic possibilities of 'virtual' communication we now have. See on 2 Jn. 12.

:14 *But I hope shortly to see you, and we shall speak face to face*- John planned to visit Gaius, at which time he intended to confront Diotrephes (:10). See on :13 for the power of face to face meeting. John's desire for this rather than simply written communication is a powerful challenge and is strangely relevant in our age of digital communication.

:15 *Peace be to you. The friends salute you. Salute the friends by name*- The wish of "peace" is a desire for the peace enabled by the Comforter, the gift of the Spirit possessed in the hearts of both John and Gaius (Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19-22). John records how the Lord called those who would receive His spirit His friends (Jn. 15:5), and it is John who uses this title in addressing his brethren (3 Jn. 14). He reflected how the Lord saw him as his *friend*. And John realised that this was how he should see his brethren; and so must we.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: JUDE

JUDE

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

JUDE CHAPTER 1

:1 *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those that are called; beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ*- "Called" is better "sanctified" (AV). This sanctification is by the work of the Holy Spirit gift in human hearts (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11). That sanctification is by association with "the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Here as there, we have Father, Son and Spirit associated. These three entities often occur together, and baptism associates us with each of them (Mt. 28:19). The error and blasphemy of the doctrine of the Trinity is in the relationship it claims between the three, and in claiming the Holy Spirit to be a personal God. The doctrine as it stands is seriously wrong, as I have argued throughout *The Real Christ*. But clearly there is a 'trinity' with a small 't', as God, the Lord Jesus and the Spirit are mentioned together many times in the New Testament, both directly together and also the three ideas occur together. Jude 1 is an example. "God the Father" and the Lord Jesus are mentioned along with the sanctifying and 'keeping' work of the Spirit. We are to 'keep' the Lord's ways and commandments, and yet He keeps us by the Spirit. "They have kept Your word... keep [s.w.] [them] by Your own Name... I kept them in Your Name... keep them from the evil" (Jn. 17). Jude will conclude by glorying in the fact that

the Lord is able to keep us from falling in spiritual terms (:24). 2 Peter 2 had predicted that there was going to be an arising of false teachers amongst the Jewish believers whom he had baptized. Jude is full of allusion to 2 Peter, and speaks as if that falling away and arising of mass false teaching had arisen by his time. And yet Jude still writes to the very weak believers as if the Spirit is still active within them and seeking to preserve them unto salvation. We too can only assume the salvation of others and their status "in Christ"; for we cannot condemn them.

Jude, Peter And Corinth

A case can be made that the letters of Peter and Jude were also written to Corinth. Peter visited Corinth, presumably focusing his preaching on the Jewish community, and perhaps he was writing his letters specifically to the Jewish house churches there (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5). The same concerns are apparent as in Paul's letters to Corinth: The need to distinguish between spiritual and unspiritual persons who despised others (Jude 19 = 1 Cor. 2:6 - 3:4; 8:1-3); those who perverted liberty into licence (Jude 4 = 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23), becoming slaves of sensuality (Jude 8,10,16,23 = 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 12:21); some eating and drinking abusively at the love feast (Jude 12 = 1 Cor. 11:17-33); refusing the authority of their elders (Jude 8,11 = 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 9:1-12); and both Peter and Paul warn Corinth of the danger of worldly wisdom. Peter's reminder to them about the authority of Paul is very understandable in this case. However, the point of all this is to observe the tenderness of Peter and Jude in writing to the Corinthians ["my beloved..."], whilst at the same time warning them of the awesome judgment which there behaviour was preparing for them. It was the same passionate love for Christ's weak brethren which Paul showed them.

:2 *Mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied*- Jude like Paul and Peter really believed that this wish that others would experience the fruit of the Spirit in their lives would come about.

:3 *Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, urging you to contend earnestly for the faith which was delivered once and for all to his saints*- Jude gives the impression that he sat down to write a positive missive of encouragement concerning the great salvation he and his readers had in common, but changed course to warn them to defend the faith. We see here a window onto the meaning of Divine inspiration; the will of the writer is not completely obliterated, but rather was worked with by the Spirit.

The Bible speaks of “the faith”, “the Gospel”, as a set of doctrines, a deposit of truth which has been delivered to the believer (Eph. 4:4–6) – “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3 ASV). That truth cannot be added to nor subtracted from, as the Bible itself makes clear – especially in the appeals of Paul and Peter to maintain the purity of the one faith. This means that a vitally true doctrine cannot become ‘added’ to that body of truth. Jaroslav Pelikan correctly reflected: “What can it

mean for a doctrine to ‘become’ part of the Catholic faith, which is, by definition, universal both in space and in time?”.

We note that the "saints" are the 'sanctified ones' of :1; the same word is used.

:4 *For there are certain people who have crept in secretly, who long ago were designated for condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into a license for immorality, and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*- This parallels rejecting Jesus as Master and Lord with rejecting His moral demands. If He truly is Lord and Master, we simply won’t live the immoral life which Jude criticizes. The warnings of 2 Peter 2 about these men had now come true. The language of creeping in secretly suggests a conscious program of infiltration; the same group are spoken of in Gal. 2:4 as being Judaist false teachers. 2 Peter 2 was addressed to Jewish converts, perhaps those Peter had baptized at Pentecost who were now refugees in Asia; so we can assume that it was to this same group that Jude was writing, seeing he uses 2 Peter 2 so consciously. These Judaists were actually appealing to the lusts of the flesh by allowing gross immorality, justified by a tokenistic obedience to some Jewish traditions. This is why in several of the New Testament epistles addressed to Gentiles, there is warning against the Judaizers. The opportunity to continue in sexual immorality whilst ostensibly having justification by works was very attractive to them. This explains why in Corinth, Ephesus, Thyatira and elsewhere there is evidence that the church meetings were a time of sexual immorality, using prostitutes as part of the worship in the same way as they were used in the surrounding religious cults.

:5 *Now I desire to have you remember (as you know all things already) that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that did not believe*- Israel were therefore “saved” from Egypt, as all those who are baptised are “saved” from sin. If one of those Israelites had been asked, “Are you saved?” their response could have been, “Yes”, but this would not mean that they would *ultimately* be saved. Salvation was a status, but the believers had to abide in it. Baptism, passing through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2), was no guarantee of ultimate salvation. It seems that the false teachers were justifying sexual immorality (:4) on the basis of some 'once saved always saved' teaching.

:6- see on 2 Pet. 2:4.

And the angels which did not keep to their own domain, who left their proper abode, He has kept in everlasting bonds, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day- The simple point was that although judgment had been passed upon these individuals, it had not yet been executed in practice. But this was no reason to think that it would not

be. The false teachers seemed to be arguing that future judgment for sin was not going to happen; see on :5.

There seems to be the implication in Heb. 9:23 that the Lord's sacrifice somehow cleansed the Angels. We have to emphasize that there were no sinful Angels in Haven at the time of Christ's sacrifice, and probably never have been. However, we have to bear in mind that "His Angels He charged with folly" (Job 4:18); "The Heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15), and also the possibility that the "Angels that sinned" (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4) were actual Angels before the present creation. This was a view supported by John Thomas; the fact that there are such strong connections between these Angels and the princes associated with Korah's rebellion does not mean that his view is necessarily wrong.

Jude's other historical examples are capable of being interpreted with reference to more than one past incident, not all of which are recorded in Scripture. Thus the dispute about the body of Moses (Jude 9) could refer to the Samaritans disputing about the people of Israel or Joshua the High Priest (see Zech. 3), or it could refer equally to Michael the Archangel, the Angel of Israel, who buried Moses body, disputing with a group of Israelites who wanted to have Moses' body travelling with them, as those of Joseph and the patriarchs did (Acts 7:15,16 RV). Similarly Jude 14 talks of an incident concerning Enoch which is not detailed in the Bible (cp. Jannes and Jambres in 2 Tim. 3:8 too).

Thus there is no reason why "the Angels which kept not their first estate" of Jude and 2 Peter should not refer to "Angels that sinned" before creation as well as to Korah's company of Num. 16. Psalm 103 is praise for God's forgiveness and mercy to sin. David concludes it by asking the Angels especially to praise God for this (Ps. 103:19-21)- which would be fitting if they too had benefited in the past from God's mercy towards sin. The fact that the Angels had crowns when they are symbolized by the elders in Rev. 4:10 suggests that they had won them through overcoming some kind of tribulation. See on 1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 9:23.

:7 *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, these gave themselves over to fornication and went after strange flesh. Such are given as an example. All of them suffered the punishment of eternal fire*- Jude warns the believers that Sodom's punishment was what awaited those of the new Israel who threw off their responsibilities. In passing, it should be noted that all Jude's examples of Divine punishment involve people who were responsible to God, by reason of knowing His ways. Is Sodom an exception? Perhaps Lot's witness to them made them responsible? The argument of the false teachers appears to have been that future judgment would not come for sin, and having been baptized, they were permanently saved (see on :5

and :6). The "fornication" being practiced amongst the Christian converts was on the basis of religious, spiritual arguments; see on :4. But judgment comes, and Sodom is cited as an example.

"Eternal fire" is symbolic for complete destruction, as in Jer. 7:27. There is no fire burning in Sodom now; but the consequence of the condemnation they received was eternal.

Some versions give the impression that the "these" refers to the 'angels' of the preceding verse 6. The AV translation connects the additional entities to the "cities" surrounding Sodom and Gomorrha. They were full of immorality etc. just as Sodom and Gomorrha were. However I'd be inclined to think that the "these" in view are the subject of the letter, which is defined in :4: "certain people who have crept in secretly, who long ago were designated for condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into a license for immorality". "These" would then refer to the first century false teachers. The "these" would refer to the "these" of :4. If that is so, then we enquire: Are there other references in Jude in the same style where the "these" are the false teachers of :4? Yes. :8 "Likewise also THESE dreamers defile the flesh"; :10 "But THESE revile whatever things they do not see with their eyes"; :11 "Woe to THESE ONES" [Gk., "them" in many English versions]; :12 THESE are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts; :14 And to THESE also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied; :16 THESE are murmurers, complainers; :19 THESE are they who make divisions, sensual.

:8- see on Zech. 3:1,2.

Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries- The authority rejected by the false prophets was that of the true prophets, who were speaking God's word in truth. They were "dreamers" in that they claimed to have had Divine revelation in dreams. But their message was awful- the paradox of 'defiling the flesh' is used, a kind of tautology to express how bad they were. The parallel in 2 Pet. 2:10 [see note there] suggests that the "dignitaries" they slandered were local civil authorities, and the example quoted in :9 concerns these too. It would seem that the immorality these false teachers were advocating was so gross that it was even against the local laws. This is how far we can go if we accept the false idea that we are saved whatever our future behaviour; and that God is not a God of judgment. This is the power of ideas; we cannot assume these issues are merely academic. What happened to the 'Christians' to whom Jude wrote is a prime example of where the power of wrong ideas can lead.

:9 *But Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil in dispute about the body of Moses, does not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said: The Lord rebuke*

you- As noted on 2 Pet. 2:10, the slander of human "dignitaries" was wrong even in its style, because the archangel Michael was at best 'polite' in rebuking the representatives of the local authorities who were resisting the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The implication is that the Angels speak in a soft, gentle way- they do not dare bring a "railing accusation" against the men they operate upon. Similarly the wilderness Angel that gave the Law and pronounced the blessings and curses upon Israel did not do so in a matter of fact 'obey or perish' tone of voice; He "pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt", as He will plead with them to repent in the last days too (Ez. 20:36). The Angel spoke to Moses "as a man speaketh to his friend" (Ex. 33:11)- i.e. in a relaxed, friendly way. It should be remembered that it was in this tone of voice that the "fiery Law" of Moses was given, rather than in a harsh, judgmental way as is often thought. Similarly Eliphaz had a vision in which he "heard a still voice" (Job 4:16, AV mg.); most visions being associated with Angels, it seems fair to assume this was an Angel's voice- as was the "still small voice" Elijah heard? (1 Kings 19:12).

Jude 9 gives guidance about how to deal with slander and attacks from false brethren. Jude alludes to the well known Jewish legend, *The Testament Of Moses*. In it, the 'devil' slanders Moses, accusing him of having murdered the Egyptian and therefore being worthy of condemnation, and tries to drag Moses' body down to punishment. Jude points out that in the story, the Angel Michael doesn't indulge in justification but rather says that "the *Lord* rebuke thee". And may this be our pattern.

Michael the Archangel's disputing with the Devil about the body of Moses could refer to the Angel that led Israel through the wilderness contending with a group of disaffected Jews. There is no implication that "the Devil" here is an angel; rather does it refer to a group of human opponents whom Angels were against. Seeing that it is stressed that all the Angels are united in doing God's will and are all obedient to Him (Ps. 103:19–21; 148:2; Heb. 1:14), it is not possible for there to be an argument in heaven between angels. Remember that the phrases "Devil" and "Satan" can be used about ordinary men. This Devil is concerned with the body of Moses not the so–called "immortal soul" of men (which is not Biblical teaching anyway). There are many similarities between Jude and 2 Peter 2. Jude 9 has a parallel in 2 Peter 2:11: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord". Peter's equivalent of "the Devil" is "them" – implying that the Devil in Jude 9 is not an individual, personal being, but a group of people. 2 Peter 2:10–12 clearly indicates that the "them" was a group of men. As with Jude 6, this verse is in the context of Jude 5 – "I will therefore put you in remembrance". Jude is therefore reminding them of incidents in Israel's history from which they should learn lessons. Thus Jude 9 must be a reference to an historical incident recorded in Scripture. There is no such incident concerning an angel called the Devil arguing with another angel. Michael the Archangel asked God to rebuke, or "forbid", the Devil. If there is a super–human person, power or agency, called

the Devil causing men to sin and creating trouble, then there is no evidence that he was ever effectively forbidden, seeing that sin and disaster are progressively increasing.

The reference to the Devil here is incidental. The purpose of the passage is to show that angels speak in a gentle, humble way, even about people they know are in the wrong. They do not show personal vindictiveness, but say "The *Lord* rebuke you". The Judaizers "speak evil of dignities; yet Michael… durst not bring against him (the Devil) a railing accusation", i.e. he did not resort to bitter speaking as they did. Similarly Ex. 33:9–11 says that the angel spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend", i.e. In a relaxed, friendly way. It should be remembered that it was with this voice that the "fiery law" of Moses was given by the angel, not in a harsh manner, as can be wrongly inferred from some parts of the narrative. Similarly the "still, small voice" that Elijah heard was probably the quiet, unassuming voice of an angel (1 Kings 19:12 cp. Job 4:16).

There are so many points of contact between this verse and Zechariah 3:1,2 that that chapter must surely provide an historical background to the verse, which would be appreciated by Jude's readers: "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?".

The most evident similarities are:

Zechariah 3	*Jude*
The angel of the Lord	Michael the archangel
Satan	The Devil
The Lord rebuke thee	The Lord rebuke thee
A brand plucked out of the fire (vv. 1,2).	Pulling them out of the fire (vv. 9,23).

The context in Zechariah 3 was that of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. They were trying to rebuild the temple and re-establish a system of worship there. However, "the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building" (Ezra 4:4), i.e. they acted as Satan / adversaries to the Jews. They are actually called "the adversaries of Judah" in Ezra 4:1. They wrote "an accusation against the (new) inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem" to the king of Persia (Ezra 4:6). The Hebrew word for "accusation" is related to that translated "Satan". Zechariah 3:8 clearly tells us that the characters of verses 1 and 2 are "men of sign" (A.V. margin), i.e. we have to interpret them. So the satans – the

adversaries – stood before the angel along with Joshua the High Priest, who "was clothed with filthy garments" (:3) – without a mitre on his head (:5 implies).

The implication is that the inhabitants of the land, the Satan, were complaining to God, manifested in the angel, that the new Jewish high priest was not really valid, as he did not wear the proper clothes (they had probably been lost during the captivity). The angel tells Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee", and proceeds to clothe Joshua with a set of priestly clothes and a mitre (:4,5), thus showing God's acceptance of him. The inference behind the complaint was that God had not really chosen Jerusalem for the Jews to rebuild, and that therefore they were going ahead with their plans without God behind them. But the angel says that "the Lord…hath chosen Jerusalem", in the same way as He had chosen Joshua to be high priest. Thus Joshua represented Jerusalem. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" the angel asks Satan concerning Jerusalem. This is quoted in Jude 23 concerning saving repentant sinners. Thus the angel is in effect saying, "Jerusalem has repented, therefore I have plucked them out of the fire of judgment and destruction; you should not therefore be implying that Jerusalem and the Jews are so sinful that they cannot be restored to their land with Me behind them".

Jude says that the dispute between the angel and the Devil – those opposed to the rebuilding of the temple – was "about the body of Moses". This phrase can therefore either refer to the Jewish people generally, in the same way as the Christian church is "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27) because we look to him for guidance, rather than being in the "body of sin" (Rom. 6:6) because we follow sin, or to Joshua the high priest. Joshua was the "body of Moses" in the sense that "body" can be a figure of speech for a "slave", e.g. Revelation 18:13; Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6; and Exodus 21:2–6, and Romans 6:6 where having a "body of sin" probably means being a "slave of sin". The High Priest was thus the slave of Moses.

Another suggestion it that the "body of Moses" was Moses' literal Body; Michael the archangel was the angel of Israel (Dan. 12:1) who led them through the wilderness in the cloud and fire (Ex. 23:20–21). The dispute may have been between the angel and a group of Jews – "the Devil" – who wanted to take the body of Moses with them. But the angel had buried Moses' body and would not tell anyone where it was (Dt. 34:6). Remember that the body of Joseph was carried up into Canaan by the Jews (Josh. 24:32) as were the bodies of Jacob and the twelve patriarchs from Egypt (Acts 7:15–16 R.V..); and we know that the bodies of the kings of Israel were used in wrong worship rituals (Ez. 43:7); it is to be expected, therefore, that some of the Jews would also want to take the body of Moses, their great leader, with them. The Jews laid great store by having the remains of their leaders physically with them – they are condemned for keeping the corpses of their kings in the temple (Ez. 43:7–9).

:10 *But these revile whatever things they do not see with their eyes or cannot examine naturally. They are like the beasts without reason. In these things are they destroyed-*

The path of Cain involved reviling what he did not understand (Jude 10,11). He didn't understand, or didn't let himself understand, the principles of sacrifice, and so he reviled his brother and God's commands, he became a true child of the Biblical Devil – because he refused to spiritually 'see' / understand. Their destruction [the same word is used about condemnation at the last day] was ongoing; they were destroying / condemning themselves by their behaviour. They were completely closed to any higher, spiritual reasoning- like animals. "See" is the word for 'understanding'. They used abusive language and had a belligerent attitude because they chose to be without understanding. They reviled "dignitaries" and "authority"; they were so drunk on their own power that they considered themselves above all civil and ecclesial authority. They were so sensual that they were blind to anything beyond that which they could "examine naturally", what was visibly in front of them. And the essence of this error is to be seen in those who reject God and His moral teaching because they say that the evidence for Him cannot be examined naturally, by direct impact upon their own eyes and ears.

:11 *Woe to them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah*- Cain, Balaam and Korah represent a heady mix of lust for money, power and sex. I mention "sex" because this was the method used by Balaam to entice Israel to sin so that they would fall, and thereby he could receive the promised "hire" from Balak. Those men were all within the community of God's people in Old Testament times. The past tense "perished" implies they had already been condemned; but that condemnation was still going to be ministered to them at the last day. They were the living dead, already "perished". Balaam "ran" for reward, so wanting to do Balak's will in order to receive the promised "hire"; and the Angel and donkey tried to arrest him in his headlong rush. He paid no attention, just as the efforts of Jude and Peter to arrest the madness of these men were not being heeded.

The condemned amongst the first century ecclesias "cast themselves away through the error of Balaam" (Jude 11 RVmg.)- and yet it is the Lord who will "cast away" the bad fish in the last day. Yet those He casts away have in fact cast themselves away. Those who lay in wait for others to kill them "lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives" (Prov. 1:11,18). There is a *direct* relationship, in God's judgment, between how we treat others and what will happen to us.

:12 *These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves*- These people were present at the breaking of bread meetings, and were in fact the shepherds of the flock. They were leaders of the church. They had no fear of future judgment, and they were solely after their own gratification; in this context the parallel 2 Pet. 2:14 says that their eyes were full of adultery. They clearly had a sexual agenda, and that agenda was realized at the "love-feasts", which in Corinth and Ephesus had been turned into orgies after the

pattern of the surrounding religious cults. "Hidden rocks" can also be translated "spots" and this is alluded to in the final encouragement that the Lord through His Spirit is able to preserve His true bride "spotless". This is quite something, given the context. Sincere individuals living under such abusive and insincere shepherds could still be preserved by the Lord, such is the power of the Spirit. Bad environment, even spiritually, doesn't preclude the Lord acting to preserve His own. And clearly enough, if members of these churches were preserved "spotless", without spot, then there is no such thing as guilt by association, somehow acquired by belonging to an apostate church.

Clouds without water, carried along by winds- They appeared to be full of rain / water, a symbol of teaching. But they never dispensed any, and were as if carried along on an endless path to nowhere.

Autumn leaves without fruit- Harvest time had come, but there was just an appearance of leaves, but no fruit. The Lord had cursed the Jewish fig tree exactly because of this. This is another indication that the false teachers in view were Jewish.

Twice dead, plucked up by the roots- 2 Peter 2 and Jude have so often stressed that these men had already been given their condemnation, although the execution of it was yet to come. They would experience "the second death"; we all die once, but those who know God's truth and refuse it shall be resurrected, condemned and thus will die a "second death". But by status, this is how these men already were. They had already been plucked up by the roots- a metaphor used in Mk. 11:20 for the judgment of apostate Israel, but a quotation from Dan. 7:8 about the plucking up by the roots of Gentile powers. These Judaists were effectively Gentiles and would be judged as them.

:13 *Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame*- "Shame" is the language of the condemned at the last day. They were proudly displaying their condemnation. They were as the wicked of Is. 57:20, a restless sea. Stability and peace, which are fruits of the Spirit and arise from the firm anchor of having the Kingdom hope, were far from them. The indulgence of lust doesn't lead to a happy life, but to this endless restlessness, a sense of movement but going nowhere.

Wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved forever- As noted above, they are "wandering" because of the way the flesh ever seeks new fulfilment. The stability of knowing the eternal love of the Lord Jesus and the certainty of future salvation are unknown to such people. "Blackness of darkness" seems a tautology, as was 'even defiling the flesh' in :8; language struggles to adequately deliver the sense of utter tragedy arising from the depth of such utter depravity. Eternal death is blackness, night, utter nothingness with no order. Compared to the infinite activity of the Spirit, eternally.

:14 *And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying: Behold, the*

Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones- Jude speaks about the false teachers of the first century. He recalls how Enoch had spoken of how the wicked of his day were destroyed in the flood: “Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment” (Jude 14,15 RV). I suggested on Gen. 8:1 that these "holy ones" were Angels who actually brought about the flood. The Lord's coming with the Angels at the last day will be an even greater fulfilment of this. And yet Jude says that “To these also [i.e. the first century false teachers] Enoch… prophesied” (Jude 14 RV). Enoch’s words were primarily addressed to his own generation, but his words ought to be taken as speaking directly to the first century apostates. In similar vein, the Lord said that Isaiah’s words to his generation were prophesy “of you” in the first century. The idea seems to be that Jude's prophesy of their condemnation was to be seen as the equivalent of Enoch's condemnation of the immoral false believers of his age in the lead up to the flood.

But there may be a double meaning here. For there was a popular first century BC ‘Book of Enoch’.

A rather detailed argument – and yet a very powerful one – that Angels don’t sin is actually provided by considering the passages in 2 Peter 2 and Jude which are used by some to prove that Angels sin. We have here what we meet many times in Holy Scripture – a series of allusions to a contemporary, uninspired, popular piece of literature in order to show that it is in fact wrong. This point may easily be lost on us, reading as we do from our distance from the original context. It’s been observed that there are many allusions to the popular first century BC ‘Book of Enoch’ in 2 Peter and Jude. This book claimed that 200 Angels were expelled from Heaven and then married beautiful women on earth. Peter and Jude allude to it in order to show how wrong it is. In the Book of Enoch, it is claimed that the righteous Angel Michael brings accusation against the 200 supposedly rebellious Angels. But this is specifically alluded to and corrected by Peter and Jude. In the table below are some of the allusions:

Jude	Book of Enoch
“Enoch the Seventh from Adam prophesied” Jude 14	Enoch 60:8
“dry springs” Jude 12	Enoch 48:1,96:6 dried up fountains
“waterless clouds” Jude 12	Enoch 18:5,41:4–5,100:11–12
“reserved for blackest darkness” Jude 13	Enoch 21:3 “darkness shall be their dwelling” Enoch 46:6
“trees without fruit” Jude 12	Enoch 80:3
“plucked up” Jude 13	Enoch 83:4

“raging waves” Jude 12	Enoch 101:3–5
‘See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and convict the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done’.” (Jude 14–15)	“See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and convict the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done” (Enoch 1:9)
“reserved unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6)	Reserved unto the day of sorrow Enoch 45:2

Peter consciously contradicts this by stressing that “angels do *not* bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord” (2 Pet. 2:11), and Jude is even more specific by saying that this is true of Michael the Archangel (Jude 9). According to the Book of Enoch, the man Enoch judges the sinful Angels, but 2 Peter 3 warns that actually Angels will come with Lord Jesus in order to judge *men*. We can now understand why Peter claims that “bold and arrogant these men (the false teachers) are not afraid to slander celestial beings” (2 Pet. 2:10) – i.e. the Angels. The Book of Enoch slandered Angels by claiming 200 of them sinned. As Jude 8 puts it, the false teachers “reject authority and slander celestial beings”. The idea that the 200 Angels had sexual encounters with enticing women was therefore a slander. We need to reflect on the implications of all this – for claiming that Angels sin is actually spoken of by Peter and Jude as if it is serious blasphemy. Those early Christians were returning to their earlier Jewish and Pagan beliefs, which according to 2 Pet. 2:22 is to be seen as a dog returning to its vomit. This is how serious the issue is.

It should be noted that the Book of Enoch and other such writings are frequently alluded to in the Apocalypse – again, to deconstruct them and show a first century readership the *real* meaning of the terms used in the popular uninspired literature of the time. Thus the descriptions of the Heavenly “Son of man” in Enoch 47:3–7 are alluded to in the description of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1:15–17 (This and many other such allusions are to be found tabulated in Hugh Schonfield, *The Original New Testament: Revelation* (London: Firethorn Press, 1985)).

:15 *To execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him*- The judgment of the Lord's second coming will not be a simple destruction of the wicked. Through the condemnation / judgment process, they will be convicted of all their sins, including all their hard words they spoke against the Lord. Such is the Lord's knowledge that words spoken by men in this life will be quoted back to them at judgment. By their words will men be justified and condemned (Mt. 12:37); see on Mt. 12:36; Lk. 13:28.

Num. 32:23 prophesied of Israel in their time of condemnation: "You will be sensible of your sin when evil overtakes you" (LXX). Truly has Ez. 6:9 prophesied of the rejected: "They shall loathe themselves for their evils which they have committed in all their abominations". Jude 15 would even suggest that the purpose of judgment being executed is to convict the rejected of *all* their ungodly deeds and hard words. Through realising their condemnation they will realize in awful detail exactly *why* this had to be. Our own self-examination now will be stimulated by realising the depth to which we *deserve* condemnation, even though by grace we are saved rather than condemned.

:16 *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts*- "Murmuring" is the word used of how the Jews murmured against the Lord Jesus (Lk. 5:30; Jn. 6:41,43; 1 Cor. 10:10). The murmuring and complaining by the false teachers was presumably in slander of the faithful teachers. And the terms of course recall Israel in the wilderness, ever murmuring and complaining against Moses and God. They should have been walking after the Spirit, but instead the lusts of the flesh controlled them.

(And their mouth speaks great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of personal advantage- This alludes to how they were false teachers, speaking words which like leaven swelled up into great things. We recall how leaven was used as symbolic of the teaching of the Pharisees. The Greek could be translated the other way around, as if they got people to respect their persons for the sake of personal advantage. They had seized the podium for the indulgence of their own lusts- see on :12. Their teachings were ultimately in order to empower their own self indulgence regarding wealth, power and sex. As noted on :15, these people would be judged at the last day for their words; and those words included the words they were teaching. Hence James warns us to not rush to be teachers, for those who speak the most words [especially publicly] risk the greater condemnation (James 3:1).

:17 *But you, beloved, remember the words which have been spoken previously by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ*- The faithful minority in these churches were not to listen to the swelling words of the false teachers (:16) but rather to remember the words of the true prophets, the Lord's apostles. "Remember" is appropriate to illiterate folk who would only have had the memory of the inspired, spoken words to go on. Maybe the implication is that Jude's readership were initially those of 2 Peter 2, who were the Jews whom Peter had baptized after their hearing the words of the Lord's apostles at Pentecost.

:18 *How they said to you: In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts*- Warning of the great falling away had been a major part of the initial teaching which these converts had received. The records of these warnings appear to have been greatly abbreviated in the Acts transcripts of the apostolic addresses. Clearly

there was follow up instruction given after baptism. The mockers were credible enough to become the apparent shepherds and teachers in the congregations to whom Jude was writing. The mocking may have therefore been quite subtle; but the Spirit through Jude exposed it for what it was. The same Greek words for "ungodly lusts" are found in Tit. 2:11,12- it was a denial of God's grace which led to living in such lusts. And the Judaizers had rejected that grace for a form of legalism which allowed them to indulge their own lusts.

:19 *These are they who make divisions, sensual, having not the Spirit*- Being divisive is the supreme testament to the lack of the Spirit; for the Spirit unites. Each heart that has received the gift of the Spirit and allowed it free reign will naturally unite with others who are led by the same Spirit. This is what "the unity of the Spirit" is all about (Eph. 4:3). Division is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20); unity is a fruit of the Spirit. It's as simple as that. Those who are divisive lack the Spirit. We need to each enshrine the principle that we will never, ever divide from those for whom Christ died, His body. If we do, we have not the Spirit and are mere religionists. These people are "sensual", seeing things in natural terms, of the flesh, and without the Spirit. This same kind of language is found in :10 [see notes there]. To divide from others is the natural, animal like way. To unite is counter-instinctive, if we live in the flesh. Unity is of the Spirit. And the natural man cannot receive spiritual things which are spiritually discerned- unless he has the Spirit and is no longer seeking to view life in material, visible, concrete, rational terms (1 Cor. 2:14). The Greek for "make divisions" here means literally to draw a boundary. The Lord Jesus was fundamentally open; He drew no boundaries of exclusion from His table and fellowship. It was men who themselves decided whether to come near to Him or not. All the *angst* about where to draw fellowship boundaries is really arguing about where to draw lines in the sand. The Lord was fundamentally open rather than closed. And as clearly stated here, such drawing of boundaries is not the way of His Spirit.

:20 *But you, beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith*- The antidote to all the awful behaviour listed so far is to be built up in the Spirit. The Lord builds us up, edifying us by His Spirit; but we need to respond by doing our part in being open to His work within us. The ideas of holiness and "the faith" recall the opening of the letter; the believers were being made holy by the Spirit, and were to defend the faith. Spiritual growth was on the basis of the basic Gospel they believed, "the faith".

Praying in the Holy Spirit- We receive the gift of the Spirit in our hearts at baptism, but we are to allow this Spirit to teach us and take over our thinking and action. The Spirit in view is the Spirit or mind of the Lord Jesus; it is His psychological entrance into us. This explains the encouragement to pray in or by the Spirit (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18). The contrast is with those who did not have the Spirit (:19).

Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer" , although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point. *Desire* is also seen as effectively praying for something (Rom. 10:1; Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:14). Weeping, desiring, waiting, meditating etc. are all acts of the mind, or 'spirit' in Biblical terminology. There is therefore a big association between our spirit or state of mind, and prayer. The spirit (disposition) of Christ which we have received leads us to *pray* "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). "Praying in the holy spirit" (Jude 20) is to be seen in this context. Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

:21 *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life*- The work of the Spirit in keeping us in Christ must be responded to by our freewill efforts to likewise keep or remain in Him. We are to 'keep' the Lord's ways and commandments, and yet He keeps us by the Spirit. "They have kept Your word... keep [s.w.] [them] by Your own Name... I kept them in Your Name... keep them from the evil" (Jn. 17). Jude will conclude by glorying in the fact that the Lord is able to keep us from falling in spiritual terms (:24). We are "looking", in utter confidence, to receive mercy and eternal life at the Lord's return. The parallel in 2 Peter is "looking for... the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:12). This again suggests that we should be able to be certain that if we die now or the Lord returns now, we will certainly be saved. But we must "keep" or abide in that status.

Jude 20,21 exhorts us: “building up yourselves... keep yourselves in the love of God”. The use of the plural ‘yourselves’ rather than a singular ‘thyself’ suggests that we are to understand this as meaning that we should build up our community, keep each other in the love of God. Jude had begun by exalting that we are “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved [s.w. “keep yourselves”] [by God] in Jesus Christ”. His conclusion is that we are kept / preserved by God in Christ *insofar as* we, the ministers of Christ, keep

/ preserve each other. The Greek for 'building up' occurs in Eph. 4:16: "From [Christ] the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, *maketh increase* [builds up] of the body unto the edifying of itself in love". The body builds itself up, *if* each part contributes. If they don't, then there is no building up. Using the same figure, 1 Cor. 3:10-14 speak of us building up God's house, the believers, on the foundation of Christ. And we will be judged for the quality of what is built- our final judgment will be a reflection of the quality of our brethren, in that their spirituality is partly determined by our efforts for them. But Col. 2:4 uses the same word to say that we are built up "in [Christ]... as [according as] ye have been taught... beware lest any man spoil you [through false teaching]. The life of fellowship with our brethren in Christ is what builds us up, if we teach each other the right things. But false teaching means that the house of believers will not be built up. This would have been especially so in ecclesias of largely illiterate members. The point is, we are all builders, each part has something to contribute, and the doing of every ecclesial service must be consciously to the end of building up one another.

:22 *On those who are in doubt have mercy*- As noted on :21, these commands are collective, and they were the more necessary because the shepherds of the congregation were self-seeking and apostate. All the faithful members had to therefore take responsibility for the flock. It is seen as trendy to admit "doubt" about spiritual things; but "doubt" here requires "mercy". It should not be the case. The work of the Spirit convicts and convinces so that doubt regarding the basic existence and saving power of God in Christ is not in doubt. We can hardly have the sure Hope which the Gospel speaks of if we have such doubts. The AV adds: "Making a difference". The context has spoken of those without any conscience who were abusing the flock and bent on indulging their own lusts through the abuse of others. The "difference" was presumably between these types and those who were weak and needed compassion shown to their moral weaknesses.

:23 *And others save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some, have mercy with fear, hating even the underclothing stained by the flesh*- This continues the allusion to Zechariah 3 noted on :9. The Angel just about decided in favour of saving Jerusalem out of the 'fire' of eternal punishment (cp. Jer. 17:27) for her sins- He had "compassion, making a difference" (Jude 22). The "garment spotted by the flesh" must connect with the "filthy garments" worn by Joshua as he came into the Angel's presence.

Likewise an Angel had pulled Lot from the fire (Jude 7)- in this sense, Jude seems to suggest, we can do God's work for him. Likewise we must "make a difference" concerning some, just as the Angels "contended" [s.w.] for men (Jude 9 cp. 22). The fire

of condemnation at the judgment is in a sense already kindled, as the Lord Himself had taught (Lk. 12:49). The weak brother condemns himself by his way of life, and falls into condemnation even now, before the judgment (James 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:6; Tit. 3:11). We see this, and have the power in some cases to save the brother by pulling him out of that fire of condemnation. Surely the point is that we can save our brother from condemnation at judgment day by what we do for him now. See on Rom. 12:20.

The "fear" we are to show is perhaps in realizing that the process of saving these people from out of the fire risks our falling into it; to save someone you have to get close to them. And these people were already condemned, in the fire of Gehenna, as it were. Their clothing was blemished, in contrast to how we are to appear "without blemish" at judgment day (:24). The Lord will keep us from stumbling, however (:24). Jude has several times expressed the idea that the false teachers were so bad that they were condemned already, as it were already in the Gehenna fire. But the faithful remnant could even save some of them, at least potentially. To pull someone out of eternal condemnation is one of the most significant things we can do with our lives. But this can only be achieved by coming close to them in association.

:24- see on Eph. 1:4.

Now to him that is able to guard you from stumbling- God can withhold men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and His Son can keep us from falling (Jude 24), keeping [s.w.] us from evil (2 Thess. 3:3). This preservation unto salvation is the work of His Spirit in our hearts. It is for this that we pray when we ask in the Lord's prayer to be 'delivered from evil'. We of course must play our part in 'keeping' the faith. But we are empowered to do so by the Spirit- hence Timothy is challenged to "keep [s.w.] that which was given to you, by the Holy Spirit which dwells within us" (2 Tim. 1:14). The strong similarities between Jude and 2 Peter 2 continue on this point too; for the same word is used of how God saved or kept / guarded Noah (2 Pet. 2:5), whilst condemning the world around him for their sin. This 'keeping' refers therefore to God's keeping of Noah spiritually, from falling into the sins of those around him. If his literal salvation from death by drowning was in view, a different verb would have been used.

And to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy- It is only the Lord Jesus who is "without blemish", the perfect Paschal lamb (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). There are repeated encouragements that we shall be likewise "without blemish" before Him at the last day (Rev. 14:5), as we are now (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22). But this is only true because of His righteousness being imputed to us, by grace through faith. This status should bring "exceeding joy" both now (1 Pet. 1:8) and in the last day (1 Pet. 4:13). We shall enter into the joy of our Lord (Mt. 25:21). His joy is above that of all His brethren (Heb. 1:9 s.w.), and yet all that is true of Him shall be true of us.

The idea of "blemish" has been common in 2 Pet. 2 and Jude. The false teachers and wicked shepherds were blemishes upon the church (:12; 2 Pet. 2:13); some were already under condemnation, with their clothes "spotted by the flesh" (:23). Yet the faithful remnant would be preserved without blemish in that they were clothed in the Lord's righteousness.

When all this is finally realized, we shall be awed at the Lord's grace, feeling with those of the parable that we have not done all the wonderful things counted to us. Our amazement and incomprehension at the judgment is brought out in 2 Thess. 1:10, which speaks of the saints 'admiring' Christ in that day, using a Greek word meaning 'to marvel at in incomprehension'. This praise will be on account of our being "presented faultless" before the judgment (Jude 24). The Greek for "presented" is the same word translated "stood" in Lk. 21:36, showing that our angel is able to stand us up in the august presence of the Lord, only by reason of our faults having been totally covered by Christ's imputed righteousness. Col. 1:22 has a similar message: "...to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable (Gk. 'free from accusation') in his sight". This freedom from accusation explains why none of our bad deeds will be mentioned to us then. One wonders if Paul's appearance before the judgment seat in Acts 25 is described as it is in order to help us imagine this; he has no accusers, and therefore can be acquitted. The idea of being presented faultless before the glorious presence of a monarch was well known in the ancient world. Esther and Daniel's friends had a person assigned to present them faultless before the monarch; and it is the Lord Jesus through the work of His Spirit who can present us faultless before Himself. Our beauty is truly in the eyes of our beholder. He is both the ultimate monarch, and also the one who prepared us for the presentation before Him.

:25 *To the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now and for always in the future. Amen*- The Roman proconsuls were to be called “Saviour”. But for Christians, there was only *one* Saviour, the Lord Jesus. The Caesars were frequently called "Saviour"- Josephus thus addressed Vespasian. Hence the radical import of the way that Jude 25 calls the Lord Jesus our *only* Saviour. ‘Caesar is Lord’ was the cry of the Roman empire. Pliny wrote that he considered refusal to make the customary gesture to the emperor’s statue to be a criminal act punishable by death. But “To us there is but one Lord, Jesus” the Christ, i.e. Jesus the Messiah of the despised, weird Jewish race.

Note that God's purpose with us began "before all time"; not just from "the beginning". We were part of His "eternal purpose" in Christ (Eph. 3:11). Our calling and foreknowledge was not just from some 'beginning', but 'before' that; we were always in God's mind, and He existed with that mind from eternity.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: REVELATION

REVELATION

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

Revelation is full of visual images, borrowed from the Old Testament. But it presents them as a kaleidoscope of images, overlaying each other, relying upon other images for the final picture presented. As such, it simply cannot be read as a chronological prediction of historical events. The images presented of the new Jerusalem and God's ways are intended to deconstruct the images of Babylon and her ways. In earlier application, Christians living within the 'Babylon' of the Roman empire were subject to her images, worldviews etc., and Revelation enabled them to re-imagine life from God's perspective, thinking according to His images of the world, seeing Babylon and the beast for who they are, and seeing ourselves and God's people for who they are. This is of supreme practical value today, as it has been in every age. But it will be of ultimate value for those living under the domination of the beast entity in the land / earth under the beast's domination in the brief period of tribulation before Christ's return. A major theme of Revelation is of martyrdom and witness. It is not God's pleasure to destroy the beast, and He expects His people to make His final appeal and witness to the beast, even at the cost of their lives, physically, economically and socially. The radical nature of that call comes to each of His people over history, but it will be at its most intense and acute in the last days. Another theme of Revelation is the Lordship of Jesus; exalted titles are given to Him, and things stated about God are stated about Him. This is not to say that He is God; rather the intention and necessity of this message is that as strongly as the beast insists that *he* is Lord, so we are to insist and proclaim that *Jesus* is our Lord. The image of the slain lamb, the crucified Jesus, hangs as a watermark image over the book of Revelation; and again, that makes sense. For the community of the last days, under intense physical and / or psychological oppression from the beast, will have the image ever before them of Him in His time of suffering and dying.

A Futurist Approach

I submit that in the last days, all God's prophetic word will come true. All previous historical fulfilments of it were true and valid, but they will be seen as but incipient fulfilments of the final and ultimate fulfilling of God's word in the events of the last hour, and the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ in His return to earth to judge the enemies of His people. Rev. 1:1 opens Revelation by saying that the things revealed or apocalypsed are to "shortly" come to pass, and the book ends with the same statement (Rev. 22:6). The Greek can just as well mean that these things will happen quickly, suddenly- rather than requiring that the entire book had a fulfilment shortly after the time it was first given. For clearly the events described in the book did not all happen 'shortly' after John's time in the first century. That is a fact, and I would argue that it leaves us little leeway in interpreting *tachos* as therefore meaning that they will happen quickly, suddenly. The ultimate thrust of their fulfilment, therefore, is not over an extended period of time from John's time over the two millennia to the time of Christ's coming. The same phrase is used by the Lord to the believers in Rev. 2:5,16 where He

warns them that He will come unto them “quickly”- the idea is that His coming in judgment will be sudden *unless* they repent. The quickness or suddenness of His coming is related to His wrath in judgment; if they repent, then the coming will not be ‘sudden’ or ‘short’. He surely doesn’t mean ‘If you don’t repent, then I will come back soon. If you do repent, then I won’t come back soon’. He uses the same concept of suddenness and unexpectedness, although without using *tachos*, in Rev. 3:3: “If you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you”.
Attention must be paid to Revelation especially in the last days because “the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3); but *eggos* means literally ‘squeezed’ or ‘throttled’- creating the idea that things are going to happen very quickly at the end. The fulfilment of God’s word in this sense will be ‘hastened’ (Is. 60:22; Jer. 1:12). And the world situation we are in enables this to be the case as no other generation. The student of Revelation, therefore, will not be caught by surprise by the speed of events in the last days- that seems to be the idea.

This is not to say that the prophecies did not have relevance to the historical experience of God's people. The continual theme of persecution and comfort of ultimate victory against the world was, of course, a powerful and relevant message to God's persecuted people throughout history. But those fulfilments were but shadow fulfilments of the final triumph and events which the book describes. These are to happen quickly, suddenly, in a short time space. This explains why each of the various visions, of seals, trumpets, bowls etc. all end with the final victory of Christ's coming and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. They can all be read as having specific reference to the last days- whatever historical fulfilment they may have had. To argue otherwise requires that these events had their main fulfilment at some time in the last 2000 years, and then there is a gap until their fulfilment in the coming of Christ. But the nature of the language and arguments used hardly allows for that. At best it could be that after each of those historical incidents there was the possibility of Christ's return, but that didn't happen because other preconditions weren't met. Therefore the prophecies were rescheduled and reapplied for their main fulfilment in the events of the last days. This would explain why some of the historical fulfilments suggested by expositors of the continuous historical school appear to 'fit' better than others. But at best, these were only incipient fulfilments- the final reality for each of God's prophetic words must come in the last days, just as the image of Daniel 2 had some continuous historical application, but the image must stand erect and complete in the last days- and that is the main fulfilment of the prophecy, whatever application it may have had in history.

1:1- see on Dan. 10:21.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ- The Lord's second coming is called His "revelation" (s.w. 1 Pet. 1:7,13; 4:13 etc.), and so there is a play on ideas here. The things revealed by the Lord in this book ultimately concern His second coming, whatever other relevance they have had throughout history.

Which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass- A great theme of Revelation is that "the time is near"- these things were about to happen. This is a major theme (1:1,3; 2:16; 3:10,11; 22:6,7,10,12,20). The relationship between the letters to the churches and the rest of Revelation cannot be overlooked; what was to happen to them in judgment was bound up with what was to come upon the land of Palestine in AD70. Mt. 21:40 parallels the coming of the Lord with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. This is exactly the sequence of events we expect in the last days, according to Zech. 14. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (Wars 5.1.5).

Revelation	The Olivet Prophecy
6:1,2	Mt. 24:14
6:14	Mt. 24:35
6:3,4	Mt. 24:6,7
6:16	Lk. 23:30
6:5,6	Mt. 24:7
6:17	Lk. 21:36
6:7,8	Mt. 24:7
7:1	Mt. 24:31
6:9	Mt. 24:12
7:3	Lk. 21:18,28
6:11	Mt. 24:14
7:14	Mt. 24:19,21
6:12	Mt. 24:7
8:3	Lk. 21:36

6:13	Mt. 24:32
8:5	Mt. 24:27

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both AD70 and also our last days. The following notes trace some leading features of the AD70 interpretation. The most powerful proof is in private reading of Josephus' *Wars of The Jews*- it reads like a running commentary on the seal and trumpet judgments upon Israel.

Which he sent and put into sign by his Angel to his servant John- This message was passed from the Father to the Son to the Son's "angel" or messenger and thence to His servant John. The "angel" may be a human messenger, but the Divine "Angel" with whom John interrelates throughout the book is surely the "Angel" referenced here. In this case, the Lord has a personal Angel who represents Him, perhaps Gabriel.

1:2 *Who testified of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw*- The aorist suggests the testimony was made once in the past; and John uses this idea of his testimony about the Lord in explaining that his Gospel record is his testimony about Him. In addition to that, he is testifying of the Lord's testimony, which consists in all things he saw in the visions he is now going to describe. This is in line with how the testimony of the Comforter, the spirit of Christ, was the testimony of the believers who had received that Spirit (Jn. 15:26,27). Here as a parade example of that, John testifies of the Lord's testimony.

The apostles bore witness to the Lord Jesus (e.g. Acts 26:22; 1 Cor. 15:15 s.w.), and He in turn bore witness to the [preaching of] the word of his grace (Acts 15:8). In their witness lay His witness. Revelation begins with John witnessing / testifying to the Word [made flesh, i.e. Jesus], and concludes with Jesus testifying (1:2 cp. 22:20 s.w.). Beholding the cross and the water and blood that flowed from it, John struggled with the inadequacy of human language: “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true” (Jn. 19:35). Years later he described himself, in allusion to this, as he “who bare record [in the past tense] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:2). He had earlier commented that the Spirit, water and blood of the cross bore witness (1 Jn. 5:8). John seems to be saying that the Lord’s final death which he had witnessed was the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ. And as he had been a faithful witness to this, so now he would be of that further revelation he had now seen in the Apocalypse. Because he had beheld the Lord’s witness on the cross, he witnessed. For he was in Christ, part of Him, of His life and death. And so are each of us.

Paul puts our thesis in so many words, by saying that his preaching to the Galatians had been a placarding forth of Christ crucified before their eyes (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). His witness to them had been a living out of the Lord in His time of dying.

1:3- see on Lk. 11:28.

Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein- This has been misread as meaning that blessing is related to 'correctly understanding' the Revelation. The Greek word translated "reads" doesn't have to mean 'correctly understands'. The obvious sense is to link it with those who *hear* the words... the message is being sent by a messenger, who was to read it out loud- as we know Paul's letters were thus read to a largely illiterate brotherhood- and it was then *heard* by the ecclesias. Both reader and hearer were blessed if they kept what the prophecy implied- which was and is an awareness of God's claims upon His people, their separation from this world, and an earnest readiness for Christ's return. The 'blessing' is elsewhere applied not to those who intellectually understand something but to those who are doing and living and saying the right things at the return of Jesus. The same Greek word for 'Blessed' is used of those who are ready at the Lord's return and doing the right things (Mt. 24:46; Lk. 12:37,38,43). Rev. 22:7 links back to 1:3, the epilogue interpreting the prologue: "Blessed is he who keeps the *logos* of the prophecy of this book" - the essence / *logos* / underlying idea of it all, which is that God's persecuted people will remain faithful to His word in Christ, will testify it to an unbelieving world, and will live lives always prepared for their Lord's return. The blessing is in the preparedness, not in the detailed understanding. If blessing depends upon holding the continuous historic view of Revelation, then the majority of God's servants aren't blessed- seeing that it couldn't possibly have been understood throughout most of the time from the first century until now.

For the time is near- The disciples expected the second coming within a generation of the Lord's death (Mt. 26:18; Lk. 21:32; Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:3); and note the use of words indicating imminence: 'shortly', 'immediately', 'a little while'. Could it not be that if Israel had accepted Jesus as Son of God, the Kingdom could have come then? Even after His death, had they believed the witness of the apostles and repented for what they had done, the Kingdom could have come then. Of course God foreknew this would not happen; but the disciples looked forward to it as a distinct reality and possibility. Revelation itself seems to read as if when "Babylon" was judged and destroyed by the day of the Lord, then the Kingdom would be established on earth. It seems that it was possible that the Roman empire be destroyed by the Lord's return; but instead the prophecy was delayed, and now "Babylon" must apply to some latter day system, which had an earlier incarnation in the Roman empire which *could* have been

its final fulfilment but wasn't. In any case, we are to live *as if* the second coming is imminent.

1:4 *John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne*- There were more than seven churches in Asia, so this number is chosen to represent the complete churches. Their experiences were to echo down the centuries in the various churches and groups who experienced persecution. The sources and forms may have changed, but the spiritual essence remained the same as they experienced.

Is, was and is to come recalls the essence of the Yahweh Name. The God who had ultimately preserved His Son and His disciples from their persecutions ["was"] would preserve the seven Asian churches in their current traumas ["is"]; and would ultimately preserve believers of all ages "to come". The essential characteristics of the Yahweh Name would be manifested consistently in whatever time and context. And in this consistency is the power of history, as Biblically recorded. For as He acted in history, so He shall act today and for all ages to come.

The essential will of the Father and Son is grace and peace toward the believers, despite all the twists and turns of history and current experience. That will was operationalized through the seven spirits before the throne in the court of Heaven. The seven spirits match the seven churches; the entire Spirit of God ["seven"] will work in the lives of all those in His community, represented by the seven churches.

1:5- see on Jn. 7:38.

And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him that loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood- The Lord's faithful witness unto death is to be the pattern for all the Lord's people. Although the kings of the earth persecute the Lord's people, He is their ruler. Events have not get radically out of control; all is under His rulership. This again was of powerful relevance to the Jewish believers of the first century, who were tempted to secretly believe but not to witness, for fear of persecution by both Roman and Jewish systems. We are freed from our sins because of His unflinching witness.

It will be observed that Revelation frequently hints that it is a message specifically addressed to those under persecution. Phrases like "Jesus Christ the faithful witness" (:5) should be read in the context of encouraging the readers to continue *their* witness, even on pain of death, just as Jesus did (see too 13:8). For this reason, an understanding of the book of Revelation is vital for those who will experience the latter day tribulation, in whatever form we feel it will take.

"The kings of the earth" is a phrase and idea which we will encounter later. If we enquire what they refer to, it depends upon what scale we wish to investigate at. The "earth" often refers to the land promised to Abraham, and the futurist interpretation of the later chapters in Revelation must bear that in view.

The love of the Lord Jesus is again interpreted as specifically His death on the cross, as often in the New Testament. His command to love as He loved us means that we too are to love unto the death of a cross (Jn. 13:32). That death means we are freed from our sins- despite being ruled over by the kings of the earth / land. It is freedom from sin which is the ultimate freedom rather than political freedom, which was always attractive to the Jewish readership of the first century. Just as the language of the Roman cult of empire is alluded to and subverted, so too is the language of Jewish nationalistic expectation. This was very strong in the lead up to AD70 and was the root cause of many of the Hebrew Christians returning to Judaism. The hope was that the Kingdom of God could be brought about by human effort now, without Jesus. The idea that 'we can do it, we can achieve a land fit for heroes' is very much the slogan of the world around us, too. And we are not to fall for it. The cry of militant Judaism was 'Freedom from Rome!'. But this is subverted into 'Freedom from sin!'. That is the ultimate freedom, to be free from the ties that bind us morally. And to thereby be free from fear of eternal death. Militant Judaism appealed to the image of 'martyrdom' at the time of the Maccabees. But the word for 'martyr' is used here of how the Lord Jesus was the faithful witness unto death; to turn a conversation around to Jesus and face social death or ostracism, that is the true witness or 'martyrdom'. Not being a suicide bomber against the Romans. Our witness is our witness (Rev. 6:9; 12:11). It is us personally witnessing in our way and context. But it is the witness of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10), who was the first and ultimate witness / martyr unto death (Rev. 1:5). We are His witnesses, continuing His witness unto death (Rev. 12:17; 17:6; 19:10). Our standing up for Him, our preaching, our witness to Him, is in the Spirit of His witness-unto-death. "The faithful witness" is an allusion to the Messianic seed of David in Ps. 89:35-37: "Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David. His seed will endure forever, his throne like the sun before Me. It will be established forever like the moon, *the faithful witness* in the sky". Judaism was looking for some Messianic seed of David to arise and save them from Rome and 'free them'. But the take of Revelation is that the Lord Jesus is the seed of David [there are many references to Him as this] and He has freed us from sin. That is the real bondage and that is the true freedom. Bondage and freedom are thereby redefined. Likewise in our world, bondage is not so much to the minimum wage economy, but to sin. And freedom is not financial independence, it is freedom from sin through baptism into Jesus. This makes us free from sin ("And being made free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness", Rom. 6:18, "he law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death", Rom. 8:2); we are 'redeemed', bought out of slavery and set free into freedom ("For freedom did Christ set us free", Gal.

5:1), the glorious liberty of God's dear children. This is not something we are fighting for against this world. It has been attained. And we are to believe it and bask it, and seek to share the victory. But it's always more attractive, and easier to mentally handle, to be in search for something- rather than rejoicing that we have found it. This is a feature of human nature we must beware of. To be ever learning and seeking, but unable to come to acknowledge the Truth when we find it.

The praise of the Lord Jesus here in :5,6 is alluding to the language of the emperor cult. Caesar was to be worshipped as supreme, because *he* had made Roman citizens the rulers ["kings"] of the known earth. All this is subverted here. The true Kingdom is God's Kingdom, in which we shall be the rulers. But that empire / Kingdom is not now, in its fullness. We await the day of the Lord's return. To believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was therefore to be believe something radically subversive of contemporary society and values. And the call to be totally part of that is no less radical for us today, in essence. Worship is a major theme of Revelation. Later we will read of a Lamb on the throne. Not Caesar. And this must be understood in the context of the cult of emperor worship.

1:6 *And who made us kings and priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen*- Having spoken of the kings of the earth, who will be portrayed later as dominating God's people temporarily, we learn that in fact it is we who are freed from any domination by sin who are the king-priests. Immediately we are introduced to what shall be a major theme in the visions- that there are two spheres of things. On the earthly level, the kings of the earth dominate us. But on the spiritual, heavenly level, we are the kings, and are radically free from all domination because of the freedom won for us on the cross. This earthly-heavenly distinction is to be found throughout John's Gospel. Things as they are in secular life only appear like that. For things are radically different from God's perspective.

The Lord "has *made* us kings and priests" in prospect, although we will only exercise this power in the Kingdom. Frequently we read of the saints being 'made' things which we must still strive to attain (Rom. 5:19; 6:18,22; 8:2; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:6; 2:13). God *made* the Lord a sin offering, that we might be *made* the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21), although our Lord still had to exercise freewill effort to be that offering, as we must too. "God... saved us (in prospect)... that... we should be *made* heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit.3:5-7).

Note too that the idea may well be of king-priests, after the order of Melchizedek, seeing we are "in Christ" and all that is true of Him comes true for us. So the idea is not that some will be kings and others priests.

1:7- see on Jn. 1:14; 19:37.

Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. So shall it be! Amen- This passage from Zechariah appears to be a prophecy of how Israel shall see the Lord at His second coming, and that is the interpretation given here. Those who crucified the Lord had this prophecy come true as they looked upon and gloated over the pierced Lord Jesus on the cross (see on Jn. 19:37). But it shall come true again, when they are resurrected to judgment at the last day, see His enthronement in glory ["he comes with the clouds" is the language of Dan. 7 about this], realize from marks in His body that this is the one whom they crucified, exclaim "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt. 23:39), but find they are not able to be in His Kingdom. That bitter disappointment at the future they have missed, that they now so want, with all the resulting self-anger, is described as weeping and gnashing of teeth. That will be psychological punishment enough for the rejected. "The tribes of the earth", every eye of them, shall see the Lord in that moment. "The earth" refers to the land, of Israel; all those who looked upon Him upon the cross, "every eye", shall then be resurrected to see Him and mourn bitterly over what they did. The "every eye" is I suggest unpacked and defined by "they that pierced him" and "all the tribes of the land". The "and..." does not have to mean 'in addition to'; it can be a device for defining the term which has gone before it. As if to say 'Yes, even...'.

1:8 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God*- It has been oobserved by Trinitarians that the Lord Jesus says He is "the first and the last" (:17; 22:13), clearly alluding to Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of the Greek alphabet. The Son of God shares the titles of God- although significantly here, that is expressed slightly differently ["Alpha and Omega" becomes "first and the last"]. This however is not to say that Jesus equals God. That is too primitive, and is to misunderstand the idea of sharing the same Name and title. Jesus is not God, but throughout Revelation [and in our own lives] He functions as God. But function is not the same as being one and the same. Trinitarians need to recognize this.

Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty- The way God is outside of time as we know it, existing in past, present and future simultaneously, is mentioned in connection with the judgment upon those who pierced the Lord and who at the resurrection to condemnation will remember what they did. They will then realize that for God, what they did is actual and real as if they were doing it right then. The passage of time does not blunt His awareness of sin nor the implication of past actions. It does to us, with our fading memories and ability to re-imagine and re-create the past according to our own warped perceptions. This is why repentance at the time of sin is so important; otherwise the passing of time results in our memories often reshaping and rewriting the sin, writing down its significance.

"Was, is and is to come" clearly alludes to the Yahweh Name, which is taken by the resurrected Lord Jesus. The "is to come" can be seen as not just the general future tense, but also specifically referring to God's manifestation in the second coming of the Lord Jesus, who says seven times in Revelation "I am coming". But one theme of Revelation is the way that it continually alludes to and deconstructs the surrounding Greek and Roman ideas. Not only of the cult of Roman empire and emperor, but also the Greek ideas of the gods. Many of their gods, especially the god of Philosophy, were claimed to exist in these same three tenses, past, present and future (D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp.280,281). But the entire social, political and religious system of the first century world was being deconstructed in Revelation. The one true God and His Son subsume and replace all these things. Just as they do all the values and structures of our worlds.

1:9 *I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*- This language speaks of another King and another Kingdom existing right then. This language and implications of this sort had been enough to provide the technical reason why the Lord was crucified; for Caesar and his kingdom were the only king and kingdoms which could be spoken of within the Roman empire. John was commanded to "write" these things, which as noted on :19 was going to be a criminal act. John seems aware of this because he goes right on to mention that he was, or had been, in exile on Patmos because of his testimony about the Lord and "the word of God". This may be a reference to his being arrested and punished for writing and distributing what we know as the Gospel of John. See on :2.

John saw himself as their partner rather than the one above them, partaking with them of the same sufferings; repeatedly he describes himself and all believers as fellow-slaves (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 7:4; 19:2,5; 22:3,6- quite some emphasis). See on 3 Jn. 14,15.

It is significant that Revelation speaks more frequently than any other NT book of simply "Jesus". Without any title attached to Him. This is quite unusual especially when compared to the rest of the New Testament, where the risen Jesus is usually called "the Lord". We must remember that "Jesus" was one of the most common male names in first century Palestine. It's rather like talking about "Dave" or "Ronnie" without any title attached- when referring to the president of the nation. And yet as discussed on :8, we find here highly exalted language concerning the Lord Jesus. This kind of juxtaposition of His humanity and His exalted status is quite common. Hebrews 1 speaks of "God even your God" in relation to Jesus, adjacent to describing Him in very exalted language. This is simply because it was on account of His genuine humanity that He has been exalted

to His high status. At times this is stated explicitly, but this literary device of placing His humanity next to His exaltation is another way of stating this.

1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying*- The radical, heretical nature of the book of Revelation needs to be appreciated against this background; it's almost a polemic against the Caesars, and to speak in this way against them was punishable by death. And Revelation speaks of the capital of the beast system (Rome) as being in the wilderness, rather than as the (perceived) centre of a cosmopolitan metropolis. And of course, Rome is spoken of as a whore... the most abusive image possible! The whole vision was given "on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10)- and this appears to be an allusion to the way that there was "a day in the Roman calendar when all the Roman citizens had to go to the local temple and declare 'Caesar is Lord'". On that very day, when John was supposed to be worshipping Caesar as Lord, he was given a vision outlining how Caesar was not in fact 'Lord' at all. And yet the Lord's day is so often a reference to the second coming. All in Revelation is to be understood in that context, which creates a solid case for treating a futuristic interpretation as not only possible but required. Although most parts of the book have discernible application to the first century or other points in history, the essence of it all will come true fully only in the last days.

Yet the great voice he hears behind him is as of a trumpet; what he heard he was to write (:11) and distribute. It was not a quiet, personal voice; but a trumpet. His message was to be preached, and it was a radical polemic against the Roman empire, the Jewish system in Jerusalem; just as in its later applications, it was a radical polemic against every society in which the Lord's people have lived. And that message is to be preached, for the voice comes as a trumpet. The principles revealed in this book are not to be quietly kept in our hearts; by their nature, they cannot be.

1:11- see on Acts 2:46.

What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches. To Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea- For the significance of placing all this in writing, see on :9 and :19. The churches chosen are surely representative of all congregations over time. Hence the number seven, suggesting completion. For there were other churches in that area. The order of the churches is perhaps simply because that is the order in which a messenger would have travelled in delivering the letters, in a kind of circuit.

1:12 *And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks*- "To see the voice" rather than "to see the person that spoke" suggests that this personage is a word made flesh, a person totally identified with their

voice. And that is of course how John has portrayed the Lord in Jn. 1:14. John turns to see the voice, clearly alluding to how at Sinai “all the people saw the voice” (Ex. 20:18 LXX). We note there is also the sound of a trumpet. We expect John to turn and see... the Lord Jesus. But instead he sees the lampstands, which are explained as representing the churches. This kind of dashed expectation is a commn literary feature of Biblical literature. And it is to make a point- that the Lord Jesus is manifest in His church. The lampstand vision is clearly based upon the lampstand of Zech. 4:2,11, where it is filled with the Spirit and the seven lamps represent the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. The idea of 'seven spirits' is of completion and totality. The idea is that the church is the manifestation of God's presence and activity in the earth today; however dysfunctional that lampstand may be. In this sense we are the light of the world, the lamp that has been lit to give light (Mt. 5:14-16). His light is to some extent obscured by the dysfunction of the lampstand. As the seven spirits went forth throughout the earth, so the idea is that the church goes throughout the earth with the witness of the Lord Jesus. Again we have the device of dashed expectation- for having been set up to see the Lord Jesus manifest in this lampstand, we will go on to read of how dysfunctional are the seven churches addressed, the individual lamps.

Our covenant relationship with God isn't just between Him and us. It demands that we are in covenant with His people; we can't love Him that begat without loving those others begotten by Him, as John puts it (1 Jn. 4:9). When John later heard the voice of Jesus and turned to see Him, instead of seeing Jesus in person as he expected, he saw instead the seven candlesticks, symbolic of the ecclesias / body of Christ (Rev. 1:12). Perhaps this was the idea behind the way that "Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people: between the king also and the people" (2 Kings 11:17).

1:13 *And in the midst of the candlesticks- one like a Son of Man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest*- The Lord being in midst of His churches [referring of course to the people within them] is a continuation of a major Johannine theme: that the Lord Jesus abides in the hearts of His people through the Spirit. The long robe and sash could possibly frame Him as a priest, working for us all in an ongoing sense, and identified with the churches. The same word for "robe" is used in the LXX of the High Priestly robe (Ex. 25:7; 28:4,31; 29:5; 35:9; Ez. 9:3; Zech. 3:4). The robe is described as coming down to the feet, which is exactly how Josephus describes the clothing of the High Priest in the first century [*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.153]. The "golden girdle" obviously recalls the sash or belt of the High Priest; although it is of gold and not blue, signalling to us that this High Priest is altogether superior to and different from the Mosaic High Priests. Typical of Revelation and the genre of apocayptic, the Lord Jesus is not specifically stated to be the High Priest; just as He is referred to later as "the lamb" rather than specifically named. But that is the message

from the visual symbolism here; and we must ever remember that this is a vision, being related to an illiterate audience who would have interpreted the symbols they had portrayed to them. The whole image of a human figure moving amongst candlesticks would evoke associations with the priest in the temple / tabernacle, tending the lamps- which the letters to the churches will show are in a bad state, smouldering and about to go out. It could be that the visual associations of a High Priest appearing and speaking would have led the initial Jewish audience to understand this as a picture of the High Priest announcing forgiveness on the Day of Atonement. "The Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10) would have been understood by them as a Jewish feast day. The blowing of a trumpet (:10) also suggests the Day of Atonement, when the release was proclaimed to all the land. The description of the Lord's feet likewise makes no reference to shoes. And the High Priest was barefoot on the Day of Atonement, strictly following the commandments about his clothing, which said nothing about footwear. But this High Priest appears always like this; as if we live continually in the spirit of relief that the High Priest has pronounced the word of pardon, and we are continually released. This is an amazing idea. And it continues throughout Revelation- we will read of censors, incense etc., all associated with the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12,13), although there are clearly other Jewish feasts also alluded to.

So through all the pronounciations of judgment to come, we must remember they are being made by the High Priest who also stands there offering the word of ultimate pardon. Salvation of repentant sinners and judgment of impenitent sinners are two sides of the same coin- both aspects are necessary to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest brought a “censer full of burning coals of fire” (Lev. 16:12) from the altar into the Most Holy Place. He then put the incense onto the firepan, creating a billowing of fragrant smoke. According to Lev. 16:13, that cloud of incense covered the mercy seat, the lid on the ark of the covenant, to as it were shield him from the presence of God. This imagery is all reapplied later in Revelation. But the ideas are there- connecting the judgments upon earth with the work of the Day of Atonement. All those judgments are progressing towards the ultimate pronouncing of forgiveness, which was the end product of the Day of Atonement rituals.

In fact, dress is a significant theme in Revelation. We are told what people or entities are clothed in. One of the difficulties in understanding Revelation is that we are reading a description of things which are primarily visual. And it's like trying to describe the Mona Lisa in words. We have to pay careful attention to the descriptions and visualize them in order to grasp the intended impression and message; this is an enterprise rather different to simply attaching meaning to symbols. Interpretation of symbolism, where symbol A [e.g. gold] has meaning B [e.g. faith], is not quite the same as getting the impression of a visual presentation which is being described in words. And often Revelation presents us with a kaleidoscope of images, which is quite different to simply

interpreting symbols. Rather the art of interpretation is to grasp the overall impression being generated. For this is the genre of apocalyptic.

The various features of the vision of the High Priestly Jesus are repeated in the letters to the churches. This High Priest is presented as ultimately powerful and active. But that must be understood in connection with the fact He is the High Priest announcing atonement for His people. And that means our salvation. All His work in history is towards that end. He is powerful to save, to forgive, to atone. And all His work with men and nations in history is towards that end. "Eyes like a flame of fire" (Rev. 2:18), feet like burnished bronze" is repeated in the letter to Thyatira, holding seven stars (Rev. 2:1), sharp sword in hand (Rev. 2:12,16), the first and last (Rev. 2:8). The idea is that this glorified Jesus, before whom John fell in awe as if dead, is actually alive and involved amongst His people now. Despite all the weaknesses and failures revealed in the letters. The Jesus in Heavenly glory is here on earth with us, that is the idea. And the High Priest who appears and pronounces ultimate salvation is also the judge and critic of human sin and failure. This is why the Day of Atonement was known in Judaism as the day of judgment. So it is, as it were, in the same breath as profound pardon is announced, that we have the messages to the churches. This pardon is not some blanket statement. It is made knowing full well the weaknesses of God's people- and it is in the same breath that forgiveness is announced that repentance is appealed for. We cannot be passive to this amazing forgiveness- we are to respond in repentance. In this sense we repent because we have been forgiven, rather than God holding forgiveness as a prize to be given to the penitent. And this is to be the basis of our witness to the world. We are to “cry” unto Zion that “her iniquity is pardoned”, but we are also to ‘cry’ for her to repent, to be “made straight”, for the rough places to be ‘made plain’; to “cry aloud…lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression (Is. 40:2-4; 58:1). It’s exactly because they have in prospect been forgiven that we are to call them to repent. The forgiveness has already been granted; iniquity has been pardoned. But We are to ‘cry’ out this fact; and also to ‘cry out’ for their repentance. But they have to respond to that.

We note that even with Divine nature, the Lord's humanity is stressed. He is as a "son of man". John's resurrection narratives stress the continued human aspect of the exalted Lord Jesus; and He is called still "the man Christ Jesus" even in His Heavenly glory (1 Tim. 2:5).

The vision of Rev. 1 has close links with that of Dan. 10. If the Rev. 1 vision is concerning the Angel, then so is that of Dan. 10. The context of the Daniel vision is that he had been praying for the opposition to the restoration to be overcome. He was therefore given this vision of the mighty Angel who was going to answer his prayers; Daniel describes the vision as being "of a certain man" (Dan. 10:5); when the Angel comes to him to tell him that despite the opposition He was going to answer his prayers, Daniel describes him as

"one like the appearance of a man" (Dan. 10:18), or as is said here, "like a son of man". So the association with Daniel 10 was a message that ultimately, the opposition would be overcome on account of the glorious "son of man" who abides amongst the believers.

1:14 *And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire*- The similarities with the visions of Daniel signpost the basic message that opposition to God's people will be finally overcome, even though they are currently in exile and under Gentile power.

To a certain degree, the acceptance or rejection which will be shown to us in the day of judgment can be visited on us in this life, in accordance with our actions. Thus the Lord Jesus appears here as the judge of the churches, in that the description of him there being very similar to that in Dan. 7 and 10, where he is portrayed as the judge at the second coming. Asaph knew that God *now* judges, and therefore asks God to arise and judge openly in the earth according to those judgments (Ps. 82:1,8). His eyes are as fire right now- He sees every aspect of our tribulations.

1:15- see on Jude 14.

And his feet were like bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the voice of many waters- This voice of judgment is going forth now. The essence of judgment day is now; see on :14. The connection is also with the vision of cherubim given to Ezekiel; again, like Daniel, to encourage God's people who were temporarily under Gentile power.

Ezekiel's cherubim refer to God's people, as well as the Angelic hosts and the hosts of Babylon; perhaps the message was simply that God was awesomely involved- as awesome as the cherubim vision- with His people on earth. The same Angelic system that brought the hosts of Babylon upon Judah also went with Judah into captivity, and would return from there with them- if they still wished to be part of that Angelic system. And yet most of Judah opted out of it, and remained in Babylon, just as we can opt out and remain in Babylon today. In this context it's interesting that the vision of Jesus as the Son of Man in Rev. 1 has similarities with the cherubim vision of Ez. 1 (feet like brass, Ez. 1:7 = Rev. 1:15; shining face, Ez. 1:13 = Rev. 1:16; voice like many waters, Ez. 1:24= Rev. 1:15). Perhaps this suggests that Israel's failure to identify with the cherubim led to a refulfilment of the prophecy in the person of the Lord Jesus, who was in person all that God intended Israel to have been. Thus the prophecies of Israel as "the servant of Yahweh", given in the context of the restoration, could have been fulfilled in the people of Israel, but were reapplied and fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The opening vision of Rev. 1 presents the Lord in His post-resurrection glory; but elements of that description occur throughout Revelation in portraying the beasts. The

point is, they are all false-Christ's. The Lord has a voice as the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15), but the serpent, on the surface, speaks with just the same voice (Rev. 12:15). The four empire-beasts of Dan. 7, the kingdoms of this world, are a parody of the four living creatures of the cherubim (Rev. 4:6). See on Acts 12:20.

1:16- see on Lk. 12:49.

And he had in his right hand seven stars- Referring to the Angels of the seven churches, held protectively in the Lord's hand, whatever persecution may come upon them. See on :20.

And out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shines in its strength- That same right hand was what touched John; see on :17. The idea of the sun shining in its full strength is the picture of Divine judgment being openly manifested (Jud. 5:31). The sharp two-edged sword has similar associations (Ps. 149:6). But the Lord is presented as having those judgment characteristics right now. This is typical of what we find in Revelation; a kaleidoscope of images often paying no attention to time as we know it. The encouragement is that even under the heat of Gentile persecution, the Lord sees with eyes as of a flame of fire, and is giving judgment right now. It's not that He is as it were looking the other way, and shall open the books and review things at judgment day. See on 2:12.

1:17 *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead*- As noted on :16, the Lord appears in the form of His latter day judgments, although that day is not yet in our kind of time. And so John goes through a symbolic death and resurrection, as Daniel did when beholding a similar vision in Daniel 10.

And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not. I am the first and the last- This is quite some striking visual image: of the Lord with the stars in His hand (:16,20) placing His hand upon John individually. The idea is that the Lord can act for both the individual and the collective churches at one and the same time. Quite how it all looked to John perhaps cannot be imagined. But the great mystery would have been expressed, of the Lord's individual and collective relationship to us at the same time.

"Fear not" coming from the Lord is language to be associated with a calming of one who feels spiritually unworthy. John writes in absolute terms of our acceptance with the Lord and abiding in Him; but even he felt the tension of his humanity when faced with the Lord.

"The first and the last", the alpha and omega, the beginning and end of the alphabet, is perhaps to get the idea over that time is not really as we see it. The Lord is portrayed in the garb of how He will be at the final judgment; but He is like that in essence right now.

1:18 *The living one; and I was dead, but behold, I am alive for always, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades*- As John lay 'dead' before the Lord (:17), so the Lord reminds John that He too has passed through death and is now alive.

Baptism commits us to a life of sharing His death and resurrection. When John fell at the Lord's feet "as dead", the Lord responded by saying: 'I too was dead, but no more; I'm alive for evermore, and as I died with you and for you, so I live with you and for you, and you do the same for me' (Rev. 1:17,18). The idea is 'I am living'. His ongoing living is manifest to us in the gift of the Spirit, the Comforter, which would replace His physical presence with the disciples on earth, making His presence and life just as real to us as if He were literally present. And that promised gift of the Spirit was to be with us "always" (Jn 14:16). In this sense He is "the living one" right now and always. He is not passive, divided from us by space and spirituality; He is alive and living through us.

The theme is of persecution, of living locked up in life situations we feel trapped in. But the Lord has the keys to death itself. The fact we are guaranteed to overcome even death, which is completely in His power, means that no human system or situation can ultimately trap us. And this has encouragement for those who may not be politically persecuted, but feel locked up in domestic and social situations.

1:19 *Therefore write the things which you see, and the things which are, and the things which shall hereafter come to pass*- This command to "write" was asking John to commit a seriously criminal offence. For within the Roman empire, such application of emperor and kingdom language to another king, the Lord Jesus, and articulating a plan for His Kingdom to come and the destruction of earth's proud empires... all this meant that the written form of the book of Revelation would have been forbidden literature, and the writing and production of it was criminal and even a capital offence. John's motivation was therefore in order to strengthen by all means the believers with the hope of the Kingdom and ultimate victory against all evil empires. He is encouraged to make this sacrifice and "write" these things *because* the Lord has the keys of death itself (:18). If even death itself is no barrier for us, and we are not finally under the power of it; how much less are we under the power of all structures which appear to lock us down in this life.

Unlike Hebrew, the tenses in Greek are precise and have specific reference. Here John was told to write down the things which he had seen, the things which presently are, and the things which shall be "hereafter". I suggest the things he had seen were the things of the vision of the Son of Man; the things which are refer to the messages to the seven churches; and "the things which shall be hereafter" is a phrase developed in Rev. 4:1, where John is bidden come and see "the things which must be hereafter". The things from then on all refer to the future, the last days and the coming of Christ. The vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 therefore refers to how things are

in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. That is confirmed by comments on many of the verses in chapter 4.

1:20 *This is the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches*- As suggested earlier, seven being the number of completeness, we are intended to understand these churches as representative of all believers, over all time and space. The same basic situations occur amongst all believers, even if the form varies. The seven churches and seven lampstands are in contrast to the red dragon with seven heads and scarlet beast with seven heads (Rev. 12:3; 17:3,7). In outline visual terms, we are getting the impression that the church is the total antithesis to the systems of the world which dominate her. We are either in the world, or in the weak and dysfunctional lampstand system of the Lord Jesus.

I suggest the "angels" refer to both heavenly Angels in the throne room of God, and to the leadership of the churches on earth which they represent before God in Heaven. There appear to be guardian Angels not only for individuals but also for groups of believers- e. g. Israel, or an ecclesia. The stars of the ecclesias in Rev. 1:20 are defined as the Angels of the ecclesias. The seven lamps are the seven spirits / Angels of God before His throne (Rev. 4:5)- yet they are clearly representative of the seven churches on earth of which Revelation has earlier spoken. There seems no reason to doubt that literal Angels are being referred to, especially as elsewhere Angels are also likened to stars-e. g. Job 38:7; and the king of Babylon "exalted (himself) above the stars" (Is. 14:13- referring to Israel and their representative Angels). There seems no more symbolism attached to the phrase "Angels" in Rev. 1, seeing it is in the context of the candlestick parable being interpreted: "The seven stars are the Angels of the seven churches". The apparent rebuke of the Angels is because they are so closely associated with their charges. However, to some degree the words of Jesus in the letters may also apply personally to the Angels- e. g. "I will... remove your candlestick" (2:5) may imply God would take away the Angel's charge from his care unless the Angel repented- i.e. changed his way of dealing with the ecclesia. The frequent calls to "repent" in the letters can easily apply to the Angels changing their mind or way of dealing with the ecclesia. The word is not bound to have a moral dimension. Thus 2:16: "I will come to *you*... and fight against *them*"; or "unto *you* (the Angel)... I say and unto *the rest*" (2:24). Similarly the command to "strengthen the things (the faithful believers- strengthened spiritually by the Angel) which remain" (3:2) cannot apply to a whole church which has many apostate members.

There are so many links between the opening letters to the ecclesias, and the rest of Revelation. The wording is so similar- the themes of persecution, faithfulness, and the promised blessing of the faithful. The letters aren't just 'tacked on' to the prophecy. The dramas which the ecclesias were experiencing on earth are explained by the rest of the

book, in its first century, relevant-to-its-hearers level of interpretation. Jerusalem was surrounded by her enemies, the temple was about to be destroyed. They were being persecuted by Jewish and Roman powers, and we see in the rest of the book how this looked from Heaven's perspective- the way the Angels were orchestrating and yet also resisting all this, how God perceived the Jewish and Roman authorities as dragons, whores etc., and how the traumas of AD66-70 were in fact all in His plan and part of a larger picture. It's like the book of Daniel. The book isn't just a life of Daniel with a few prophecies thrown in. It's a life of Daniel, in captivity, awaiting revival, longing for Messiah. And the prophecies give us Heaven's perspective on it. However, Revelation has more relevance than to just the first century hearers. Just as the events of AD66-70 are typical of the last days, so Revelation likewise has its ultimate fulfilment [regardless of any others it may have had over history] in the crisis of the last days, in the final showdown between Babylon and Jerusalem, between the true Christ and the anti-Christ. The book will speak to us in the final tribulation as no other book can- because it's all about the last days.

REVELATION CHAPTER 2

2:1 *To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*- The Lord is in the midst of the churches in the sense that He "walks" amongst or "with" the churches / believers. This is an idea John uses several times in his Gospel; that the Lord walked amongst or in the midst of men (Jn. 6:66; 7:1; 11:54; 12:35). It is also John who records the wonderful promise of the Comforter; that the Lord's physical absence would be compensated for by the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, so that it would be as if He were present with them still. The Jesus who walked the streets and lanes of Galilee with His followers still walks amongst us today.

If Timothy was the elder of the church at Ephesus, it would appear that the Lord's rebuke of the 'angel' or elder of that church in Rev. 2:1 may well have been directed at Timothy or his successor (assuming an AD66 date for the book of Revelation). This could imply that Timothy failed to follow Paul's charge to him of 2 Tim. 4, and that his initial devotion waned in some ways. And yet on the other hand, a study of 1 Timothy shows that the situation in Ephesus was desperate at that time; doctrinal apostasy and return to the surrounding idol cults or Judaism seemed inevitable as the weaknesses seemed so deep. And so Paul's advice to Timothy was followed and only in the power of the Spirit did Timothy turn things around in Ephesus. But it was at the cost of losing *agape* love (:4). All the same, there is encouragement here that apparently awful and almost hopeless spiritual situations can be turned around by wise leadership and in the power of the Spirit.

2:2 *I know your works and your toil and patience, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and did test them that call themselves apostles, and yet are not, and found them false*- This intolerance of false apostles and teachers would have been in obedience to

the commands to Timothy regarding these types at Ephesus in 1 Timothy. The situation there seemed hopelessly weak, and the false teachers entrenched. And yet empowered by the Spirit and with timid Timothy rising up the challenge of dealing with the situation, the problem with the false teachers had been turned around. And yet, at the cost of losing *agape* love (:4), making all this but a pyrrhic victory.

There is a marked warning throughout the letters that there will be a spirit of self-deception and hypocrisy amongst the latter-day ecclesias. Jezebel "*calls* herself a prophetess" (2:20), some "*say* they are Jews and are not" (2:9), others "*say* they are apostles, and are not" (2:2), Sardis had "a name that thou livest" but was dead (3:1). This must be seen in the context of other NT warnings that deceivers would enter the ecclesia, appearing to have the Apostolic gifts of the Spirit. As noted on 1 Jn. 4:1, John's own communities of converts had faced this problem. There was a conscious program of infiltration of the ecclesias by "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. 2:4), originating from the 'satan', the great adversary of early Christianity- Judaism. As noted on 1 Jn. 4, John himself had given various tests as to how false and true apostles could be identified. It seems Ephesus had put these into practice. These false apostles were part of a whole system of fake Christianity, called the antiChrist, the fake Christ. In the immediate context, as demonstrated throughout our commentary on 1 John, this referred to the Judaist opposition to Christianity and the program of conscious infiltration of the early churches.

2:3 - see on Acts 20:34.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary- Patient, long term 'bearing' alludes to the longer term workers of the parable, who complained that they had borne the heat and burden of the day, but struggled to accept that their weaker brethren could receive the same gift of salvation as them (Mt. 20:12). As :4 puts it, they had left their first *agape*. They were motivated by the Lord's Name, enduring persecution for His sake; but the lack of true love was seen as threatening their salvation (:4,5).

2:4 *But I have this against you, that you left your first love*- That we should love as the Lord loved us is the utterly essential basis of the Gospel; it was the "beginning" of what the Lord preached and it was likewise the first thing John included in His message when preaching the Gospel (see on 2 Jn. 5,6). To leave or put away *agape* from this core place was to fall far indeed and required repentance (:5). The attributes of zeal and doctrinal soundness listed in :2 and :3 are seen by many as all that is required to be fairly sure of salvation. But actually they are irrelevant compared to the supreme aspect of *agape* love. "Left" can carry the idea of 'dismissed'. They had come to the mentality that such love could be dismissed as of fundamental importance. The more 'religious' issues of zeal and preserving purity of teaching had assumed such importance in their minds that they had dismissed *agape*, the love of others as the Lord loved us, from its primary place.

The Lord Jesus had "somewhat against" six of these seven ecclesias in the Lycus valley. He had "somewhat against" one ecclesia because they allowed prostitution to go on within the ecclesia. But exactly the same rubric is used here in the letter to Ephesus; the Lord had "somewhat against" them because they had left their first *agape*, they no longer had a spirit of true love within the ecclesia as they once did- even though they were full of zeal in other ways. The similarity of the rubric is surely intended to teach us that lack of true love is just as obnoxious to the Lord Jesus as those other sins which appear so much bigger in human eyes. Indeed, sin is serious, in all its guises. See on 1 Cor. 11:18.

I suggest we have here a Johannine version of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 13. That we can suffer great things for the Lord's cause, even give our body to be burned. But without love, this is nothing. We have the same spirit here. We would rather assume that anyone who was burned at the stake is for sure going to be saved. But not so. You can do this but do it without love. And so it means nothing.

2:5- see on 3 Jn. 10; Rev. 1:20.

Therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the first works. Or else, unless you repent, I will come to you and move your candlestick out of its place- As noted on :4, the supreme place of *agape* love is such that without it, the Spirit would not burn within them. John in his letters has connected such love with the indwelling of the Spirit, the oil within the candlestick. The lack of such love reflected a lack of the spirit or mind of the Lord Jesus; and without that, we are "none of His". So the candlestick was no longer burning; which is why the Lord spoke of removing it, because it had gone out and was just useless clutter. Thus is pointed up an utterly fundamental point: that doctrinal purity and religious zeal, including exclusion of false teaching, is not the same thing as being in fellowship with the Lord. Without love, the spirit of Christ, we are just religious clutter, a candlestick with no oil lamp burning in it. The huge "fall" spoken of here uses the same word as in Gal. 5:4, where the Galatians 'fell' from grace because of Judaist influence. And we suggest the same influence was at work here in Ephesus.

Rev. 2:5 does not tell the sound members of the ecclesias to disfellowship those who had not done "the first works". The "first works" of Ephesus were her "first love" (*agape*). The Lord is using "works" here (as often in the New Testament) to refer to attitudes- Ephesus were doing all the right actions, but the “work" of a loving mind was missing. Note a selection of passages where "works" refers to abstract spiritual fruits like faith, rather than to physical actions: Jn. 6:29; 8:39; Prov. 12:22 LXX; Rom. 2:15; Col. 1:10,11; 2 Jn. 11,7; Rev. 2:6 cp. 15. And that loving mind would naturally be manifest in "works".

Notice the end-time language found throughout the letters to the seven Ecclesias:
Ephesus: repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly. (2:5)
Pergamos: Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (2:16)
Thyatira: Behold, I will cast her [Jezebel] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (2:22, 25)
Sardis: If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (3:3)
Philadelphia: Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly. (3:10-11)
Laodicea: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. (3:20)
This is initially speaking of the state of the ecclesias before AD 70. But it is also a prophecy of the end time condition of the ecclesia churches. We can therefore conclude that the various problems and states of spirituality described in these letters looks forward to that of the last days. Between the seven churches here mentioned, we have a picture of the wider state of affairs in the body of believers at the time of the Lord's return.

2:6 *But this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*- 'Nicolas' means literally 'victory of the people', and that is roughly the meaning of 'Balaam', who is elsewhere used in the letters as representative of the Judaist false

teachers. Although the Lord effectively tells them that their lack of love will lead to their condemnation unless they repent, He still notes their positive points. And we see a huge measure of Him as a person in that. To even note the positive in those who had left His love, their first love. But perhaps the Lord is listing all their apparently good points to highlight and point up their major inadequacy- for lack of love meant that all these apparently positive points had no final meaning.

2:7 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- The Lord is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). The comforter, the gift of the Spirit, was effectively the Lord personally. His physical absence was made good by the presence of the Spirit. The Comforter was to teach them (see on Jn. 14:18). So the idea behind "He that has an ear, let him hear... the Spirit" may be an appeal to those who had received the Comforter to actually listen to what it was teaching them. The primary speaker of the letters to the churches was the Angel representing the Lord- the Angel Gabriel? But they were actually from the Lord Jesus Christ, "The Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17 RV). The one special Angel in the midst of the Cherubim in the Old Testament visions of Ezekiel 1 would then represent the Son of Man ("The Lord the Spirit") in the midst of the lightstands (Rev. 1:13) and the lamb on the throne surrounded by Angels in the four living creatures of Rev. 4 and 5. The Lord Jesus didn't personally pre-exist, but the idea of Him was perhaps represented in Old Testament times by an Angel.

To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God- We see here how the Lord Jesus functions as His Father, without being God in a Trinitarian sense. For now *He* has the authority to permit man back into the garden. There is much language of both judgment and blessing used in the letters; and nearly all of it can have a present as well as a future application. For in John, the Lord so often insisted that eternal life was given by Him now, in the sense of the gift of the Spirit of His life into the hearts of believers; and thereby they could live now the life which they shall eternally live. And in John 6 He predicated that eternal life upon eating Him. "The tree" is the same word used of His cross. And it can be argued that He was effectively crucified in a garden, for again it is John who notes that He was buried in a garden "in the place where he was crucified" (Jn. 19:41). The association of that garden with the "Paradise" of Eden restored was clearly in the Lord's mind on the cross, when He assured the repentant thief that he would indeed be with Him "in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). He saw that miserable crucifixion field as part of the future "paradise"; He was effectively assuring the thief 'You and I will be here in this very place again- in My Kingdom, when Eden is restored, and this garden where we are dying is part of the Kingdom restored on earth'. So the Lord saw in that thief the representative of all who shall "overcome"; overcome their doubt about the Lord's grace and fear that their sins are too great a barrier between Him and themselves.

2:8 *And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things: The first and the last, who was dead and lived again, says*- Again, the Lord is presented as Lord of time. His death was the beginning ["first"] and not an end; His living again is "the last", in that sense, the end of 'time' as we know it, for He lives for ever. For the significance of "write", see on 1:19.

2:9 *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich!) and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan*- As noted on 1 Jn. 4:1 and elsewhere, the main enemy of the early churches were the Judaist infiltrators who came in under the guise of being Christian brethren (Gal. 2:4). There was an entire system, the Satan / adversary, consciously seeking to

destroy the Christian movement. Exclusion from the synagogue system was the punishment for confessing the Lord Jesus (Jn. 9:22), and this meant economic exclusion, unable to buy or sell. Hence their poverty, and tribulation orchestrated by these Jewish infiltrators. They typically operated by making false accusation against the Christian [in this sense acting as a devil, which means 'false accuser'], and then getting local Gentile civil powers to punish the Christians, just as they did with the Lord.

"Satan" often refers to the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the church in the first century. There is no indication here that there was a super–human being working through those Roman and Jewish systems. If it is argued that those systems received power and direction from the Devil in the sense of a super–human being to persecute the church, it must be remembered that the Lord Jesus told the Roman governor: "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above", i.e. from God (Jn. 19:11). Thus it is God, not the Devil, who gives power to human governments to persecute His people, as He gave them power to do so to His Son. "The most high rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:32). Thus God was ultimately the power behind the Roman Satan, or system, that was persecuting the Christians in the first century.

2:10 *Do not fear the things which you are about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison, you may have tribulation ten days*- The Devil that gave the ecclesia at Smyrna "tribulation ten days" was clearly the Romans. It was only they who could cast them into prison. The casting into prison (place of punishment), tribulation and afterwards being honoured (physical reward), recalls the experiences of Joseph and Daniel who were persecuted by the civil powers of Egypt and Babylon, as those at Smyrna were by the civil powers of the Roman "Devil". It has been shown that there were several ten–year periods of special persecutions of Christians in the Smyrna area: under Domitian, A.D. 81–91; under Trajan, 107–117 and under Diocletian, 303–313. The Septuagint in places uses the term *diabolos*, false accuser, to translate the Hebrew 'Satan'. 'Satan' therefore carried the sense of both an adversary and also a false accuser. "The synagogue of Satan" in Smyrna may well refer to not only Jewish adversarial opposition to the Christians, but also that they falsely accused them to the Roman authorities. There could also be the suggestion that the Jewish synagogue in Smyrna was in fact working with the 'Satan', the Roman empire, against the Christians. Kraybill considers that the phrase "synagogue of Satan" is "a way of highlighting commercial or political relationships some Jews had with Rome". He also gives evidence that Jews in the provinces of the empire cooperated with the Roman government in order to ensure that they continued benefiting from the Roman legislation that exempted Jews from doing military service and paying taxes to the imperial cult (J. Nelson Kraybill, *The Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) pp. 170, 186). In Domitian's time, a tax was levied to support the emperor and the imperial cult. Jews were exempted from this, and Christians refused to pay it. The "synagogue of Satan" in Smyrna loudly "say they are Jews" (Rev. 2:9), in order to avoid this tax and get benefits from the Roman empire at the time; but probably denounced the Christians to the Roman 'Satan' because of their refusal to pay that tax. So "synagogue of Satan... who say they are Jews but are not" was an appropriate description of them (Mark Bredin, 'The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* Vol. 28 No. 4 (Winter 1999) pp. 160–164).

The Devil and Satan in the New Testament often refer to the political and social power of the Jewish or Roman systems. Thus we read of the Devil throwing believers

into prison (Rev. 2:10), referring to the Roman authorities imprisoning believers. In this same context we read of the church in Pergamos being situated where Satan's throne, was – i.e. the place of governorship for a Roman colony in Pergamos, where there was also a group of believers. We cannot say that Satan himself, if he exists, personally had a throne in Pergamos. The Bible repeatedly stresses that human political authority, civil authorities etc. are God given, deriving their power from Him (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17); never are they said to derive their authority from 'Satan'. Yet they can be called 'Satan' in that they are adversarial at times to His people.

The allusion is to Luke 21:12 concerning the latter-day tribulation. "Some of you" may correspond to "some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Luke 21:16), seeing that they are exhorted to be "faithful unto death". The prison tribulation would be for "ten days... and I will give unto you a crown". This points back to Daniel's 'trial' of ten days (Dan. 1:12), and his later going into prison and emerging to receive a crown. Daniel's 'devil' was Babylon, and the 'devil' of Rev. 2:10 refers to a like power in the last days. The idea of ten days of affliction suggests the 10 days of self-examination and affliction of souls before the day of Atonement- as if the purpose of the final tribulation is to evoke self-examination and repentance in preparation for the High Priest's appearing on the Day of Atonement.

There is the possibility that some may be preserved from the tribulation: "You *may* have tribulation ten days". This will be "because you have kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10). Others will suffer, and even die, but are assured of salvation if they respond to the trials properly. There may be a similar meaning behind Is. 26:20: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you (i.e. pray intensely- 2 Kings 4:33): hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast". However, this primarily refers to the deliverance of Israel from Assyria in Hezekiah's time; and the hiding in chambers in Jerusalem while surrounded by the terrifying Assyrian army was hardly the quiet get out we might imagine this verse offers. However, it seems from the Olivet prophecy that the household *will* go through this time of trouble. The fact it is in some sense not required if we are spiritual enough indicates that the household will be weak in the last days- and therefore we will need it.

There are all manner of possible futures envisaged within God's plans, because He so respects human freewill. This explains the conditional element in prophecies, and in this case the possibility of persecution for some at some points in time. The horn of Dan. 7:21 "prevailed against" the saints. "Prevailed" here can mean 'could prevail' implying that this persecution could be avoided (cp. "You may have tribulation"). Likewise the Hebrew for "make war" can mean 'approached to make war'. Thus it may be possible for the saints to avoid the persecution in some way, e.g. by their "holy way of life" (2 Pet.3:8) shortening the days of tribulation. The fact that the prophecies speak as if there will be persecution may suggest that there will not be sufficient effort in this direction for all the saints to be saved from this. See on 3:10.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life- For all the encouragement that the Father and Son are ultimately in control, death under persecution was still a real possibility. But the reward would be "the crown of life". This may refer to the *stephanos* given to the victor in a race; but the word is also used about such wreaths given to guests at a wedding, or to the bride herself. The imagery of marriage suppers is far more common in Revelation than that of running an Olympic race.

2:11 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death*- For "he that has an ear, let him hear..." see on 2:7.

2:12 *And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that has the sharp two-edged sword*- As noted on 1:16, such language is appropriate to the Lord in the day of His final judgment. But effectively, judgment is now; the Lord is not passive toward human behaviour, and the opening of books at the last day should not imply that He is not now our immediate and insistent judge. The sword will be used in judgment of enemies; so it is as if the Lord is standing in judgment over the churches right now, and was looking to severely judge the church in question.

2:13- see on 1 Cor. 15:10.

I know where you live, where Satan's throne is, yet you remained loyal to my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells- The Lord is fully aware of our situations. And whatever judgment He makes, even of condemnation (see on :12), that judgment is made taking into full account past evidence of spirituality and commitment, as well as with total knowledge of all our surrounding environmental factors.

Pergamos being “where Satan’s seat (throne) is”, shows that the Satan referred to is not a personal super–human being. If it is, then his throne was literally at Pergamos, for all to see. It has been shown that the Roman administration of the area was based here, thus the Lord Jesus commends the ecclesia for holding to the Truth, despite being in close proximity to the source of persecution. Thus “Satan” again refers to the Roman authorities. It is also significant that a huge throne dedicated to the Greek gods has been discovered there.

Pergamon was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to emperor worship (I.T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p. 456). However it must also be noted that Pergamon was a centre for snake worship associated with the shrine of Asclepius (J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1976) p. 228). Revelation speaks of ‘Satan’, the adversary, as being characterized by the serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). “Satan’s throne” may also be a reference to the altar of Zeus in Pergamon. or the special throne–seat of Dionysus in the theatre there. “The city featured various Pagan sites of worship, including a monumental altar to Zeus, and a temple dedicated to Augustus and Rome, which served as the centre of the cult of the Roman Emperor in Asia Minor. Pergamum was in fact the capital of the Roman Province of Asia” (H.A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2006) p. 144).

However, we must bear in mind that the 'satan' described in the New Testament and Revelation is often Jewish and not pagan. It was Jewish opposition to the Christians which led to the local Roman authorities acting against them, as happened with the Lord and Paul. It may be also that there was in Pergamos some centre of Jewish opposition.

The faithful group who existed "even where satan's seat is" may point forward to the existence of an ecclesia at the very headquarters of the final satan/beast. For the situation in the seven churches represents how things will be in the last time. Our suggestion elsewhere that some faithful natural Jews would be taken to such a place, e.g. a rebuilt 'Babylon', would make this possible.

2:14 *But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication*- Balaam

was an apostate Jew, who sought to collaborate with the surrounding Gentile powers in order to bring Israel down. He did so by getting Israel to sin sexually by sleeping with cult prostitutes as a sign of their devotion to Gentile idols, knowing this would trigger God's displeasure with Israel, hoping it would mean the withdrawal of His blessing and protection of them. Twice it is emphasized that the false teachers will lead spiritual Israel into the worship of idols, after the pattern of Balaam and Jezebel (:14,20). Both of these advocated the use of the idols of the surrounding nations for political purposes, whilst apparently supporting the true worship of Yahweh at the same time. The false teaching in the early churches was very similar. As noted on 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy 2, the use of cult prostitutes entered the Christian churches. The idol worship and prostitution were therefore part of the same scene and not two separate issues. The mix of paganism and Christianity was therefore similar to the mix of Yahweh worship with paganism advocated by Balaam. And again, the source of the problem was Judaist infiltration.

Israel were on the very borders of entering the land when they succumbed to Balaam's false teaching, and the new Israel of the last days, on the brink of the Kingdom, will face and may fail a like temptation. As Balaam well understood, the way to break the strength of a fundamentalist religious movement is to morally corrupt them. The spirit of sexual permissiveness which is in this Sodom-like world of the last days, is evidently affecting the brotherhood of our age.

It may be that the Islamic powers will impose the worship of Islam upon natural Israel and perhaps upon the Western world, and may use their oil stranglehold to make the rest of the world persecute any pro-Jewish religions who will not offer a nominal acceptance of Islam. This would pressurize Christian churches to make similar compromises with their surrounding non-Christian world.

2:15 *So have you also some that hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans*- "Nicolas" has a similar meaning to 'Balaam', 'victory of the people'. However precisely this group were, they would have been advocating the same mix of Christianity with paganism as noted on :14. *Niko*, to overcome, is a word often used in these letters to characterize the faithful as 'overcomers'. The Nicolaitans were therefore framing themselves in spiritual terms when in fact they were the very opposite. And we will meet this kind of idea later in Revelation, where e.g. the whore is described with terminology appropriate to the priestly cult, and Babylon appears as Jerusalem.

2:16- see on Rev. 1:20.

Therefore repent, or else I will come to you quickly, and I will make war against those with the sword of my mouth- As noted on :12, the language of latter day judgment is applied to situations now. The Lord judges now; His coming quickly or suddenly can refer to His coming in judgment, rather than His second coming. Even the final word of Revelation 22:12 that the Lord is coming quickly can be read as a connection back to this statement here. For the first recipients of Revelation, the Lord's coming was going to be sudden in that like a thief in the night, He would come in judgment in ways they did not expect. The reference may be to the events of AD70, although these would not have unduly affected Jewish Christian groups in places like Pergamos. Perhaps rather the reference may be to Nero's sudden announcement of persecution against Christians. Or to some unrecorded intervention of the Lord in judging them.

Again we must emphasize that the language of making war (19:11) with the sword of His mouth is all appropriate to His second coming. But the essence of that

judgment is now. There are clear connections between the rod of final judgment and the word / mouth of God. Ez. 21:9,10 equates the sword with the rod of the Lord Jesus Christ: "A sword is sharpened... it is the rod of My Son" (AVmg.). The sword is a clear symbol of the word of God's judgment (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:21). Is. 11:4 confirms this link between the judgment word of the Lord Jesus and His rod: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked". Ps. 2:9 shows the power of this word / rod: "You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". Ps. 110:2 describes the rod of Christ's strength being sent out of Zion to enable Him to rule the world; Is. 2:3 envisages the judgment word of the Lord Jesus going out from Zion. However, in all these cases the rod does not just mean spoken words and mental understanding, but also refers to the physical punishments to be seen in the last days. Thus Micah pleads with Israel to see that God's Hand was behind their present distresses, which were effectively God's word spoken to them: "The Lord's voice cries unto the city... *hear* the rod, and who has appointed it" (Mic. 6:9). And so here the Lord warned Pergamos that unless they repented- i.e. obeyed His word- He would come and fight against them.

There is a significant amount of language used in the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 which has unmistakable reference to the final 'coming' of the Lord. This must have some application to the second coming, and/or A.D. 70. This means that the letters must also be indicative of the state of the latter-day ecclesias. No less than a significant seven times in the letters do we read of Christ 'coming' to the believers (Rev. 2:5,16,25; 3:3, 10,11,20). "I will come unto you quickly... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (2:5,23) is language found in Mt. 16:27 and Rev. 22:12, also concerning the second coming: "I come quickly... to give every man according as his work shall be". The Lord's coming "unto you quickly" has particular aptness when this is understood as being addressed to believers living on the brink of the second coming.

2:17- see on Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:19.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches- see on 2:7.

To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna- Here we have another example of allusion to Jewish legend. It suggests that the churches addressed were known to John whose Gospel was clearly aimed at Jews; they probably included his converts. Hence the allusions to Jewish terminology that would have been inappropriate if largely Gentile converts were being addressed. The Lord Jesus speaks of giving His people "of the hidden manna" – referring to the myth that Jeremiah had hidden a golden jar of manna in the Holy of Holies at the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, which then ascended to Heaven and is to return with Messiah. The Lord doesn't correct that myth, as He doesn't correct misunderstandings about demons– He as it were runs with it and uses it as a symbol to describe the reward He will bring. He adds no footnote to the effect 'Now do understand, this is myth, that jar never really ascended to Heaven nor will it come floating back through the skies one day'. Perhaps this is why the New Testament often quotes the Septuagint text, even where it incorrectly renders the Hebrew original – because God is not so paranoid as to feel bound to only deal in the language of strictly literal truths. If first century people were familiar with the Septuagint, even if is a poor translation of the Hebrew original in places– well OK, God was willing to run with that *in order to engage with people in their language*.

And I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it- It has been suggested that this refers to a custom

of writing a name on a stone, breaking the stone in half at random, and each friend keeping one half. The half stone would only fit exactly with the other half stone, and when the friends met in the future, they would fit the stones together as proof of their earlier relationship. Relationships in the Kingdom of God will be in that sense private and unenterable. Bible characters often have epithets in God's record of them- Judas who betrayed, Jeroboam who made Israel sin. We will be given such a name / summation of our relationship with the Lord in the Kingdom. Nobody else knows / understands / appreciates this name. This is a clear statement that other believers cannot enter into the personal relationship between a man and his God. Likewise, none of us can know the name which was written on the Lord Jesus (Rev. 19:12). None of us will ever quite be able to enter into the nature of the relationship between Father and Son. If we could, He would not be our Lord. Paul possibly expresses the same idea of an unenterable relationship in 1 Cor. 2:15: "He that is spiritual discerneth all things (about God), yet he himself is discerned of no man" (AVmg.). Our real spiritual being is a "hidden man" (1 Pet. 3:4).

Eating the hidden manna is to be paralleled with being given the stone. The context implies this will be done at the day of judgment. According to a number of commentators, a white stone was laid down by the judge as a sign of acquittal and acceptance. The Lord would therefore be implying that after our encounter at the judgment, there will be an ongoing relationship in the Kingdom of God between us, a locking together of stones which no-one else possesses. The white stone is also parallel to the white, stone-looking manna of the wilderness years (Ex. 16:14,23; Num. 11:7). The reward we will be given in the Kingdom will be our spiritual food, to be eaten 'daily' throughout the Kingdom. Israel were to eat on the seventh day (a type of the Kingdom) the manna which they had gathered and prepared on the sixth day. The manna is a symbol of God's word as expressed in Christ (Jn. 6). Biblically, a name refers to personality and character. The new name which no one else knows thus refers to the reward "prepared" for us individually, the new personality which we will be in the Kingdom, the room in the Father's house prepared for each of us (Jn. 14:1). This latter idea alludes to the way that there were chambers around the temple named after individuals (e.g. Ezra 10:6). We will *each* have our own chamber, in this figure. This new personality will be written on the manna / stone, it will be the result of our own very personal distilling of the essence of God's word. The concept of a name written on a stone sends the mind back to the way in which the names of the tribes of Israel were written on the stones of the breastplate, each reflecting a different aspect of the light of God's glory (Ex. 28:17). We will do this through our personal understanding of and response to God's word. It is a comforting yet sobering thought that the Lord sees us as 'names'; not just as people. Biblically, the name speaks of the character. When He says He will confess us before the Father (Mt. 10:32), He means He will confess our name before God (Rev. 3:5); He knows us according to our names / characters. He speaks of ecclesial members as "names" in Rev. 3:4; He calls His own sheep by name, and they each know His voice, responding to His word *individually*. The call to one sheep will only be recognized by that sheep; the others won't respond (Jn. 10:3). He will take individual note of each sheep, treating them accordingly, as the shepherd leads more gently those that are with young (Is. 40:11). It seems that even now, we each have our own individual name with the Father and Son, encompassing their understanding of our essential character. It may even be that in the record of Scripture, God inspired the writers to record the names of individuals according to His judgment of them (or at least, how the faithful viewed them at the

time), rather than by the names they actually went under. What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil, Num. 1:15), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names.

We will relate to each other in terms of our spiritual characteristics. We will each have a name or character which is individual to us. We will relate to each other not by names as pieces of language, but by reason of the characteristics which they speak of. To relate to each other for ever as we do now, in human terms, would be totally unfulfilling. There is an urgent need for us to develop a spiritual aspect to our relationships now, especially between husbands and wives, parents and children.

Compare the engraving on the stone "which no man knows" with the Urim and Thummim stones; the engraving upon them would not have been known to anyone except the High Priest, who perhaps saw them once per year in the Most Holy. Rev. 2:17 also speaks of the "hidden manna", hidden in the Most Holy. It would fit the context if the "white stone" refers to the Urim and Thummim. Alternatively, the reference may be to the "white stone" of the tables of the covenant. The new name written upon them would then connect with the covenant which God writes on the believer's heart as part of the new covenant: "I will put my law in their inward (cp. "hidden") parts, and write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3). Whilst the terms of the covenant are the same for each believer, the personal promise of the Kingdom is something which no other person can enter into. So we should never be 'bored' with hearing about the basic Gospel, the promises which comprise that covenant.

2:18 *And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like to burnished bronze*- The cherubim visions of Ez. 1,9 and 10 are applied in the New Testament to the glorified Christ (Rev. 2:18; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:4-9). This surely implies that they were ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah; and perhaps we are to understand that they could have had fulfilment in a Messiah figure at the time of the restoration. But the immediate point here is that the Lord who will stand in latter day judgment stands in judgment on His church right now. Judgment in essence is now.

2:19 *I know your works and your love, faith, ministry and patience; and that your last works are more than the first*- There was real spiritual progress here; and yet we see how legitimate spirituality can sadly co-exist with serious unspirituality, both within the church and within individuals. For the "nevertheless..." of :20 is serious indeed.

2:20 *But I have this against you: you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols*- "The woman Jezebel" in some manuscripts and RVmg. reads "Your wife Jezebel", as if perhaps the wife of the 'Angel', the pastor of the group, is in view. This would be likening this element of the ecclesia to weak-willed Ahab. The fornication / use of prostitutes and eating of idol food are not two separate things; they are part of the same issue of importing elements of the surrounding pagan cults into the Christian church, whereby at the breaking of bread there was also eating of idol food and sleeping with cult prostitutes. As noted on 1 Cor. 11 and 1 Tim. 2, this was far from the only church which had these problems.

Jezebel teaching believers to commit fornication is the language later to be used concerning Babylon: a prostitute encouraging fornication. This connection suggests that the false teachers within the latter day church will be connected with political 'Babylon' and the beast. The similarities between the "man of sin" within the church and the beast / little horn teach the same thing.

2:21 *And I gave her time that she should repent, and she does not want to repent of her fornication*- Jezebel in the first century, and her equivalent in the last days, will be given "time to repent of... fornication", but they will not take up the offer. This "space" is interpreted by John Thomas as the 1260-day period, which would appear reasonable. I have elsewhere applied this to the tribulation period. The inference is that the state of fornication exists within the churches *before* the tribulation begins, and that the tribulation of that period is designed to bring about repentance.

Thus they will be given a period to repent, the beginning of which will be at the time when the saints first realize that the Lord is about to return (cp. the virgins starting to go forth, Mt. 25:1).

2:22 *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, into great tribulation, and those that commit adultery with her-unless they repent of their works*- Perhaps a 'bed of sickness' is appropriate punishment for her behaviour in 'bed'. We see here how God's plans are open ended. If this element refuse to repent, then they would have "great tribulation". If they repent, then they will not need to pass through it. We noted the same on :10. Yet Jezebel was given space to repent but didn't, therefore judgment was pronounced; but even then, *if* she repented, she wouldn't be punished. This is simply the eagerness of God for human repentance.

2:23 *And I will strike her children dead*- John's letters use "children" to mean converts or those over whom a person has pastoral authority. This lends support to the impression that Jezebel was in the leadership of the church, see on :20. This could have been a threat of literal death, just as Ananias and Saphira were smitten with death. Or the reference could be to the second death at the last day, the judgment for which was given by the Lord in this life when He perceived their refusal to repent.

And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will repay each of you as your works deserve- "I *am*... and *I will*..." alludes to the Lord's manifestation of the Yahweh Name, He who is, was and will be. And He is *now* (Gk.) ordained as judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42)- and we should preach Him as such. He *is* now the judge of the dead in the sense that His very being and victory is in itself the judgment of all men. Those who reject His message right now are judging themselves. Note the parallel here between mind and works; this was at the core of the Lord's doctrine of the Kingdom, that the thought is seen by Him as the action. The Lord Jesus continually searches our hearts or spirit, in His function as "the Lord the Spirit" (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). The extent to which this is true will be manifested in the Lord's final judgment.

2:24 *But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who do not know the so-called deep things of Satan: I will not impose any other burden*- The faithful element at Thyatira were told that they had "none other burden" than to keep themselves separate from "the depths of satan" taught by the false teachers among them. The absence of any command to immediately withdraw fellowship from these people in the run up to AD70, but rather to concentrate upon one's own continuing to hold true doctrine, fits in with the parable of the tares. There

is certainly no truth to the idea of guilt by association or a closed table, or the Lord would have taught the need for separation.

"The *depths* of satan" indicates that the pressure on the faithful will be subtle; there will be a distinctly academic and sophisticated edge to the wrong teachings that will circulate within the ecclesia. “The depths of Satan as they speak”, refers to the false teaching of the Judaizers, the Jewish Satan, who were pretending to offer deeper spiritual understanding through their false doctrine. They spoke evil about deep spiritual things which they did not understand (Jude 10), speaking words which seemed superficially impressive spiritually (Jude 16). The Judaizers’ reasonings about keeping the law and worshipping angels, “intruding into those things which he has not seen” (Col. 2:18; i.e. “which they know not”, cp. Jude 10, had “a shew of (deep, spiritual) wisdom” (Col. 2:23). There are many other such examples.

2:25 *Apart from that which you have: To hold fast until I come*- It seems that it is God's especial wish that a man conquer some specific human weakness in his life. If he succeeds in this, God may make concessions to his other areas of human weakness. It seems that the Thyatiran believers had none other burden put upon them than to resist the teaching and practice of the "woman Jezebel" amongst them- although it would seem there were other 'burdens' which the Lord *could* have put on them.

2:26 *And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works to the end, to him will I give authority over the nations*- "Works" have featured twice in this letter. They are commended for their "works" (:19), but must repent of their bad works of allowing Jezebel to teach fornication (:21), knowing the Lord will judge according to our works (:23). But the key is to keep [perhaps, 'keep hold of' as in :25] the works of the Lord Jesus. For salvation is not of our works, but of trust in Him and having His righteousness imputed to us.

This has a specifically last days relevance: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto *the end*, to him will I give power over the nations" – “the end" being the second coming. Surely the Lord is referring back to his comment that in the final tribulation period, he who endures to "the end" of the period will be saved (Mt. 10:22)- as the one who comes to the end of the days in Dan. 12 is blessed. Enduring to the end therefore means keeping (guarding, doctrinally) the works of Christ- holding on to the One Faith until the end. This evidently won't be as simple as it sounds. The works are "His" works, and may refer to obeying the great commission in taking the knowledge of Him to all the world in the last days. This reference to the great commission is confirmed by the comment that the reward will be to receive power / authority over the nations- the very phrase used in Mt. 28:18 about how the Lord has received just this, and therefore we are to go to all nations with the Gospel and baptize people. All that is true of the Lord is to be true of us; if we keep *His* works rather than our own works, then the gift of "all power" to Him over the nations is also true for us.

2:27 *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron*- The allusion is to Psalm 2 which is clearly about the future Kingdom on earth. Yet the Psalm is given a first century fulfilment in Acts 4:24-28. The same prophecy has multiple fulfilments; and that is exactly what we find in the book of Revelation. As the Lord will rule the world with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and brake the nations to powder at His return (Dan. 2:44), so will each of those in Him. And notice how Ps. 2:1,2, a prophecy about opposition to Jesus personally, is appropriated to those who preach Him, because they are in Him (Acts 4:25,26).

The Lord Jesus will rule, or shepherd (Gk.) His enemies with a rod of iron. He can somehow both shepherd and crush at the same time. Our relationship with Him is a reflection of these two aspects of His character. Perhaps the idea here is that His punishment of sinners is even then an attempt to shepherd them to be His sheep.

As the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received from my Father- The unbelieving will be broken to shivers, "as the vessels of a potter". But this is in fact quoting Jeremiah's words concerning the breaking of the individual believer who is rejected at the last day (Jer. 18:4-6; 19:11). The point of the Lord's quotation is surely that those He rejects will share the world's condemnation.

Dan. 2:44 describes how the kingdoms of this world will be broken and scattered as the chaff before the wind, as a potter's vessel. Yet this is exactly the language of Jer. 13:24 concerning Israel's latter destruction. The apostate amongst Israel will be "dashed" (Jer. 13:14) as the nations of the world will be (Ps. 2:9). The faithful will have some kind of part in the judgment of the systems which persecuted them, be they Jewish or Gentile.

The structure of the book of Revelation reflects this theme- the first series of visions are of judgments on God's people Israel, whilst the second part of the book is judgments upon the Gentile powers of Rome / Babylon [however we wish to interpret them]. Likewise the plagues upon Egypt recorded in Ex. 7-10 are frequently alluded to in later Scripture concerning the judgments upon the apostate people of God. Quite simply, God's rejected people suffer the judgments of this world.

2:28 *And I will give him the morning star*- The morning star is the Lord Jesus personally (22:16); as demonstrated in the previous verses, all the Lord's titles, works and functions are ours if we are in Him. The angels of the churches are likened to stars (1:20), held tightly in the Lord's hand. The Lord is stressing His personal identity with His people; they are stars, as He is. And He will give us Himself, He will be all in all within us, as in essence He is now through the Spirit. This is the reference of 2 Pet. 1:19, where the day star arises in our hearts at His return. The Lord likened the manna to Himself, which He gave us personally to eat, to absorb Him into ourselves (Jn. 6:31-33). So the idea of fully giving of Himself into us at the last day should not be strange, at least to any reader of John's writings who had already read John's gospel. For there we find frequently taught the idea of taking the Lord Jesus personally into us, His very self into our very selves, His spirit and life into ours.

The Lord's return in glory will be as the arising of the sun (Mal. 4:2). The morning star, or Venus, arises whilst it is still dark, and is the herald of the sunrise. Perhaps there is some reference here to the idea that the faithful will have some portent of the Lord's coming just before it happens; perhaps through persecution, or because the day star arises *in our hearts* before His return (2 Pet. 1:19).

There was something radical in the association of the Lord Jesus with Venus, and the promise of this title to all His followers. For Julius Caesar, and other Caesars, had encourage the cult of Venus worship on the basis that the Caesars were descended from Venus and were the incarnations of Venus on earth. To apply their titles to the Lord Jesus and His followers was a radical form of rebellion against the norms and values of the society in which they lived; just as we are to be likewise rebels.

2:29 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- see on 2:7.

REVELATION CHAPTER 3

3:1 *And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works*- Seven is the number of totality. The seven stars refer to the angels of the churches. The total power of the Spirit is in the Lord's hand to be used for the care and development of His churches, His people. There is infinite potential power available; and His Spirit is essentially His mind, and not just His power. He wishes our spirituality, as we surely do. And yet God's knowledge is attained through His omnipresent Spirit; He thereby has totality of knowledge and thereby of judgment. God makes His Angels Spirits; perhaps mechanically, if you wish, His presence and power is articulated through the ministry of the Angels. This would be why :5 follows on in the context of the Angels and Jesus uniting to declare our verdict at the judgment: "I will confess his name before my Father, and before His Angels".

You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead- The name or reputation of being alive when they were spiritually dead is the very inversion of what is true of the Lord. His Name amongst men is achieved because He was dead but is now alive, alive in His people through the gift of His Spirit which many of them were now in denial of.

3:2 – see on Rev. 1:20.

Be watchful and establish the things that remain, which are ready to die- The 'things that remained' uses the same word used for 'the remnant'; He has just used it of the faithful remnant in Thyatira (2:24). The 'angel', the eldership on earth who were represented by Divine Angels in the Heavenly throne room, were bidden strengthen that remnant, for even that was about to spiritually die. The 'you' referenced in "your works" therefore refers to the angel / eldership. They had not watched, i.e. watched out for, the spiritual wellbeing of their flock.

I have explained earlier that the seven churches here provide a picture of how the churches will be in the last days before the Lord's return. The Olivet prophecy, like the Lord's letters, gives a huge emphasis on the need to watch in the last days (e.g. Mk. 13:5,9,23,33,35,37). The watching is for the safety of the house against the 'thieves' of false teachers; we are each the porter, with the responsibility for the rest of the household on our shoulders (Mk. 13:34,35). Throughout the Lord's letters there is this same pointed emphasis upon the need to watch. The idea of the remnant being "ready to die" immediately suggests the parable of the virgins, whom we have portrayed as struggling to keep the flame of real faith from dying away. Seeing that the majority of Sardis are pronounced as "dead" (3:1), this encouragement to keep alive what was about to die can be read as a call to each of the faithful in the last days to not only keep their own faith alive, but to make every effort to keep alive those who appear fatally ill. This command presumes that it will be evident to the faithful what constitutes spiritual life and death. As our experience of the last days goes on, the difference between wheat and tares becomes increasingly marked - without having to anticipate the separation that will come at harvest. "Be watchful" is in the context of strengthening what remains, providing further proof that the command to watch in the last days fundamentally concerns watching over the state of the ecclesia and one's own faith, rather than 'watching' the political state of the world. It seems that for generations, we have thought that 'watching' meant reading 'Signs of the times' articles which were actually no more than a running commentary on the state of the world. The Hebrew word translated "watch" is also rendered "to take heed to oneself".

The Hebrew word has the same idea. Thus David spoke of his *soul* watching (Ps. 130:5,6). Habakkuk 'watched' for what God's word really said (Hab. 2:1); God watches over things in the sense of being sensitive to them (Jer. 31:28 Heb.). This Old Testament background to the idea of watching carries through to the NT. It's because we *don't* know the time that we are commanded to watch- not 'signs of the times', because we don't know the time; but rather, to watch ourselves. Thus Acts 20:31 speaks of watching in the sense of being aware of the possibility of personal and collective apostasy. In 1 Cor. 16:31, watching means to stand fast in the One Faith; in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Thess. 5:6,11 it refers to praying for each other spiritually. In the last days, many brethren will turn away, Paul warned Timothy, but by contrast "*you* - watch" (2 Tim. 4:5). If we watch, both ourselves and others, the Lord's return will not be like a thief for us (Rev. 3:3). Thus watching is a sign of our acceptance by the Lord (Lk. 12:37). Yet *watching* our doctrine and way of life, realizing the real danger of mass latter day apostasy, is increasingly unpopular.

For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God- The Lord is right now in the presence or "sight" of God, representing us before Him. And He found Himself having to represent the works of these believers to the Father, and He did not 'find' them complete; they were an appearance of religious activity rather than being the works done in faith and motivated by grace which the Father seeks.

3:3- see on Jud. 16:20.

Therefore remember how you have received- They are bidden recall their first conversion; at that time, believers 'receive' the Spirit (s.w. Jn. 14:17; 20:22; Gal. 3:2,14; 1 Jn. 2:27). To receive Jesus as Christ is to receive His Spirit (Jn. 1:12,16). The Corinthians received the Spirit, but were "not spiritual" at the time Paul wrote 1 Cor. 3:1. These believers were likewise being asked to remember the Spirit gift received, and to allow it to function within them.

And did once hear and keep it, and repent- They needed to "keep" the Spirit they had been given. The idea of 'keeping' does not solely refer to obedience to commandments, but to allow the Lord's word, His gifted Spirit, to abide / remain within them.

Therefore if you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you- The watching in view is not simply of themselves but of others; see on :2. “I will come as a thief" is an evident allusion to 1 Thess. 5:2 concerning the thief-like coming of Christ to the unworthy in the latter-day church. "You shall not know what time I will come upon you" implies that they *should* have 'known the hour'. This probably continues the allusions to 1 Thess. 5 - this time to :1: "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (faithful ones). For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (AV). 1 Thess. 5:1,2 in turn alludes to Mt. 24:43 (R.V.): "But this ye know" that "the goodman of the house" would have watched if he knew when the thief would come. The wise at Thessalonica 'knowing' the times and seasons of the thief's coming therefore implies that their 'knowledge' was in terms of appreciating what the spiritual trials of the last days would be like. Rev. 3:3 brings all these strands together in warning the apostate members of the latter-day ecclesias. Not watching is equated by the Lord with not knowing the time. The evident allusion to the disciples not watching (Mk. 14:37) suggests that if we don't know the time, we will be like them- unprepared when we ought to be on the tiptoe of expectancy. The connection with the disciples also hints that when the Lord told them that they didn't

know the time, he was in some sense rebuking them rather than making a general statement about the impossibility of *ever* knowing the time of his return.

3:4- see on Rev. 2:17.

But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their clothes, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy- The Lord refers to His people not simply as 'people' but as "names". The Hebrew idea of a name is that it expresses personality and character. We are not numbers on a screen, but unique persons, known intimately to the Lord. These faithful ones were undefiled by the fact the others in their church were apostate- yet another disproof of any theory of 'guilt by association'. The clothes undefiled refer to the gift of righteousness imputed at baptism abiding; just as the gift of the Spirit received abode with them (:3). "Walk with me" is yet another reminder that the destiny of the believer is to share the Lord's destiny; all that is true of Him is to become true of us. And this includes the idea of being "worthy", which we are not in our own strength, but only on account of being in Him, the worthy one.

Again we must give full weight to the fact that the "few" in Sardis who had not defiled their clothes attended an apostate ecclesia; and yet they are *not* seen as "defiled" by the Lord Jesus. This is proof positive that there is no such thing as guilt by association with erring members of an ecclesia. Those faithful members were not rebuked for not disfellowshipping the others. The Lord's criticism of the ecclesias seems to be that they had allowed false teaching to develop, rather than the fact they hadn't separated from it. Smyrna was an ecclesia which received no criticism at all from the Lord; they weren't rebuked for not disfellowshipping the other local ecclesias who were apostate (Rev. 2:8-11). The elders at Sardis, an ecclesia holding many false teachers, were told to strengthen what remained (the Greek is usually used regarding people)- they were to strengthen the faithful minority, but nothing was said about withdrawing from them because they fellowshipped weak brethren.

3:5- see on 1 Cor. 4:9; Rev. 2:17.

He that overcomes shall thus be dressed in white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the book of life- "Thus be dressed" refers to the way that the Lord who spoke these words was at that very time dressed in white garments; they were to share His status, all that is true of Him is to become true of all in Him.

Blotting out of the book of life suggests that individuals were originally included in the plan for eternity, but are removed. Moses asking to be removed from that book is therefore a mark of his extreme love for Israel; willing to sacrifice his place in eternity for them. God did not accept this kind of substitutionary atonement, however. I have suggested that John wrote and spoke his gospel to appeal to his fellow Jews; and his letters were written to his converts. Revelation was perhaps also primarily intended for Jewish converts, and the initial references to the 'satan' refer to the Judaist conspiracy to wean his converts back to the synagogue. The idea of our names remaining in the book of life would have suggested to a Jewish audience that we'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life, as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32). For Jews, Moses was the acme of spirituality, a spiritual pinnacle they could never realistically attain to. But here they are promised that they are not mere Levites but in Christ, can share the peaks of Moses.

But there is the real possibility of names being removed from the book. This is the greatest tragedy; that a person at one point was on track for eternity, but lost that

status. We must do all we can to 'watch out' for others, therefore (see on :2); and never, ever, to make anyone stumble from the way which leads to eternal life.

And I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels- As noted on :4, we are 'names' and not numbers; in the Hebraic sense of a name reflecting the sum total of a person's character and being. Who we are as unique persons is confessed before the father; and our names, that code, if you will, which summarizes 'us', is recorded eternally in the book of life. This points up the eternal importance of personality and spiritual character; for to some degree, who we are today is who we shall eternally be. Salvation is personal. We as persons shall be saved, meaning 'we' shall be immortalized.

3:6 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- See on 2:7.

3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true*- The Lord's essential character is important to establish, because it is He who has the power to eternally open and close the way to eternity in His Kingdom. 'Holy and true' was one of the many titles heaped upon the Caesars, and again the radical, subversive nature of the book of Revelation appears. For the ultimate holy and true one is not Caesar, but the Lord.

He that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens- The quotation is from Is. 22:22, where Eliakim is given delegated rulership in David's Kingdom. Perhaps the idea of David having the key to his kingdom alludes to the way that he consciously chose his successor and did not let it pass automatically to his firstborn. But the power to eternally shut and open the Kingdom has been delegated to us, in the sense that if we do not preach to others, or make them stumble from the path, we have closed up the Kingdom to them. The keys of knowledge are in our hands as preachers, and we can thereby open or shut up the Kingdom to men (Mt. 16:19; Lk. 11:52; see on Jn. 20:23). We have just been reminded that a man's name can at one stage be in the book of life, and then be removed; eternity can be closed to a person, as well as opened. The foolish virgins find the door to the Kingdom eternally locked against them. We get a strong sense from this imagery of the future we may miss, and how commitment to the things of the Kingdom logically demands 100% commitment from us.

3:8 *I know your works (behold, I have set before you an open door, which none can shut), you have a little power*- Although no *man* can shut the door, the Lord can (see on :7). An open door speaks of an opportunity (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). It is the Lord who takes the initiative, opening the door to the Kingdom, by grace. It is for us to respond to His initiatives. Their "little power / strength" could imply that it could have been far stronger; but all the same, the Lord commends and accepts them. There are ranges of response to the Lord, and He is willing to accept that some ground will yield more harvest to His glory than others. Some work harder and longer in the vineyard than others; but all receive the penny of salvation.

And did keep my word and did not deny my name- The aorist suggests this keeping of the Lord's *logos* was at a particular time in the past. They had presumably been called upon to deny His Name and stop abiding in His "word". And they had refused. This could have referred to the local Jewish synagogue expelling them (Jn. 9:22), with the associated economic and social isolation which ensued for a diaspora Jew. Or in the Gentile context, it could have referred to exclusion from pagan trade guilds, with the same effect; or perhaps a call to show loyalty to the Caesar cult. But :9 suggests that the persecution had originated with the 'satan' of organized Jewish opposition.

3:9 *Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie- behold, I will make these come to you and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you-* The persecution of :8 had been brought about by an organized group of people called here a false synagogue, implying they were Jews, but in name only. Perhaps one of their arguments was that God did really love the Christian Jews; because Judaism had a lot to say about themselves as the unique lovers of God, who enjoyed His special love. John in his letters has argued that if a Jew does not accept Jesus as Lord and Son of God, then such a Jew is outside "the love of God". For he who denies the Son denies the Father also. These Judaist troublemakers will be resurrected and at the last day, see those they persecuted enter God's Kingdom. They will bow before the feet of those they persecuted, just as they will say "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!", but all too late for their personal salvation.

Some now in the ecclesia will be dashed to pieces by the Lord at the last day (2:27). Mal. 4:3 speaks of them being ashes under the souls of *our* feet, as if the faithful will play a part in the destruction of their faithless brethren. After our judgment, *we "*will return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not" (Mal. 3:18). Then in our own understanding the Kingdom of God will be likened to wise and foolish virgins; then we will see the tares clearly. Then the apostate false brethren in Philadelphia will worship before the feet of their faithful brethren. It may be in this sense that we will judge Angels / ecclesial elders (1 Cor. 6:3 cp. Rev. 2:1 etc.). Or it could be that the rejected will destroy each other. The surrounding world with whom they will then be associated will destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13); and they will have a part in this destruction. If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren.

3:10 *Because you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the time of trial which is to come upon the whole world, to test them that dwell upon the earth-* The Lord told the Philadelphians that He had set before them an open door, which elsewhere is a figure for an opportunity to preach (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). He parallels such preaching with keeping His word and not denying His Name. For those who do these two things, i.e. respond to the open door preaching opportunities of the pre-tribulation period, “I also will keep you from the hour of temptation [tribulation] which is to come”. If we preach now, and the door is open as never before, then perhaps we will be saved from the tribulation. For one of its aims, as in the first century, will be to inspire us to witness as we ought to have been doing. See on Rev. 2:10, where we noted again this idea of various possible outcomes and chronologies stored up in God's purpose, in response to human freewill decision making. An the same is true especially of latter day chronologies of events leading up to the Lord's return. If the latter day faithful [perhaps especially referring to Jewish Christians within the land promised to Abraham] keep the Lord's word, He will keep them from the "tribulation" designed "to try them that dwell upon the earth" / land - of Israel. So whether or not some shall experience the latter day tribulation depends on factors such as their repentance and witness of the Gospel to all nations.

3:11 *I come suddenly. Hold fast to what you have, that no one takes your crown-* As noted on :3, they were to hold fast to the gift of the Spirit they had been given at conversion, and allow this to continue to guide their path towards salvation. For it is the Spirit which they had already been given. They had been given "eternal life" in the sense of the spirit of that life which they would eternally live. In this sense they already had their crown; but as names in the book of eternal life could be blotted out,

so the crown now potentially given can be taken away. The *stephanos* may refer not only to the victor's crown at the games, but to the wreath worn by those invited to a wedding or feast- an image elsewhere used in Revelation, rather than that of the games. Our part in the wedding can be taken away and given to another if we do not want it. Another will take our crown or wreath. This suggests the allusion is to floral wreath given to wedding guests; for a victor's crown in the games could hardly be given to another. But in the Lord's parable, the invitations to the Jews to come to the feast were taken from them and given to others.

3:12 *He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name*- There was apparently a large pillar in Philadelphia which may have been the reason for this idea. The name of Yahweh being written on a person suggests they are a priest, even the high priest. Instead of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on his chest, we here have the name of the new Jerusalem written- which city speaks of all the believers. This is a major theme of the letters; that the role and exaltation of the Lord becomes true for all who are in Him. As the Lord was the central pillar of the new temple, so shall we be.

It is not surprising that the Lord, as the Son of God and His supreme manifestation to men, should also carry God's name. He could say "I am come in my Father's name" (Jn. 5:43). Because of his obedience, Jesus ascended to heaven and God "gave him a name which is above every name" - the name of Yahweh, of God Himself (Phil. 2:9). So this is why we read Jesus saying in Rev. 3:12: "I will write upon him (the believer) the name of my God... and I will write upon him my new name". That the name was still new suggests these letters were given not so long after His ascension. At the judgment, we will share the Lord's exaltation; He will give us God's name; we then will fully carry the name of God. He calls this name, "My new name". We can now properly understand Is. 9:6, where concerning the Lord Jesus we are told, "His name (note that) shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father...". This is a prophecy that the Lord would carry all the titles and Name of God - that He would be the total manifestation or revelation of God to us. It was in this sense that he was called 'Emmanuel', meaning 'God is with us', although He personally was not God. The way He speaks here of "my God" even in His resurrected glory is proof enough of that. Thus the prophecy of Joel 2 that men would call on the name of Yahweh was fulfilled by people being baptised into the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21 cp. 38). This also explains why the command to baptize into the name of the Father was fulfilled, as detailed in the Acts record, by baptism into the name of Jesus.

And yet the idea of bearing God's Name refers to what already in essence is happening to all who are in the Lord Jesus, by baptism into His Name.

3:13 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- see on 2:7.

3:14 *And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*- The subsequent judgments are prefaced by this reminder that the Lord Jesus is the final truth, the "Amen", and had Himself suffered unto death as the ultimately faithful martyr / witness. Laodicea was a hopeless case, it seemed; but the Lord reminds them that He is the beginning of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and the power of the Spirit which had created the natural creation was available to them too. He had begun the

work of new creation in them, and it could still be brought to completion if they repented.

3:15 *I know your works, how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot*- The reference may be to the hot and cold springs near Laodicea. It is easy to assume that 'hot' refers to hot zeal for Him, and 'cold' to total indifference to Him. But why then would He wish them to be totally "cold", and not rather praise them for having at least some heat? For in earlier letters, the Lord takes full cognisance of the fact there is some 'heat', some good points, even in those He chooses to condemn. So I suggest we must read in an ellipsis here. He may mean 'I wish [that you realize that you can only be] either cold or hot'. They themselves considered themselves lukewarm, but thought this was acceptable to Him. And here we have a penetrating attack upon our own spiritual psychology; for we too would likely consider ourselves lukewarm, not coldly indifferent but not red hot in response to Him.

The site of Laodicea has suffered major earthquakes, but in recent times the original first century town has been uncovered. It was a thriving small town that became prosperous from its location at a crossroads. A large home has been unearthed which had a meeting room in the woman's quarters where crosses and other Christian symbols had been inscribed, and the surviving mosaics suggest Christian themes. This room would not have held more than 30 or 40 people. Typical of other house churches uncovered at other sites, it seems the majority of the church were female. These women apparently increased in wealth, making them lukewarm in faith. Only about 300 meters from that house there is evidence of warm springs, now inoperative because of the earthquake damage. I suggest these are the source of the Lord's reference to lukewarm water. The suggestion is often made that the reference is to the current hot springs at Pamukkale, but this is a long way away and there is no evidence that there was any viaduct bringing that warm water to Laodicea. There would have been no need for this as the water has so much calcium carbonate in it that it can't be drunk. And there were already warm water springs at Laodicea before the earthquake. After Constantine legalized Christianity, a church was built at Laodicea and the Council of Laodicea is full of strict religious ordinances about not doing anything in the Lord's service without the agreement of bishops, and laying down very restrictive and unBiblical demands upon believers. We see the path of declension- material prosperity leading to lukewarm faith, yet still bearing the name "Christian". And then this led to the formalism and mere religion of organized churchianity.

3:16 *As you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth*-

There is no third way. We may as well realize this. The Lord Jesus *hates* the fact that some think there is a third road; He would that we recognized, as He does, that there is really no 'lukewarm' position- only hot or cold. He seems to ask us to realize this: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt" (Mt. 12:33).

We know that from God's perspective, we *are* either cold or hot. We either serve Him or mammon. We are either on the road to the Kingdom or to death. So surely the Lord is speaking from *our* viewpoint; He wished that those believers would have the attitude that they were either cold or hot, rather than thinking there was a middle course. In essence, their weakness is ours; for time and again, we hide behind the philosophy of 'balance' in order to justify a "neither cold nor hot" attitude. Our lack of serious devotion, both individually and as a community, rests in this sophistry of 'balance'; lukewarmness has become respectable, both in the brotherhood and in the world; total commitment is branded as fanaticism and simplistic dogmatism.

As tourists came to taste the waters of the Laodicean springs, so the Lord tasted the believers there. The spewing of them from His mouth connects with how the sharp sword of judgment proceeds out of His mouth (1:16; 2:16; 19:21).

3:17 *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing*- The implication was that they believed some kind of false prosperity Gospel, reasoning that their wealth was a result of their spirituality and God blessing them for it. Hence the next half of the verse insists that contrary to what they are think, they are in fact deeply unspiritual. This verse is a powerful argument against the prosperity Gospel, for apparent material blessing is portrayed here as *not* the reward for spirituality but the fruit of unspirituality. The language of saying to themselves that they were rich and "have prospered" is exactly that of the rich fool (Lk. 12:21). So we can safely assume that "you say..." refers to what they, like him, said to themselves within their hearts. And these words of the heart are what we are judged by. But the same Greek word used here is used of how those who accepted 'Babylon' were made rich and prospered because of her (18:3,15,19). And Babylon is presented in Jeremiah as considering she needed nothing Whatever 'Babylon' referred to in the Laodicean context, these apparent Christians had materially benefitted from connection with her- be it the synagogue system, the pagan trade guilds or the Roman Caesar cult. And there may well come a latter day wave of prosperity- for those who associate with latter day Babylon. But for Christians, it will cost them their eternity.

Not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked- They perhaps considered that their material wealth must reflect their spiritual wealth. They were unaware that spiritually they were poverty-stricken and naked, needing to develop the riches of faith and clothing of righteousness. It seems to follow that their feeling of being spiritually rich and needing nothing was fuelled by being "increased with goods" - as if the material prosperity of the very last days will lead some to interpret this as God's blessing upon them, and a sure sign of their acceptability. “I am rich..." is alluding to Hos. 12:8, where Israel's wealth was associated with a feeling that they were therefore without sin: "Ephraim said, I am rich... in all my labours they shall find no iniquity in me that is sin". This encourages us again to think that the first recipients of these letters were Jewish converts. Likewise, the description of them as wealthy but naked is taken straight out of Ez. 16:7 about natural Israel; suggesting that it is Jewish converts who are being written to here.

They were unlike Paul, who lamented "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24 s.w.), throwing himself upon the Lord Jesus in total faith in His grace. The Greek for "miserable" is found only in 1 Cor. 15:9, where apostate Christians considered that they had "hope in Christ" only in this life, and were therefore considered by the Spirit to be "miserable". For them, their level of association with Christianity gave them some psychological benefits in this life, but the wonder of sin forgiven and certain eternity ahead had not dawned upon them. They refused to accept that they were "poor in spirit" and could, upon that recognition, have sure hope for the future Kingdom (Mt. 5:3 s.w.). They refused to see themselves in the man born blind from birth of John 9, who is set up as representative of us all; they would not recognize that they were totally naked before the eyes of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:13). From these references we see that wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked all refer to what we all naturally are; by refusing to see themselves as such, the Lord's work and provision for them was not seen as necessary.

The unfaithful now walk naked, in the Lord's eyes; but they will do so in the final condemnation of Rev. 16:15. They can walk naked *now* and repent, clothe themselves so as to cover the nakedness of condemnation which they now have; but not then.

3:18 *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich*- John's writings continually allude to the power of the gift of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which is the true way to becoming enriched (1 Cor. 1:5; Eph. 3:16; the same word for "prospered" in :17). "Buy from me" obviously recalls the parable of the virgins, where the rejected go to buy oil [cp. the Spirit] all too late. The idea is that we can *now* do, spiritually, what the rejected will so desperately wish to do in the time of their condemnation, but will be unable to. Gold refined by fire is the figure Peter uses for Jewish converts who were being refined by the tribulations of the first century, both at the hands of the synagogue system and the Romans (see on 1 Pet. 1:7). The Jewish converts at Laodicea had flunked out of these testings by fire through their association with 'Babylon'; see on :17. The counsel to buy this refinement by fire would be another way of saying that they ought to have submitted to the tribulations, so that their faith would have been developed.

And to clothe yourselves with white garments, that the shame of your nakedness be not revealed- In the latter day church scene, it seems some because of their refusal to repent, will then have a final tribulation at the end of the holocaust period. Their salvation is what the Lord searches for. There is the suggestion that this group may choose not to suffer the initial stages of the holocaust, in that Rev. 3:18 implies that they are only *counselled* to buy the golden faith that is produced by the fiery trial of the latter day tribulation. Thus as with offering the pinch of incense to Caesar, there will be opportunity to avoid the tribulation by some apparently tokenistic obedience to the beast. By doing this they will waste "the space" given "to repent of her fornication", and will experience a final tribulation.

We are clothed with white garments at baptism. The appeal to clothe themselves with them is an appeal for re-conversion. They could cover their shame now- but they choose not to. And yet, unknown to them, in God's eyes these people foam out their own shame (Jude 13).

And anoint your eyes with eyesalve so you may see- "Eyesalve" didn't really improve vision, but just as the Lord used the wrong idea of demons without correcting the science, so here. The idea is that they needed to apply something to help them 'see' differently, not least to 'see' themselves as they truly were before God (:17). That 'eyesalve' is surely the Spirit, which the Lord will give, but which we must be willing to apply. Anointing of itself implies pouring out the oil of the Spirit. For it is the Spirit which opens the eyes of our understanding (see on Eph. 1:18).

3:19 *As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent*- The Lord must have acted in the lives of those wealthy but lost believers in order to bring them to repentance. And He did so out of love. And the arrogant, self-assured wealthy are hard to spiritually love. But the Lord did, and for all time sets us an example of loving sorrow for the wealthy in their spiritual lostness. The Lord's reproof, according to Jn. 3:18, is in who He is as a person; within the light of Him as a person and character. He was therefore seeking to bring Himself to their attention; chastening is intended to direct our focus onto the Lord Jesus. It is the gift of the Comforter which reproves (Jn. 16:8); as baptized believers, they had once received this, and the Lord wishes for that potential Spirit gift within them to be allowed full reign. The Hebrew and Greek words for 'chastening' also mean 'teaching'. None of the Lord's chastening is solely punitive; He seeks to teach, and we need to perceive that in whatever chastening we receive. And the end product of that teaching is repentance.

3:20- see on Mt. 24:15.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him and he with me- The Lord stands at the door and knocks at His return, and the faithful will open immediately to Him (Lk. 12:36). And yet the essence of His coming is now. He wishes to enter hearts; those who accept His Spirit have Him 'coming' to them (Jn. 14:18 s.w.). His presence through the Comforter is just as real as was His presence amongst men in Palestine during His mortal ministry. The Lord is here writing to those who have turned away from Him in Laodicea. He is urging them to let Him come to them, to allow the Spirit to enter and fill them.

The Lord stresses, with apparently needless repetition, that to the man who responds to His word, "I will eat with him and he with me". There is something very touching in the picture of a man living alone (unusual in the first century), presumably due to old age or persecution, with no wife (either dead or left him); and the Lord of all knocks at his door. He lets him in (i.e. responds to the word of Christ), and they eat together. Two men, eating a man's meal, earnestly bent together over the table. It's a fine picture of the mutuality between the Lord and the believer. Even in failure and weak moments, that mutuality is still there. The same word is used of the Lord having "supper" and 'eating' with us in the communion meal (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), and so the fellowship of the breaking of bread is also specifically in view.

In the latter day application, the Lord knocking on the door and 'coming' when the believer opens, hints at His second coming once the ecclesia shows a suitable level of spiritual response. In the same letter to Laodicea, the ecclesia being "rich and increased with goods" (:17) recalls the days of Lot and Noah, both typical of the second coming, and the unworthy walking naked is a figure picked up in 16:15 concerning judgment day. Our attitude and response in the split second when we know 'He's back' will effectively be our judgment. When the Lord speaks about knocking on the door of our hearts and our response (Rev. 3:20), He is picking up the language of the Song of Solomon 5:2-8, where the bridegroom (cp. Jesus) knocks at the door of the bride. But notice the sequence there:

While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes]
She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]
He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]
Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]
She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]
But he's gone , he *withdraws himself* [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]
Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]
She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him.
Hos. 5:6 is likewise relevant: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to

seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath *withdrawn himself* from them".]
She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love").
She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]

The basic point is that if we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him, and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him. And as noted above, His coming to us is effectively now. We shall open to Him in that day if we have opened our hearts to Him today.

3:21- see on Mk. 10:37.

He that overcomes, I will allow him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne- Here we see the very intense extent of our possibilities in Christ; all that is true for Him really can be true for those "in Christ", even those as apparently far gone as Laodicea. These descriptions of the faithful in the Kingdom show how they are counted as righteous by grace; they overcame *even as* the Lord overcame. They are described as clothed in white linen, just as was the Victorious Saviour straight after His death (Mt. 27:59). A comparison of our struggles with the Lord in Gethsemane, let alone the cross, reveal that we do not overcome as He did. We have not resisted unto blood in striving against our own sin. We will have the *right* to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone.

'Israel' means 'he who will rule as / with God'. This would therefore be the basis of Rev. 3:21, which promises that he who overcomes (also translated "prevail") will be a ruler with God, on His throne. It seems that the Lord has his mind back in Gen. 32, and he saw all who would attain His Kingdom as going through that same process of prevailing with God, overcoming, and being made rulers with Him.

3:22 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- see on 2:7.

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

4:1 *After these things I looked, and beheld a door opened in heaven*- John is being given a peep into the heavenly throne room. The 'court of heaven' was a common Jewish idea. The events on earth are reflected there, with representative Angels standing before God and receiving His judgments. The Angels may represent sinners and sinful entities, but Angels themselves do not sin. The comfort is that situations in earth are not out of control, but are known and perceived totally and instantly in Heaven. The opening of a door speaks of an opportunity being provided, perhaps in response to a knock (see on 3:8,20). It could be that John and others had sought desperately to understand their persecutions and how things really were in Heaven; and John's visions were the answer.

And the first voice that I heard, as if a trumpet was speaking to me, was as one saying: Come up here, and I will show you the things which hereafter must came to pass- Unlike Hebrew, the tenses in Greek are precise and have specific reference. In Rev. 1:19 John was told to write down the things which he had seen, the things which presently are, and the things which shall be “hereafter”. I suggest the things he had seen were the things of the vision of the Son of Man; the things which are refer to the

messages to the seven churches; and “the things which shall be hereafter” is a phrase developed here in Rev. 4:1, where John is bidden come and see “the things which must be hereafter”. The things from then on all refer to the future, the last days and the coming of Christ. The vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 therefore refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. That is confirmed by comments on many of the following verses in chapter 4. The vision is in the form of "a voice of a trumpet". The same Greek words are found in Mt. 24:31 and 1 Thess. 4:16 about the "sound [s.w. "voice"] of a trumpet" which will be heard at Christ's return. The same words are used of the trumpets heard at the final outpouring of woe upon the land at the Lord's coming (Rev. 8:3). The vision therefore has a clear end time reference, and describes the scene in Heaven at that time, rather than being a general picture of how things are in Heaven.

4:2 *Immediately I was in the Spirit*- Being "in the Spirit" was in response to the invitation to come 'up' to Heaven to view the court room (:1).

And beheld a throne set in heaven; and one sitting upon the throne- The setting up of the throne recalls the language of the throne being 'set' for judgment at Christ's return (Ps. 122:5; Dan. 7:9). As noted on :1, the entire vision in chapter 4 is of the state of affairs at the last day being reflected in the Heavenly throne room. Thrones set on earth are set in Heaven, just as David on earth sat as it were on the throne of God in Heaven as king.

4:3 *And he that sat on it was to look upon like a jasper stone, and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon*- The rainbow suggests that Divine judgment has come to an end, and the faithful remnant saved. As noted on :1, this is a picture of things at the last day. The Lord sits upon the judgment throne with a rainbow as a halo around it, meaning that His judgment is overarched by grace and a desire in fact not to condemn the world, even if they spurn His grace and choose His condemnation.

Jasper is the gem used to describe the appearance of all the faithful (21:11,18,19); the Lord's righteousness and exalted status will finally be true of all who are in Him. The sardine or sardius likewise (21:20), and the emerald (21:19). These are also stones in the High Priestly breastplate, representing the tribes of the Lord's people. We, His people, shine from His face. This is the extent of His total identification with us, and ours with Him. See on 5:3.

4:4 *And round about the throne were twenty four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty four elders sitting, dressed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold*- This again is reflecting the situation of the last days. The elders are 'clothed in white clothing', but every time those words occur in Revelation the context is of believers who have overcome the tribulation and are now clothed in white (3:5,18; 7:9,13). The vision of such clothing in Heaven may suggest that the elders thus clothed are the representative Angels of the believers on earth. Revelation is full of this kind of representation of human situations before the court of Heaven. Their golden crowns (4:4) are the crowns of victory which the faithful wear after judgment (the *stephanos* is specifically a victory wreath- 1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19; the crown which shall be given "at that day", 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10). Golden crowns are worn by the latter day enemies of God's people (Rev. 9:7); the specific usage of *stephanos* here, the victory wreath, suggests that they are celebrating their brief victory and establishment of a fake Kingdom of God. This is exactly what Moslems expect their Mahdi to do as a result of their latter day victories against the Jews. The ten horns of the beast are also crowned (13:1); the brief victory of the beast is a parody of the establishment of the true Kingdom of God.

These 24 elders recall the 24 orders of priests, who represent all the Lord's redeemed people. For we are a nation of priests, constantly in His service. As noted on :3, the Lord is presented as having the stones of the high priestly breastplate shining from His face as He sits enthroned, as a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek. We too shall be enthroned. Priests who are enthroned are king-priests; the Lord likewise was a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek, and we shall eternally have this status. We have just read that the faithful shall share His throne (3:21). As noted several times on Hebrews, we are not only benefitted by the Lord's high priestly work for us, but merge with Him, entering into the Holiest as did the High Priest- to do the work of the High Priest for the salvation of others.

I am of the view that the seals and vials of Revelation have such strong connection with both the Olivet prophecy and the actual events in the land in AD66-70 that it is impossible to discount the application of Revelation to this period. This means that it would have been written some time before AD70. A major theme is the need to resist the Caesar worship and maintain their separation from the world around them. Indeed, the whole of Revelation can be read, in its' AD70 application, as an account of the struggle between Christ and Caesar. Such strong imagery is used in order to emphasise that there could be no third road. It was one or the other. Thus Rev. 4,5 presents a picture of the throne of Heaven, but it is replete with reference to the imperial ceremonial court. Consider the points of contact and contrast:

- Greco-Roman kings were considered to be divine, and their courtrooms were arranged in concentric circles centring upon the Caesar / King- just as with the true throne room
- Their attendants were often arranged in groups of 7s and 12s- after the supposed seven planetary spheres and the 12 signs of the zodiac. Compare this with the 7s, 12s and 24s [2 x 12] in Revelation (4:4,5,10; 5:6-10). The 24 elders are a parody of the 24 lictors or bodyguards who surrounded Domitian and other Caesars. Instead of praying for Caesar and the empire, Revelation presents a radical counter culture. Caesar and his empire are presented as a fake Kingdom, which is to be prayed against- resulting in the overthrow of that Kingdom by the Kingdom of God. And the death of the Lord Jesus is seen as having already guaranteed this, and achieved it in prospect. Likewise casting crowns before Caesar is parodied in :10. This is ultimately done before the Lord Jesus, and is done for ever. All these allusions show how the Roman kingdom / empire is the antithesis of the true and ultimate Kingdom / empire, of God through the Lord Jesus. The 'iron rule' of Rome is the antithesis of the 'iron rod' with which the Lord Jesus shall rule the nations through His people (Rev. 2:26). There is no overlap between the two empires. Human politics cannot bring about God's Kingdom. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And in the lead up to that, Christian culture and Roman culture [or the world's culture] are absolutely separate and counter to each other.
- These attendants sung hymns of praise to the Caesar (cp. 4:8-11; 5:9-14)
- The Caesar dispersed justice to the empire / kingdom, symbolised by a scroll (cp. 5:1-8).
- Language such as God, Son of God, Lord's day, saviour of the world was used in the imperial cult.

Suffice it to say that today just as much as in the 1st century, there is a radical clash of cultures and belief systems between us and this present world. The radical nature of the conflict cannot be overstated.

However, the primary audience of the book of Revelation was likely Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who were drifting back to Judaism and becoming caught up

in the wave of nationalism which led to the Jewish War and the events of AD70. And so for them, the reference of the 24 elders would have been to the Jewish system which was now far eclipsed by the glory of the Heavenly system which had the Lord Jesus at its epicentre. There may well be reference to "the smaller Sanhedrin" at Jerusalem which had 24 elders in the lead up to AD70. Again, symbols and images of worldly power, of the society around us, are subsumed and deconstructed beneath the wonder of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. And so it should be in our worldview.

4:5 - see on Rev. 1:20; Jer. 1:11,12.

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, voices and thunders- As noted on :1, the vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. In this context, the seven heads and mountains of the beast perhaps have their match in the seven spirits / Angels before God's throne. As found in Daniel, the situation on earth is not at all out of control; rather is it a reflection of the Heavenly throne room, just as the beasts of Daniel 7 arise out of the sea as a result of the [apparent] 'striving' of the spirits / Angels / winds. The lightnings which flash out of the throne were not just what were 'usually' there in Heaven; rather are these the lightnings which flash in the last day events of Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18, recalling the flashing of lightning as a sign of God's especial and saving activity of His people (Ps. 18:14). As lightening, fire and thunder 'proceeds' out of the throne and from the mouth of Him sitting upon it (1:16; 4:5), so the same word is used of how fire and judgment proceed out of their mouth of God's briefly victorious enemies (9:17,18). So often the contrast is drawn between the things of God's Kingdom and God's people, and those of His opposition. The thundering recorded here is that of Rev. 19:6 at the time of the second coming of Christ. The great voice out of the throne ["voices" may be a reflection of the Hebrew idea of an intensive plural] is the great voice out of the throne of Rev. 16:17; 19:5 when "it is done". It is the voice of victory which effectively comes out of the throne at the last day (Rev. 7:9,10).

The 24 elders of Rev. 4:5 represent rather than symbolize the believers, whose guardians they are. These Angels represent the saints in the court of Heaven. In this lies the practical meaning of all this; that we, our 'case', our thoughts and deeds, are represented in none less than the court of Heaven; and there they are judged, discussed, and responded to.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God- It is the faithful who are "before the throne". The seven spirits refers perhaps to the totality of God's Spirit and His power. Seeing He makes His Angels spirits, it could be that God's power is apportioned between seven senior Angels. But the connection with the seven churches and stars, who are the angels of the churches, is also clear. As the indwelling Spirit dwells and abides within us, so we are represented as the seven lamps burning always before Him in Heaven. In the last day, of which this vision speaks, we shall be turned to Spirit nature. We are the elders, and we are the seven spirits. The symbolism reflects different aspects of the same realities.

There are four references in Revelation to the seven spirits (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), making a total of 28. Which is the same number of times Revelation uses the term "the Lamb". The idea is that the totality of the Spirit is under the control of the Lord Jesus- which follows from His enthronement as King of the cosmos, on God's behalf, with all power / Spirit given to Him. To Him who was once a little boy growing up in Nazareth, clinging to His mother, struggling with childhood hurts and illnesses... so highly was He exalted. But these seven spirits are clearly to be

connected with the seven lamps burning before the throne of Rev. 4:5, the candlestick with seven lamps burning "before the Lord" (Ex. 40:25). And that candlestick is the church, according to Rev. 1-3. The fullness of His power works through the church in her mission of being sent into the world with the Gospel, just as the seven spirits of God in Zechariah 4:10 [the basis of the candlestick imagery in Revelation] go to and fro throughout the earth. We have total power behind us in seeking to fulfil the great commission. Like those sent forth by the Lord during His ministry, we return from each mission admitting that we lacked nothing.

4:6 *And in front of the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal*- The allusion is to the bronze "sea" or laver in the temple. Verse 5 has just alluded to the candlestick. Here there is a tranquil “sea of glass”, but this is the very same symbol as used in Rev. 15:2 concerning how this situation is arrived at *after* and *as a result of* the fiery judgments upon God’s enemies in the last days. This confirms the suggestion on :1 that we have here a vision of the state of things in the last days, seen from Heaven's perspective. This glass sea is “clear as crystal”- which is the very metaphor used to describe the Kingdom conditions (Rev. 21:11; 22:1). Again and again, Revelation 4 uses the language of the period surrounding the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth. It’s a prophetic vision of the things which shall be “hereafter” (4:1), rather than a description of how things were in Heaven at John’s time and how they have been ‘up there’ for the last 2000 years.

In confirmation of this, note that the whole scene happens “in front of the throne”, but this phrase is repeatedly used later in Revelation to speak of the situation before the judgment throne of the Father and Son, when this as it were is set up on earth. Before that throne the faithful shall be found faultless (14:5), and they sing before that throne a new song because of their triumph (14:3). Those who overcome the tribulation of the last days are found “before the throne” (7:9,11,15). So what we are seeing in chapter 4 happening ‘before the throne’ is not a mere description of ‘what was going on before God’s throne at John’s time, and has been going on all along since then’. No. This is about what shall happen before that throne *at the day of judgment at the second coming*. That is the time referent of Revelation’s language of “before the throne”. For the sea of humanity is hardly calm as crystal glass before His throne, and will not be until the last day.

And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind- There are evident similarities between Ezekiel's cherubim, and the four living creatures of Rev. 4. They are both described as "full of eyes" (Ez. 1:18 = Rev. 4:6), with four very similar faces (lion, calf, man, eagle in Rev. 4:7 = lion, ox, man, eagle in Ez. 1:10); and both have wings (Rev. 4:8 = Ez. 1:8). Yet the living creatures of Revelation speak of being redeemed by the blood of Christ and made king-priests in God's Kingdom (Rev. 5:8-10)- as if they are the redeemed people of God. The four faces are likely to be connected with the four standards of the tribes of Israel (Lion = Judah, Man = Reuben, Ox = Ephraim, Eagle = Dan). Each of those tribes had two other tribes assigned to them in the encampment procedures of Num. 2. There is extra-Biblical tradition that the cherubim in Solomon's temple had the same four faces which Ezekiel saw on the cherubim- lion, ox, man and eagle. Those to whom Ezekiel related his vision would have immediately understood the point- that the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the Heavenly, and that above that was a huge Angelic system operating, which also represented God's people- them. But that huge system was to remove to Babylon, and then the final visions of Ezekiel show that glory returning. Ezekiel, as the representative "son of man" as he's so often

styled, was caught up within that system and transported at ease between Babylon and Jerusalem- and those who wanted to opt in with God and His Angels could likewise be taken to Babylon and returned. Those who chose to remain in Babylon were therefore resisting being part of an awesome system of God manifestation and Angelic operation. We have that same choice in things great and small today.

Just as the lamb with seven heads faces off against the dragon and beasts with multiple heads, so here, the four living creatures [AV "beasts"] are the equivalent of the "four beasts" of Daniel, who morph into the beasts of Revelation. Again the idea is that the apparently invincible systems seen "on earth" are nothing compared to their far greater equivalent "in Heaven". And the faithful are given a glimpse of Heaven's perspective, and asked to make that their worldview.

We have just read that the faithful shall share His throne (3:21). And exactly there is where we find the living creatures. The "four living creatures" are a means of expressing God's manifestation, be it in Angels or Israel in the past. But now, at the point of the last day of which this vision speaks, the reference is to us. This is why we / they are both in the midst of the throne and round about it. We are in one sense before the throne, receiving His grace, casting our crowns there (:10); and in another sense, sharing with Him in His throne itself.

4:7 *And the first creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had the face of a man and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle*- See on :6. The four beasts full of eyes which are found here (:6,7) are the Heavenly reflection of the four beasts of Daniel 7, and the powerful little horn with its cunning eye is thus presented as a weak parody of the Heavenly reality. As noted on :1, the vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. These beasts all exist in the last days in some form, but shall be subsumed within the "four living creatures" of the cherubim, representing the glorified believers; see on :6.

4:8 *And the four living creatures each had six wings, full of eyes round about and within*-The 'beasts' / 'creatures' of the nations shall be subsumed within and by the cherubic "living creatures", representing the believers (see on :6). Their being "full of eyes" is a repeatedly noted feature, and I suggest refers to how we shall then know all. A large element of our struggle in this world is that we do not have full vision, we cannot attach precise meaning to event, nor see the immediate future. This plays no small part in the psychological struggle of believers especially, who sense that there *is* meaning to event, and the hand of God is and shall be in their immediate future history, but cannot see it all in detail.

We note that these four living creatures are the same as the cherubic figures of Ez. 1, but there are differences. In Ez. 1, *each* creature has four faces and four wings, whereas these have six wings, like the seraphim of Is. 6. Perhaps the idea is that here we have a composite image of the seraphim and cherubim, a vision more glorious and extensive than anything revealed in the Old Testament.

And they have no rest day and night- As the Angelic entity of Heaven, representing the believers, has no rest day nor night from His service and praise, so the beast worshippers have no rest day or night from their judgment (4:8 cp. 14:11). These are the only times in the entire New Testament that this Greek phrase for 'having no rest' are used. Indeed, so often Revelation uses phrases and words which occur only in Revelation. So I suggest the scene at this stage is that of the last days (see on :1), and here we have ceaseless praise during the period of the beast's destruction. See on :1. But here again we have an allusion to the Imperial cult. Tacitus writes of how "day and night the applause and acclamations of the Augustiani echoed

around the palace". But we are being shown at this point that the true Kingdom or empire is God's, and His throne is the locus of it, and not Caesar's palace in Rome.

Saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come- This again is an allusion to the Imperial cult; here, to the way the Emperor was to be addressed as "most holy [*sacratissimi*] emperor". "Our Lord and our God" was how Domitian demanded to be addressed. But the Lord God is the Almighty. Not Caesar. At every point, we find a demand for the believer to jettison the cult of Emperor worship, just as we are called upon to view our world as passing away, and to give our loyalty to the Kingdom of God and His Son. The idea of eternity was commonly found in the Imperial cult. Caesar was eternal, Nero being addressed as "the only one from the beginning of time", and so were Roman cities (*urbs aeterna*), the Roman people (*Aeternitas Populi Romani*), and empire itself (*pax aeterna*). But all these ideas are the antithesis of the Kingdom / empure of God, they were all to pass away, and instead of Rome, the New Jerusalem would alone last eternally. Likewise, "was / is / is to come", clearly alluding to the Yahweh Name, is the ultimate reality opposed to the sea-beast which "was / is *not* / is to come" (Rev. 17:8.11). The dragon and beasts are represented as pathetic fake imitations of the ultimate Divine reality. They are often described as deceivers; whereas in the mouth of God's people there is no deceit. And we are to view this world likewise.

4:9- see on Rev. 5:6.

And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever- The giving of honour to Him who sits upon the throne (4:9) is an idea only found elsewhere in 19:7, where honour is given to the Lord on the throne "for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready". Again, we are directed to understand the giving of honour as appropriate to the Lord's second coming. The picture is specifically of the last days; see on :1. The "living creatures" have something to "thank" the Lord for, and to glorify and honour Him for. I suggested on :6 that at this point, they refer to the glorified believers.

4:10 *The twenty four elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne and shall worship him that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying*- Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. They will cast their crowns before the enthroned Lord, as if to resign their reward as inappropriate for them. Indeed, they shouldn't be in the Kingdom. The righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18). The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17).

This is another of many allusions to the emperor cult, whereby local kings and rulers knelt and cast their crowns before the Roman emperor or before images of him. It was a statement of utter submission. But this picture is applied to the Lord Jesus, and contributed towards making Revelation such a subversive and illegal document within the Roman empire. The things we stand for are no less radical and break all the norms of the societies in which we currently live.

Because it is by God's will that we are created, because He is from everlasting to everlasting, because God is creator (:11), we cast our crowns of 'reward' before His throne in a sense of unworthiness, just as David in Ps. 8 had the overawing sense of 'Who am I…?' when he reflected upon God's creation.

Depending upon how we translate the verbs, there could also be the sense here that the casting of crowns goes on "for ever". To throw down your crown is

something done on the cusp of emotion, from deep recognition of unworthiness before the One whom we so deeply respect. But that cusp of emotion shall endure for ever.

4:11 *Worthy are you, our Lord, to receive the glory and the honour and the power. For you did create all things, and for your sake they existed and were created*- "Our Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus, and is again a subversion of the way Caesar was addressed in this way. His creation of all things recalls the prologue of John's gospel, where clearly a new creation is in view (2 Cor. 5:17), a creation of a world of persons in His image. And as the faithful find themselves accepted and immortalized before His throne, they will realize that indeed the new creation has come to its final term. And they stand there because of His creation of them, and not in their own strength, created of His will [NEV "sake", AV "pleasure"] and not their own. The allusion may be to Jn. 1:13, where the Lord Jesus is presented as bringing us into spiritual being not of our will but of His. In :8,11 we read of "the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" 'receiving [*lambano*]' "glory, honour and power [*dunamis*]". The only other time we read of this is in Rev. 11:15-17, when the seventh Angel sounds and the Kingdom of God is established: "We give You thanks O Lord God Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken [*lambano*] Your great power [*dunamis*] and have reigned". The vision here is specifically about the state of the Heavenly throne room at the last day; see on :1.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

This continues the vision of chapter 4, which we have clearly located in the last days. The sealed book of 5:1 is the book of life, which is only opened at Christ's return (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12). The opening of the seals is therefore something which is the opening of the book- and the events associated with them therefore occur at the last hour, when the book is opened. Any appropriacy to events at other points in history is intended and was of encouragement to those of that day, but the essence of the fulfilment is in the last days. The joy of the redeemed that the Lamb has opened the book through His blood is not just joy that prophetic revelation has been given in the seals; it is joy that they have been redeemed because the book has been opened (5:5,9). The Lamb's blood was required to open the book, and it is redemption, a place in that book of life, which was enabled by the Lord's death. The actual opening of the scroll is performed by the Lord Jesus in His role as "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (see on :5), and according to Gen. 49:5 this refers to the Lord in His latter day manifestation, triumphing over the prey. The redeemed burst into praise when the Lamb takes the book of life to open it- they thank Him for redeeming them, and for making them "kings and priests, and we shall reign on earth" (:10). This sounds like they are about to start reigning. The time when this is said is therefore that of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth.

Not every detail has been given of how that end has been achieved, but in chapters 4 and 5 we see a broad sweep from the beginning of the last days right through to the full establishment of the Kingdom.

That the scroll refers to the book of life was first pointed out to me by Peter Watkins. One of the most compelling reasons is the way that Daniel 7 is being alluded to, and the parallel with the opening of the books at the judgment is in the scroll of Revelation 5 being opened:

	Daniel 7:9, 10	*Revelation*
(a)	thrones were set	the 24 elders upon 24 thrones (R.V.) (4 :4).
(b)	the Ancient of days did sit.	a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne (4:2).
(c)	His garment white as snow.	like unto a jasper (4:3).
(d)	His throne like the fiery flame.	and a sardine stone.
(e)	His wheels as burning fire.	(Ez. 1:15-21. Not mentioned in Revelation except by implication in connection with the four-fold cherubim-chariot of Rev. 6).
(f)	a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him.	the sea of glass.
(g)	thousand thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.	the number of the angels was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (5:11).
(h)	the judgement was set and the books were opened.	I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life (20:12).

5:1 *And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals*- Note the parallels with Ezekiel- the four living creatures, a throne scene, a scroll- with judgments against Israel on it, to be fulfilled in a Babylonian invasion. This similarity with Ezekiel would explain the correspondence between the cherubim vision of Ez. 1:22-28 and that of Rev. 4:2-6. But as explained in the introduction, the scroll is the book of life. But the opening of it involves the breaking of the seals, which speak of judgment upon Israel at the hands of an invasion by a latter day Babylon. Perhaps this is the significance of the scroll having writing on both sides; referring on one hand to the blessing of acceptance and salvation, and on the other to judgment to come. This would explain why the scroll of 10:10 is both sweet and bitter. The book of life is only opened once all the seals are broken, and I suggested in the introduction to this chapter that this implies the seals refer to events which happen in short succession in the very last days, just prior to the opening of the book of life. That surely is required by the 'decorum of the symbol'.

5:2 *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to undo the seals of it?*- The great voice recalls the great voice of Goliath challenging Israel to provide a man who could provide their salvation; see on :4. None of course are worthy, and John opened his writings with the statement that not even John the Baptist was "worthy" (Jn. 1:27). This points up the power of imputed righteousness in 3:4 where the faithful are called "worthy". All that is true of the Lord becomes true of us if we are in Him, but by grace alone. All the New

Testament commands to "walk worthy..." are ultimately not obeyed by any of us. Only He is worthy.

5:3 *And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, or to look thereon*- See on :2. No Angel, no human believer currently live nor any who had previously lived and died, was worthy. Perhaps John somehow saw all the past and present believers flash before him in the vision. Being unworthy to even look upon the book of life recalls the impossibility of man looking upon God. The parallel suggests His close identity with all the names in His book of eternal life. In similar style, the face of the Lord Jesus is portrayed as identified with the stones of the breastplate, representing God's people; see on 4:3. But the idea may be that nobody was able to look at the scroll in the sense of reading or understanding it. And thus the simple point is made- that we cannot know who shall finally be saved. And apparently none in heaven, no Angel, knows that either. For we are all a work in progress and have freewill to act in such a way that our name may be removed from that scroll; see on 3:5. Who exactly will be saved amongst the last generation is therefore an open question right to the very end. But I suggested on :1 that the writing on the scroll was on both sides; the names of those saved, and yet also the final judgments. And nobody could even read or know that final picture apart from the Lord. And this again would be because the final chronology of events and nature of the various judgments are to some extent open; if for example Israel repent and accept the Lord early in the process, then various aspects of the judgments will not be necessary. These issues, of defining who are saved and also of knowing the exact chronology of latter day events, have been wrongly fascinating for many. But we not only cannot know them, we are unworthy to know them.

5:4 *And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll, or to look thereon*- See on :3. Weeping because no man could open the book of life, of salvation, has similarities with Israel's inability to find a champion against Goliath. Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (1 Sam. 17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking one on another helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward being offered: “It shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (1 Sam. 17:25). But "all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (1 Sam. 17:24). Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and their Angel representatives in the court of Heaven weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or open the book of life- until our Lord prevailed on the cross. John is representative of all of us, weeping at his inability and unworthiness to open the book of life.

5:5 *And one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered; he can open the scroll and the seven seals of it*-Why this unusual title for the Lord in this context? Surely because the events are happening at the time when He is fulfilling His role as the lion rather than the lamb. That time for active and aggressive manifestation of Jesus against others- not least against the other beasts of the latter days- is at His return. The allusion is obviously to Gen. 49:9 which speaks of Judah’s lion as aggressively

triumphing over his prey- the work of the Lord Jesus *in the last days at His return*. In Rev. 5:5, the lion of Judah 'prevails', the language of struggle, in order to open the scroll. The loosing of the seals therefore speaks of the Lord's activity at the time of His coming in triumphant judgment upon the other beasts of the field.

The Lord "conquered" or 'prevailed' / 'overcame' in order to open the scroll. This is the language of the Lord's overcoming on the cross (s.w. Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:33). As the Lord urged us to be of good cheer because He has overcome / conquered (Jn. 16:33), so the Angel urges John. And the word is frequently used of how all the faithful 'overcome' their world (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 1 Jn. 2:14; 4:4; 5:4 etc). But the Lamb alone has "overcome"; yet we in Him are finally counted as having achieved His victory. Just as He alone is worthy, but we are counted worthy (3:4). This concept of being "in Christ" is so common in Paul, and John too is expressing the same wondrous idea but in different ways. This great truth lifts us up above all feelings of personal inadequacy and failure to achieve. For we are part of One so much greater than us, and His Name and victory are ours.

The concept of conditional prophecy opens up a significant window into the tension facing the Lord Jesus as He approached the cross- indeed, throughout His ministry. So much depended upon Him. If He had failed, so much would simply not have come true as God intended. Rev. 5:5 stresses how the Lamb alone, through His sacrificial death [hence the figure of a lamb] was able to open the seals, and thus enable history as God intended to unfold. Indeed, the sealed scroll can also be understood as the book of life, whose opening was only made possible by the Lord's death. This had as it's basis the language of Dan. 12:4, where Daniel sealed the book. Rudolf Rijkeboer comments: "Daniel's prophecy of the seventy year-weeks takes us to the time of the Messiah, but not really beyond. How things would continue would depend on the Saviour, if He was victorious. That he would be victorious was… by no means a foregone conclusion. It depended totally on the Saviour's own free will… while the scroll remains sealed… that particular future is not going to happen at all!". In this sense we understand that through the cross, the pleasure or 'intention' of God would be furthered by Messiah's 'hand' through His crucifixion (Is. 53:10).

5:6- see on Jer. 1:11,12.

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had just been slain- The living creatures, representing the victorious believers, are in the midst of the throne (see on 4:6). We are set down with the Lord in His throne (3:21). But superimposed upon them is now the ever stronger image of the Lamb standing and not sitting. He is at our centre, in Him He is us and we are Him. For in no other way can we be portrayed as sitting upon the throne. The slain lamb is still standing, rather than lying down as a dead body. Perhaps the idea is that the Lord died on the cross in a vertical position, as if dead whilst still standing in victory.

The lion's triumph is only because He had previously been the sacrificial lamb; but He is portrayed as a rather aggressive looking lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes (5:6). Again we note that the beast with his ten horns and a little horn with eyes (Dan. 7:20) is an anti-Christ, a parody of the real Jesus. We note the sustained emphasis that the Lamb alone was "worthy" to open the scroll of life (4:11; 5:2,4,9,12); but the Lord graciously says that His redeemed people will walk with Him because they too are "worthy" (3:4). This is a deep insight into the extent of imputed righteousness, and what it means to be counted as "in Christ". The marks of

His sufferings will be in Him eternally, and thereby we will be eternally reminded of the things we now only dimly appreciate (Rev. 5:6; Zech. 13:6). See on Mk. 9:47.

Rev. 4:9 alludes to the Isaiah 6 vision, and applies it to the future judgment. Yet silhouetted within the vision of the judgment throne is a slain lamb (Rev. 5:6), as if before the judgment, all will be aware of the Lord's sacrifice. The accepted will utter praise immediately after realising the wonderful verdict pronounced for them- in terms of praising the Lord Jesus for his sacrifice, and recognising their eternal debt to the blood of His cross (Rev. 5:9). The cross and the judgment and reward are connected. This is why the Sephardim called the Day of Atonement, with all its typology of the cross, "the day of judgment". To come before the cross is to have a foretaste of judgment; there and then was the judgment of this world.

The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth- The Lord's death meant that the Spirit was given to all His people (Jn. 7:39). And it was in the power of the Spirit that they went out into all the earth with the Gospel, in fulfilment of the great commission. I noted throughout Jn. 14-16 that the Comforter has especial relevance to the fulfilment of the great commission. And yet the reference is also to the Lord Jesus becoming Lord of all Angels, becoming Himself "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). His Spirit is therefore sent forth into all the earth, just as His followers go into all the earth with Him and the message of His Spirit.

And yet a specifically latter day interpretation is also discernible once we perceive the allusions to Zech. 6:5-7, where the horsemen spirits of the Lord go forth throughout the earth / land promised to Abraham. This theme will be later developed in the seals, trumpets and vials. But at this stage the comfort is that in the awful situation to come upon that area in the last days, the details of which we are to read about in the next chapters, the Lord's Spirit is intensely present, preserving and empowering His people.

The Chronology And Structure Of Revelation

The lamb slain is clearly a reference to Passover. I suggest that the key to the interpretation of Revelation is in understanding how its structure is linked to its interpretation. This doesn't mean that interpretations which ignore the structure are wrong; the book is open to multiple fulfilments, as most Bible prophecies are. The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament out of context- phrases and verses are taken up and given an interpretation which can't be extended to the surrounding context of the Old Testament passage. And so it's surely legitimate to likewise interpret Bible prophecy in a similar piecemeal manner. However, this doesn't preclude a hermeneutic [scheme of interpretation] which takes an entire book and seeks to make sense of it from start to finish.

Throughout latter day Bible prophecy, there is mention of a 1260 day / 42 month / three and a half year period of final tribulation. The Jews had a three and a half year reading cycle, similar in principle to the annual *Bible Companion*, whereby there were specific readings from the Pentateuch and prophets, with a Psalm read every Sabbath. This system was based around the feasts. The book of Revelation is likewise based around the feasts. It should be noted that the Gospel of John, which appears so similar in style to Revelation, was likewise based around the Jewish feasts; and a case can be made that it was intended to be read over a three and a half year cycle along with the Jewish lectionary readings (Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel And Jewish Worship* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1960)). Hence John's account of events seeks to place them all within the period of the various feasts; and his material can be seen as a kind of

exposition of the Old Testament 'readings for the day' according to the Jewish triennial reading cycle.

There are many connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation	Feast	Allusions
5	Passover	Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13
7	Tabernacles	Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 1
8,9	Day Of Atonement	Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whitt *Revelation: A Biblical Approach* pp. 104,105.
11	Dedication & Purim	The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Pu exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5
12	Pentecost & Passover	The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, s reap?"
14	Tabernacles	
15 + 16	Atonement & Passover	Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm
19	Passover	Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms
21,22	Tabernacles	

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:
Chapter 5: Passover
6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles
Chapters 8& 9: Atonement and Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)
Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles
1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between chapters 9 and 11.

Not all prophecy has to be predictive. The Lord Jesus spoke of His future sufferings and commented that once those things happened, the disciples would be able to make sense of them *at that time* because of His previously spoken words about them (Jn. 8:28; 13:19; 14:29; Acts 11:16). And so it may be futile to try to work out precisely how things will be before they actually happen; but as we pass through the

final three and a half years, those who understand will be amazingly encouraged as they see everything falling into place. It will be the most amazing, detailed and practically encouraging fulfilling of prophecy that anyone has ever lived through. And given the whole nature of the tribulation, it will be encouragement that the faithful will sorely need.

5:7 *And he came and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne*- This appears to speak of the Lord Jesus taking the scroll from God. Salvation is from God, but the Son has opened that salvation to us. But all this is indeed a kaleidoscope of images. The Lord Jesus is enthroned (:6), yet He comes to the throne where the living creatures are; He is as a lamb, then a lion, now apparently again in human form. As explained in the introduction to chapter 1, this is classic apocalyptic genre. Over interpretation will lead to false interpretation. The images rotate as in a kaleidoscope, because each image portrays a different aspect of the truth being revealed.

5:8 *And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints*- The living creatures represent the faithful who are set down in the Lamb's throne and the throne of the Father (see on 4:6). But now they fall before the throne. And here the living creatures are differentiated from the "saints", whose prayers they hold. See on :7 for the idea of a kaleidoscope of images being presented, and the danger of over interpreting these visual forms.

In 15:2 it is those who overcome the beast who have harps. The living creatures and elders are entities in the Heavenly throne room, representing the believers on earth. Whilst the victory is the Lord's, it has been brought to realization by the prayers of the saints. Chapter 8 emphasizes how the incense of their prayers triggers the events which happen on earth to bring about the Lord's visible return to establish Hs Kingdom. Their bowls of prayer cannot be separated from the seven vials or bowls of judgment which are later poured out on the earth / land; they are poured out as a result of the bowls of prayer offered by the saints. 5:9 will go on to talk of a new song being song. This is to be connected with the offering of incense; we are being invited to behold a reflection of a temple service in Heaven itself. Edersheim describes the offering of incense in the temple as follows, and note his mention of the "new song" being sung afterwards, just as we have here in 5:8,9: “As the President gave the word of command which marked that 'the time of incense had come,' the whole multitude of the people without withdrew from the inner court and fell down before the Lord, spreading their hands in silent prayer. It is this most solemn period, when, throughout the vast temple-buildings, deep silence rested on the worshipping multitude, while within the sanctuary itself the priest laid the incense on the golden altar, and the cloud of odours rose up before the Lord, which serves as the image of heavenly things in Revelation (Rev. 8:1, Rev. 8:3, Rev. 8:4). The prayers offered by priests and people at this part of the service are recorded by tradition as follows: 'True it is that Thou art Jehovah, our God and the God of our fathers; our King and the King of our fathers; our Saviour and the Rock of our salvation; our Help and our Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to Thy name by the seashore. Together did all praise and own Thee as King, and say, 'Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel'”.

Revelation describes Angels rushing in response to human prayers, vials of judgment being poured out on earth as a result of the incense of prayer accumulating... this is the power of prayer. If prayer is like incense, we must give Dt.

33:10 RVmg. its full weight- that incense would come up "in your nostrils". This is how intimately we are invited to see our prayers being received by God; this is the power of prayer. The golden vials full of prayers of Rev. 5:8 become the vials of judgments which are poured out on the land in Rev. 8:5- so close is the connection between the events that mould history, and the incense of prayer.

5:9 *And they sing a new song, saying: Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open the seals of it. For you once were slain, and did purchase for God a people with your blood, people of every tribe, tongue and nation*- See on :8 for the significance of this "new song". Is. 42:9,10 says that we sing the "new song" now, because we sing / meditate of the "new things" which will be in the Kingdom. In that day, we will "sing a new song" (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). And yet this is undoubtedly picking up on the way in which we can *now* sing the 'new song', every morning (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1).

This presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. And they are found to be redeemed at the time when the book of life is opened, which is at the Lord's return. Which we believe to be imminent. This means that not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Bosnians... every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. And representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It seems highly doubtful to me that over the past 2,000 years, the Truth of Christ has been taken to every *ethnos*, tribe, clan, custom and language, especially in Africa and Asia. So it follows that only once *we* have done it in our generation will this come true. The brethren in those parts especially have work to do yet, it seems to me. And we should all support them as best we can. But these days, one only has to stand on the streets of London, Sydney or New York handing out fliers to reach every nation and tongue. I have a real belief that given the current rate of progress in preaching, the current generation *could* witness literally world-wide representation by those who understand true Christian doctrine- *if* we *all* do our bit. It is very difficult for me to reproduce in writing the kind of picture I have in my mind. But it is a thrilling and all consuming, all-demanding vision.

We are a purchased people, redeemed, bought out of slavery, by the Lord's sacrifice. A true appreciation of the Lord's work on the cross, a real ability to say that the Son of God loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*, will reflect itself in our attitude to materialism. The Lord gave His blood in order to purchase our body and our spirit for himself (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Rev. 5:9 RV). *Therefore* we must surrender our body and spirit, all that we have, to Him. We are not our own. To hold *anything* back is to deny the cross; to deny the Lord what He paid so terribly to possess: our lives, our hearts, our bodies.

The very close association of the Angels with their charges is shown by the Angels identifying themselves with their charges by saying that Christ had "redeemed us" out of every nation, and given them the hope of being king-priests in the future

Kingdom (Rev. 5:9,10). Unto the Angels the world to come has not been put in subjection, nor do they belong to specific nations, but because they identify so closely with us they can speak in this way. Rev. 5:9 RVmg. speaks of the Angels in the Heavenly throne room, representing us, praising God that He had purchased men unto Himself "and madest them to be [AV "made us"] … a kingdom… and they [AV "we"] shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10). If the RV is correct, we have a picture here of our Angels thanking God in advance for the salvation which He has prepared for us their charges. It would seem from this that our 'guardian' Angel changes according to what we are trying to achieve for God. Similarly the great Angel of the Exodus appears to have been Moses' personal guardian because Moses and the Angel were working for the same ends.

5:10- see on Rev. 6:9.

And made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they shall reign upon the earth- Several times so far in Revelation we have noted the faithful presented as enthroned priests, king-priests, after the order of Melchizedek. And the Lamb Himself is likewise presented. It's not that some will be kings and others priests; we shall be king-priests. If we can gain a clear picture of God's intended roles for the priests under the Law, we will have further insight into our future work as king-priests. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

As noted in the introduction to chapter 5, this whole vision refers to the last day. The redeemed burst into praise when the Lamb takes the book of life to open it- they thank Him for redeeming them, and for making them king-priests who shall now reign on earth. This sounds like they are about to start reigning. The time when this is said is therefore that of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth. Seeing there is no conscious survival of death, it is hard to imagine how the redeemed could have said this to Jesus 2000 years ago, especially seeing that many of them were not then in existence. The vision goes on to the time of the total establishment of the Kingdom on earth, when all existence in heaven, earth and sea praise the Lamb (5:14).

5:11 *And I looked, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*- We are seeing a vision of the heavenly throne room, where the Angels represent before God the believers on earth. Now we have the kaleidoscope of images merging again; the Angels about the throne are the believers crying out in the joy of victory and final receipt of grace.

This huge number reflects Abraham's seed as innumerable. The living creatures in and around the throne symbolize the redeemed; see on 4:6. The great number of the redeemed could mean that many are saved relative to the wonder of salvation, seeing that many are called but few chosen; and there are plenty of other suggestions that the redeemed are but a minority amongst humanity. But on the other hand, the numbers are intended to be gawped at as huge. This needs to be given full weight by those who consider that only their tiny denomination or fellowship shall be saved.

5:12 *They were saying with a great voice: Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain to receive the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing*- Angels and those faithful they represent upon earth (see on :11) are united in realizing that this wonderful salvation is thanks to the Lamb. Not the lion, but the Lamb, thanks to His death, the book of life has been opened and the reward given. The seven terms used are all elsewhere used about the power, riches etc. of the pagan world which has dominated the believers in their lifetimes. The glory of the kingdoms of this world is to be given to the Lamb.

5:13 *And I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing, honour, glory and might, for ever and ever*- Ps. 69:34 speaks of how *everything* in the sea, heavens and on earth should praise God. This cannot refer to believers in all those places. Rev. 5:13 uses similar language to describe how every creature in the sea, under the earth and on the earth and in Heaven, all praised God for Christ's ascension into Heaven. The dead do not praise God. The impression is given that the whole natural creation will in some way render praise to God. But those under the earth in :3 are dead believers. Those under the sea are believers who died at sea who are to be resurrected when the sea gives up its dead (20:13). Those "on earth" are the believers who are still alive at the second coming. They together with those in heaven, the Angels (see on ;11), unite in praise.

5:14 *And the four living creatures said: Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped*- On 4:6 we discerned that the living creatures, the cherubim, are a visual way of expressing God's manifestation; and in this case they refer to the believers, along with their Angel representatives in the court of Heaven. The elders likewise represent the believers and their Angel representatives. Every form of representation of the redeemed is portrayed as falling down in praise. The language of rapturous praise of One by all is taken from the image of the Roman triumphs and coronation of Caesars. Again, the images of the imperial cult are being applied to the Lord Jesus; which was radical and subversive stuff in Roman society. It is no less subversive in our age, in spiritual terms.

REVELATION CHAPTER 6

6:1 *And I looked when the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder: Come!*- The living creatures as they are in Heaven represent God in manifestation through His Angels, who represent His people on earth. The voice of thunder is as it were God's voice. The contrast is between the "four beasts" of the cherubim, and the four beasts of Dan. 7 which will reappear later in Revelation. God's heavenly Kingdom is already triumphant over them; we are just waiting for the day when this is manifest on earth. This is the same conflict and contrast between the Lamb with seven heads of Rev. 5, and the various beasts with their heads and horns. The apparently invincible are conquered by the apparently weaker, whose power is so much greater. And this is the same principle we see in our lives of conflict with the flesh and the world systems structured around us. The invitation "Come!" is later repeated by John at the end of Revelation as an invitation to come and inherit the Kingdom. The Gospel is an invitation into the things of God, to see things from His Heavenly perspective, from the standpoint of His Kingdom. The repeated invitations here to "Come!" are rendered in some manuscripts as "Come and see!". In John's language, this has meant coming and seeing the things of the risen Lord (Jn. 20:1). It is His death and resurrection which has opened the things of Heaven.

General Observations

The seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials, subdivided as they are in places into subdivisions, all appear to be parallel. But they aren’t necessarily describing the same events. I suggest the seals refer to the judgments to come upon God’s people and land, Israel / the land promised to Abraham; and trumpets and vials describe God’s

commensurate judgment of the beast system which inflicts these judgments. The similarities are because as they have judged, so they will be judged. The cup they give others to drink must be drunk by themselves. And it could be argued that their judgment will be even more severe and complete. Thus in the seals, a fourth part of things are affected; in the trumpets, a third part; whilst the vials speak of total destruction. As with the judgments on Egypt, which form the basis for the seven vials, the people of God may initially be affected by the outpouring of those judgments, but those who are sealed are saved from them.

The vials are really bowls or cups poured out on the land. The same word is used in one of the Aramaic targums on Is. 51:17,22,23 concerning how the "cup" of judgment drunk by Jerusalem will be given to her judges, the beast system of latter day Babylon. This explains why the vials / bowls / cups are based around the plagues on Egypt, representing the abusers of Israel:

Vials in Revelation	Israel's experience and plagues on Egypt, Exodus
Boils 16:3,4	9:8-12
2 and 3. Water to blood, water sources contaminated, 16:6	Water to blood 7:14-21
4.Scorching heat from the sun, 16:8,9	This will specifically not come upon God's people (Is. 49:10; Ps. 121:5,6; Rev. 7:16), just as the later plagues did not harm the Israelites in Egypt.
5.Darkness 16:10,11	10:21-23
6.Gathering to Armageddon- perhaps Jerusalem. The word could mean 'The desirable city', 'His fruitful mountain', 'the mount of assembly'. It may refer to the Mount Megiddo.	Mount Megiddo was where repentant Israel won a great victory against the Canaanites, the tribes within the land (Jud. 5:19).

7.Lightning, plague	As on Egypt. The reference is also to Ez. 13:8-16 which describes such things coming on Jerusalem- perhaps the idea is that those who now dominate Jerusalem will be punished in this way.

The first four seals, the four coloured horsemen, are based upon the horsemen of judgment in Zechariah 1, which vision is repeated in Zechariah 6 but with the difference that the four horsemen go out to judge the nations who have performed these judgments upon Israel, e.g. “the north country”. These four horsemen inflict punishments and judgments which are full of Old Testament allusions to prophecies concerning how God would judge His people, His land and specifically Jerusalem for their impenitence. Ezekiel 5-7 is full of the same language about what shall come upon Jerusalem, e.g. famine is described in the same language as in Revelation 6 (Ez. 4:16). The four judgments of Rev. 6:8 are those of Ez. 14:21- to come upon Jerusalem. The language of Jeremiah’s prophecies against Judah are particularly alluded in these first four seals (Jer. 6:22-26; 14:11,12; 15:1,2; 16:4,5; 18:11-21; 21:8-10; 38:2; 44:11-14). And the language of the fifth seal is alluding to the Lord’s word of judgment upon Jerusalem in Mt. 23:35. Most significantly, the language of the four horsemen is taken directly from the curses upon Israel for disobedience to the covenant in Dt. 32:23-35.

Clearly enough, beyond any question to the serious Bible student, the focus of the four horsemen is upon God’s people in their land, and especially the city of Jerusalem, in the last days. The Old Testament allusions continue in the appendix to the seals which we find in Revelation 7:1-17. There, the sealing of some of God’s people is obviously based upon Ez. 9:4, where the same was done to the faithful at the time of the Babylonian invasion.

The theme of ‘seven’ judgments coming upon the land surely connects with the claim that Mohammad waged seven military campaigns against the infidels in the land [promised to Abraham]. The Hadith several times speaks of the "seven military expeditions led by the Messenger of Allah himself (may peace be upon him)" (e.g. Book 19.4469), or of the “seven battles” he was victorious in (Book 19.4462). This would explain the seven fold structure of the seals-trumpets-vials. The Moslem pretenders to the pattern of Mohamad bring seven judgments upon Israel, and are punished by likewise receiving back seven judgments, drinking the cup they made others to drink. The Hadith claims that Mohammad predicted three cycles of calamities in the last days, which would be subdivided into various other calamities: "Hudhaifa b. al−Yaman reported: By Allah, I have the best knowledge amongst people about every turmoil which is going to appear in the period intervening me and the Last Hour; and it is not for the fact that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) told me something confidentially pertaining to it and he did not tell anybody else about it, but it is because of the fact that I was present in the assembly in which he had

been describing the turmoil. and he especially made a mention of three turmoils which would not spare anything and amongst these there would be turmoils like storms in the hot season" (41.6908). This is exactly the Biblical picture- of three cycles of judgments and turmoils in the land (seals-trumpets-vials), subdivided into various specific calamities. As the jihadists strive to obey the letter of their writings, they will thereby be fulfilling the outline picture of the last day crisis which is foretold in Revelation.

The typology of the invasions recorded in Judges as well as those of Babylon and Assyria teaches that the latter day Arab incursions during the period of prolonged downtreading will have consciously aimed to destroy the agriculture and even the physical structure of the land of Israel. Dt. 28 and Lev. 26, which have a specific application to the latter-day curses upon Israel, emphasize this curse of famine and its related problems of disease and death. This is exactly the language of the seal, trumpet and vial judgments of Rev. 6,9 and 16, largely falling upon the earth/land of Israel. Our Lord's prophecy of famines at the time of the end had its primary fulfilment in the land of Israel around A.D. 70 - and its secondary reference is fundamentally to the land of Israel too (Lk. 21:11), although this does not rule out this prophecy's partial reference to famines in the surrounding world also.

It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If ye will not for this hearken unto me... then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and the Arabs as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials. The implication of this is that there are at least six periods of God's appeal to Israel to repent through their trials, which they will refuse to accept. "If you will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of Arab downtreading. "If you will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the idea.

It's noteworthy that the seven seals and seven trumpets and seven vials all conclude with the seventh being the establishment of the Kingdom. So there are actually six judgments in each case. The Hadith (Book 41.7040) speaks of six signs before the last day: "Hasten in performing these good deeds (before these) six things (happen): (the appearance) of tribe Dijjal, the smoke, the beast of the earth, the rising of the sun from the west, the general turmoil (leading to large-scale massacre) and death of masses and individuals". These six are very similar to the things spoken of in the seals and trumpets- signs in the sun, mass death, smoke, beasts of the earth. The jihadists are seeking to consciously fulfil the Hadith and so, due to the allusions the Hadith and Koran make to Revelation, they will end up fulfilling God's word of their own volition.

The Seventh Seal?

It is my belief that prophecy is to some extent conditional, and the outcome is variable upon human repentance, God's gracious holding back of legitimate, prepared judgments, the intensity of His people's prayers etc. The lack of any detail about a seventh seal, even though it is opened, is significant. All we read is that there was silence in Heaven at that time for half an hour (Rev. 8:1). This has the same feel to it as the seven thunders whose details were specifically not written down (Rev. 10:4).

Why mention them? I submit that the final judgments intended upon the land and God's people are not in fact going to be performed, although they are potentially prepared- because of God's gracious response to human repentance, prayer and the suffering of His dear people.

This idea that the seventh seal is not opened is confirmed by the observation that the sixth seal is the composite one that contains the trumpet and vial prophecies — the *sixth* seal and not the seventh.

Sixth Seal (Revelation 6: 12-17)	Seven Trumpets
great earthquake	great earthquake (11:13)
	another earthquake (11:19)
sun black	third part of sun smitten (8: 12)
moon as blood	third part of moon smitten (8:12)
stars fall from heaven	"there fell a great star from heaven" (8:10)
	third part of stars smitten (8:12)
the great day of his wrath	"your wrath is come" (11:18)

Sixth Seal	Seven Vials
great earthquake	great earthquake (16:18)
sun black	darkness in kingdom of beast
islands moved	every island fled away (16:20)
mountains moved	mountains were not found (16:20)
the great day of his wrath	the vials of the wrath of God (16:1)

The Seals and the Olivet Prophecy

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on

Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both the first century and also our last days, and the seals are perhaps the clearest example of this.

Rev. 6:1,2	Mt. 24:14	Rev. 6:14	Mt. 24:35
:3,4	:6,7	:16	Lk. 23:30
:5,6	:7	:17	Lk. 21:36
:7,8	:7	7:1	Mt. 24:31
:9	:12	:3	Lk. 21:18,28
:11	:14	:14	Mt. 24:19,21
:12	:7	8:3	Lk. 21:36
:13	:32	:5	Mt. 24:27

John was told that the events of the seals "must take place"- *dei genesthai*. The Olivet prophecy uses the same phrase (Mt. 24:6; Lk. 21:9).

We have seen that the Olivet prophecy describes the events of both AD70 and our present last days, with special reference to the tribulation of God's people, both natural and spiritual. The connections between the Olivet prophecy and the seals would therefore indicate that the seals, and therefore much of Revelation, has reference to these same two time periods. Fairly conclusive evidence for a pre-AD70 date for Revelation has now been published. In any case, the connections with the Olivet prophecy cannot be shrugged off as incidental. The seals, then, can be applied to our latter day tribulation. There seems no reason to insist that they should be interpreted chronologically; they can quite comfortably be seen as describing different aspects of the same period. This is how series of judgments described in the prophets often have their fulfilment (notably in Isaiah), rather than being a chronological prophecy of events. Zech. 12:3-11 is a passage which contains seven occurrences of the phrase "In that day...". The passage does not have to be interpreted chronologically; this is a list of events which will occur around the same time, "in that day". They are snapshots of the same scene from different angles. The seals and the repeated references to a three and a half year tribulation period can be understood likewise; they do not necessarily refer to chronologically different events, but are giving different aspects of information about the same basic scene. The lack of strict chronological sequence in prophecy is a major feature of the Old Testament; thus a consideration of the phrase “in that day..." in Isaiah reveals that the context 'jumps around' all over the place, from the first coming of Christ to the Babylonian invasion to the Kingdom. There is no reason to think that Revelation is any different.

All the seals must be opened if a scroll is to be opened. The scroll doesn’t become partly visible because one seal has been broken. I suggest the imagery is chosen in this way in order to lead us away from seeking to interpret the events of the seals as being continuous historic, consecutive events. Rather are they different aspects of the total picture of what has to happen before the book of life can be opened. The idea of opening a sealed scroll is obviously alluding to Dan. 12:1-4,

where Daniel was told that the scroll would be opened specifically in the last days- i.e. the seals to it would be then removed. This means that we have to look to the last days for the time when the seals are removed.

In my youth I attended regular continuous historic studies of Revelation, noting carefully in my wide margined Bible the suggested fulfilments of the various seals, trumpets and vials in events during the Roman empire and subsequent European history. Some of these fitted better than others. I couldn't deny that there was a fairly good fit in some areas, but in others, eyebrows had to be raised. The fit seemed forced and lacked the ring of truth in terms of credible interpretation. We don't need to take a red pencil and put a line through all those interpretations. Like the continuous historical interpretations of the image in Daniel 2, they have a certain validity. But just as the image was specifically about a latter day entity which stands erect and complete in the land promised to Abraham in the last days, destroyed in totality by the Lord's return, so Revelation has its major fulfilment in the last days. Any shadowy fulfilments we may discern over history are incidental compared to the ultimate and main, intended thrust of latter day prophecy- which is focused upon the events in the land promised to Abraham in the last days before Christ returns. We live at the end of human history; the previous fulfilments are but mere shadows compared to the ultimate reality which is now starting to unfold before our eyes.

The Horsemen

The Hadith claims that the Moslems will be as horsemen in the final conflict at the end of the age: "The Last Hour would not come until... there would be a terrible fight and the Muslims would prepare a detachment (for fighting unto death) which would not return but victorious... Allah will decree that the enemy should be routed... Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: I know their names and the names of their forefathers and the colour of their horses. They will be best horsemen on the surface of the earth on that day". (41.6927). As we find so often in Revelation, the descriptions of the main players are expressed in terms which fit admirably with Moslem self-understanding as expressed in the Koran and Hadith.

The Four Horsemen and Zechariah

The vision of horses going forth to bring judgment is clearly alluding to the similar vision in Zech. 1:8-12; 6:1-8, and we need to get a handle on what is in view there in order to understand how this will come true in the last days:

"I stared into the night, and there was a man mounted on a red horse! The horse was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him there were red, brown, and white horses. Then I asked, "Who are these, sir?" The messenger who was talking to me answered, "I will tell you who these are." The man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, "These are the ones whom the LORD sent out to wander throughout the earth." Then they reported to the angel of the LORD who stood among the myrtle trees, "We have wandered throughout the earth—and look!—the entire earth is at rest. Everything is quiet and peaceful." And the angel of the LORD replied, "LORD of the Heavenly Armies, how long will it be until you show mercy to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, with whom you have been angry for these past seventy years?"… Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?". And the angel answered and said to me, "These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the

white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country." When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth. Then he cried to me, "Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country."

The horses of Zechariah 1 are those nations who have trampled up and down the earth / land of Israel, subduing it until it is quiet. The chariots / horses of Zechariah 6 are the Angel cherubim representatives of those nations, who are sent out against them in judgment. Such judgment is portended in chapter 1 also, where straight after the vision of the horses we read of the four horns who have abused Israel being cut off by the carpenter Messiah of Israel. Significantly, there is an Angel stationed with the horses in the valley from which they emerge, as if to show that the judgments upon the land were Angelically controlled; Israel was not at the hands of chance human evil, indeed the horses report back to the Angel. This sets the scene for the horses / chariots of chapter 6 going out in judgment against those nations. The land lying still and at rest is explained further in 1:11,12- it was because the cities of Judah were lying in ruins after the horse powers had trampled over them. This all looks forward to how Jerusalem shall be trodden down in the last days, after the pattern of how the Babylonians trod it down (Is. 5:5; 28:18; 63:18; Lk. 21:24)- which is when this prophecy will have its final fulfilment. We can look, therefore, for the three or four entities which trod down the land and people of Israel to have their latter day equivalent, and a like judgment from Heaven. And this is what Revelation 6 is explaining in more detail- in a latter day context. The immediate message in Zechariah's time was therefore that a future treading down of the land and Jerusalem was to happen, but the silver lining of that cloud was that this would finally lead to the eternal restoration of Israel. This is exactly the same style as in Ezekiel 38; we noted in studying the context of that prophecy that it was given at the time when news of Jerusalem's fall had come to the rebellious captives in Babylon amongst whom Ezekiel was sitting. They were being told that another even worse desolation was to happen, patterned after the events they were now hearing of, and yet from this would come the eternal restoration of Israel in God's Kingdom on earth. But not immediately.

The two brass mountains of Zech. 6 are from where the horses / judgments issue forth- towards the north and south of Israel. The mountains must therefore be in central Israel. I suggest the mountains in view are both in Jerusalem- the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion, in between which is the valley of Jehoshaphat. These mountains and that valley are from where God's latter day judgments proceed (Joel 3:2,16; Zech. 14:14). Or it may be that they are the two mountains formed by the cleavage of the Mount of Olives predicted in Zech. 14:4, at which time "half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half toward the south". This would connect with the horses / chariots going out towards the north and south here in Zech. 6. Any difficulties with exact chronology may be accounted for by the suggestion that the meaning and nature of time will change in the time around the Lord's coming, as I have outlined at length in *The Last Days*.

The four horses / chariots are understood by most commentators to have connection with the four metals and beasts of Daniel's prophecies. Their connection with the four winds / spirits of the Heavens (Zech. 6:5) recalls the way that the four beasts of Daniel 7 arise as a result of the same four winds / spirits being active. I have explained elsewhere that the four metals and beasts of Daniel's prophecies refer to powers that will dominate the land and people of Israel in the last days, whatever

historical application they may have had. The metals and beasts all exist together in the last days, because they are all judged together at the coming of Christ to earth.

Potential Fulfilments of the Horses of Zechariah Chapters 1 and 6

The way prophetic words can be rescheduled in fulfilment is demonstrated by the 70 years. They came to fulfilment at the time of Daniel's prayer in Dan. 9:2; but also at the fall of Babylon and edict of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1); and yet also in the second year of Darius (Zech. 1:1,12). This latter period would have been timed from the actual destruction of the temple (2 Kings 25:2,8,9); whereas the captivity began before that. And the predicted restoration didn't happen as prophesied. But it will ultimately happen- at the Lord's return.

The little horn of Daniel 7 grows out of the fourth kingdom, represented by the fourth beast. But in Daniel 8, a very similar horn grows out of Greece, the third kingdom. We can therefore conclude that the antichrist figure of Daniel 8 would have appeared as an outgrowth of the Greek kingdom, and been destroyed by Messiah's coming. But this didn't happen, and Antiochus Epiphanes became but an incipient fulfilment of the antichrist of the last days. Zechariah, like Daniel, contains many conditional prophecies- "And this shall come to pass, *if* you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Zech. 6:15). Zech. 9:13 appears to be another such conditional prophecy, similar in reference to that of Daniel 8 about the possibility of Messiah's coming at the time of the Greek empire. God says He will place Ephraim within the bow of Judah, to be fired at her enemies; and He would "raise up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece" (Zech. 9:13), leading to the final salvation of God's people, the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom, and her Messianic king coming unto her (Zech. 9:9). But this didn't come true; the resistance of the Maccabees was not based on true spirituality, and the Romans took over control of the land from the Greeks. No Messianic Kingdom was established. This would explain the purposeful ambiguity of interpretation which there is in the image of Daniel 2; a good case can be made for the sequence Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece, and yet also for the sequence Babylon-Medo Persia- Greece-Rome. Daniel 8 predicts the breakup of the Greek empire after Alexander's death into four horns, out of which a little horn arises (Dan. 8:8). The only other prophetic reference to four horns is again in Zechariah, when we read of how the four horns who had scattered God's people were to be cut off by the carpenters (Zech. 1:18,19). The carpenters surely look forward to the carpenter Messiah. He could have appeared and cut off those four horns; but He did not, and so another prophetic sequence was allowed, in which another [fourth] beast arose, this time with ten horns, not just four. And in Revelation we find this developed further, in that seven heads also appear on the beast, and a whore rides the best, sitting upon [another?] seven hills / kingdoms. The number and ferocity of the enemies of God's people seems to increase over time. If Israel had repented earlier, then all this would have been unnecessary. The three horses of Zechariah 1 thus become four horses in Zechariah 6. The fact the four cherubim chariots are sent out in judgment of those same coloured horses speaks of how all earthly entities have their representative Angels in Heaven.

This same situation can be found in the way that Zechariah 1 opens the prophecy with a vision of three kinds of horses- red, white and speckled. These represented the powers which had subdued the land of Judah and left it in the desolate state it was at the time of Zechariah (Zech. 1:12). It's tempting to interpret them as Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia; or perhaps Babylon, Media and Persia. Straight away, we read of *four* horns, representing the powers who had desolated God's people; and how they would be destroyed by the carpenters, surely looking forward to the carpenter

Messiah. And the vision of Zech. 6 has *four* and not *three* kinds of horses- red, black, white and speckled. This may be Zechariah's way of saying that because of Israel's inability to fulfil the required spiritual preconditions, the longer version of the prophetic program was going to come into play. Although as always, there is the distinct message of hope, that finally God's triumphant purpose with Israel shall come to realization.

The Final Scenario

The vision of Zechariah 6 could have had fulfilment in Zechariah's time; the three horses of Gentile oppressors in chapter 1 are matched by the horses of the Divine cherubim in chapter 6, who are sent forth to judge those powers. But there are four of them- because by the time of chapter 6, the prophetic program had been extended to coax repentance from Israel. And now in Revelation 6, we have a similar scene in the last days- four horses of different colours are sent out into the earth / land of Israel. The context is the same- these are the powers which will dominate Israel in the last days, under Angelic control, in order to bring about her repentance and eternal restitution to God. I don't think we have to look for four literal entities. The 'four' clearly connect with the four beasts and four metals, and the speckled horses of Zechariah invite comparison with the feet or iron and clay; especially if we read the Hebrew *amots* in Zech. 6:3 as meaning 'red' [AV "bay"]- they would be speckled with red, as if the strength of the red horse was partially in them. Until Zechariah's time, there had been various horses of Gentile powers, the fulfilments of the metals of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7, dominating the land and people of Israel. They had trodden down the land and people until they were silent (Zech. 1:10,11). This treading down is to happen in the last days, when the image stands complete, and all the beasts exist together. This is the burden of the first four horses pictured in the first four seals.

We need not look for these events to come chronologically; for all the seals have to be removed before a scroll can be opened. The event of 'opening the scroll' is presented by the metaphor as one event, and the seals are presenting different aspects of the events required for the scroll to be opened.

The horses were "sent" by Yahweh "to walk to and fro through the land" (Zech. 1:10). These are the same Hebrew words found in Jer. 25:9 for how Yahweh "sent… all the families of the north…and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" into the land. The horses are thus confirmed to represent the nations who had subjugated the land. And the same Hebrew words are found in Hab. 1:6: "I raise up the Chaldeans… which shall march [s.w. "walk to and fro"] through the land". These horses are effectively parallel with the four horns who 'scattered' Israel (Zech. 1:19). Israel were to be "scattered [s.w.] beyond the Euphrates" (1 Kings 14:15); the number four is not perhaps referring to four specific powers, but rather alluding to the way that Israel's domination according to Daniel's visions was to be by 'four' entities.

The coloured horsemen of Revelation 6 are therefore full of reference to the nations who subdued the land and people of Israel, and also to the Angelic powers who ultimately permitted those nations to do that work, and who finally judged them. The horsemen are presented in Revelation as clearly under the control of the living creatures, the Angel cherubim, and that was the same as in Zechariah. The first horse was white and conquering; this doesn't mean that firstly there was a period of military victory, followed by one of hunger and necessity. The seals don't have to be chronologically separate from each other. The opening of the book of life will require a military conquering of the land / earth of Israel, as well as the sufferings of the other seals [hunger, famine etc.].

6:2 *And I looked and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given to him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer*- In the first century application to the "last days" which culminated in AD70, the rider on the white horse "bent on conquest" would initially refer to the victorious Roman march towards Jerusalem in Spring 67. The rider takes peace from the earth (cp. Mt. 24:6,7)- the disruption of the '*pax Romana*', the peace of the Roman empire. "Caesar has obtained for us a profound peace. There are neither wars nor battles" (Epictetus, *Discourses* 3:13:9). The riders on the black and pale horses would then refer to the famine and death resulting from the Jewish war.

The description of the rider on the white horse going out to conquer is intended to be linked with the description of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 19:11. Yet the rider of Rev. 6:1,2 is part of the judgments upon the land. It refers to an anti-Christ, a fake Christ, the ultimate false Messiah; perhaps the Islamic Mahdi.

The white horse here must be understood as the latter day version of the white horse of Zechariah chapters 1 and 6, which went forth to conquer the land promised to Abraham and to tread down its cities and inhabitants. The simple point is that the land of Israel will be conquered; the current technological advantage of the IDF and the bravado of the state of Israel will not ultimately save them. Only faith in Christ will. And yet the figure of a rider on a white horse is used later in Revelation regarding the Lord Jesus. This doesn't mean that it is the Lord Jesus who is in view here in 6:2. For often in Revelation, the powers and entities who dominate God's land and people are presented in terms elsewhere used about the true Kingdom of God and its king. Thus the whore who rides the beast represents the city of Babylon, but the descriptions used have clear connection with the description of the true city of God. This is not to say that they are one and the same. It means that the antiChrist is a fake, imitation Christ, and his Kingdom is likewise an imitation of the true. So the white horse conqueror of the land is an antiChrist- bearing in mind that the Greek idea of *anti* carries the idea of an equivalent or imitation, rather than [as in Latin] someone 'against'. The Hadith in book 19.4388.4390, 4392 and 4437 claim that Mohammad rode on a white horse during the time of the early Moslem battles with the Jews. The language of conquering is very current amongst Islamic jihadists: "Allah hath decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer" (Sura 58.21).

The horses invite connection with the locusts like horses and "the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to battle" in Rev. 9:7,9,17, which I later interpret as the hordes of Israel's neighbours from the Euphrates who will rush into the land promised to Abraham to destroy it. Horses are frequently used in the Bible to represent military action. In Rev. 14:20, blood comes up unto the horse bridles- these invaders meet a terrible destruction. The final destruction of Israel's enemies features the destruction of their horses (Rev. 19:18), and that prophecy compares their horses with the white horse of the Lord Jesus and His followers also on white horses (Rev. 19:11,14,19,21). This juxtaposition of 'horses' suggests that the white horse conqueror of 6:2 is not Christ, but rather an antichrist, an imitation, fake Christ.

The rider on the white horse was "given" a crown, a *stephanos* of victory, and with that 'gift' he goes out to 'conquer'. We find the same Greek words translated 'given' and 'to conquer' in Rev. 13:7, where "the mouth" of the beast is "given… to make war with the saints [God's people, Israel] and to *overcome* [s.w. "conquer"] them". The mouth of the beast is his publicity agent, the false prophet, the little horn- the antichrist figure. And it is this same individual who is pictured in 6:2 as riding the white horse, an imitation Jesus, an anti-Christ. The same Greek word translated conquer / overcome is also found in a similar context in Rev. 11:7: "The beast that

ascends out of the bottomless pit [having experienced a death and amazing 'resurrection'] shall make war against them [the two faithful witnesses] and shall *overcome* them and kill them". But the same word is found frequently throughout Revelation and John's letters, speaking of how ultimately God's people shall conquer / overcome. The point is, they will temporarily be overcome, but they shall gloriously overcome at the end. "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last" (Gen. 49:19).

The crown of the antichrist connects with how the horns of the beast have crowns. His bow connects him with Gog, the individual leader of the assembly of ten nations from within the land promised to Abraham who will invade Israel in the last days. In Gog's defeat by Divine intervention, his bow will be smitten out of his hand (Ez. 39:3). The bow is the weapon of Esau / Edom, the father of the Arab peoples (Gen. 27:3); and it is repeatedly used about the weaponry of the Babylonians and Assyrians and the neighbours of Israel, whose desolation of the land and Jerusalem are the prototypes of the latter day desolation (Is. 5:28; 13:18; Jer. 4:29; 6:23; 46:9; 50:29,42; 51:56). Jeremiah perceived that the bow of Babylon was effectively the bow of Yahweh, drawn against His own people in judgment (Lam. 2:4; 3:12). Again we see that the horses, their riders and weaponry are also those of God, just as the coloured horses of Zech. 1 are matched by the same coloured horses which comprised the Angel cherubim in Zech. 6. Zech. 9:10 speaks of how the horse, chariot and battle how will be "cut off from Jerusalem" just prior to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. Here in Rev. 6:2 we have the development of that situation- and the focus will finally be upon Jerusalem as the holy city of Islam, now proclaimed by some Jihadist theologians as more holy than Mecca.

6:3 *And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying: Come!*- See on :1

6:4 *And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, that they should slay one another. And there was given to him a great sword*- The red horse is literally a flame / fire coloured horse [*purrhos*]. The same root word is found in describing how the horses released from beyond the Euphrates spit "fire" [*pur*] upon the earth / land of Israel, with which they destroy the people there (Rev. 9:17,18). Perhaps the "fire, smoke and brimstone" which they bring upon the land means that they consciously think they are bringing Divine judgment upon Israel- this is indeed the radical Islamist position. Or there may be reference to some form of warfare which makes use of fire, some kind of white phosphorous or other weaponry which creates intense fire which water cannot quench. The only other time we meet the colour 'flame-coloured' ["red"] is at Rev. 12:3, the great red dragon. This horse is therefore to be associated with that system of latter day domination of the land.

Constantly, the comfort is given that none of these calamities upon the land are a result of radical evil, evil that is totally free of any control; for "it was given unto him...". All the traumas to come upon the land are under direct Divine control through the Angels.

"Him that sat thereon" is the same phrase used of how the whore sits upon the beast (Rev. 17:1,3,9,15; 18:7). The whore is the embodiment of the beast, of the same red colour as the red horse. They are symbols for the same thing- an entity of latter day domination of the land which is controlled by an individual-the antichrist, the rider of the horse, the rider of the beast.

It is ultimately the Lord Jesus who sends a sword rather than peace upon the earth (Mt. 10:34); the horses and their woes are all, therefore, under His direct control.

There seems to be allusion to Mt. 10:34 because Rev. 6:4 goes on to say the red horse rider has a sword, and he causes those in the earth / land to kill each other. Mt. 10:34 records the Lord teaching that He had come to send a sword in the form of division between persons. The red horse rider causes those living in the territory of the land promised to Abraham to kill each other; and this is the scenario we currently see unfolding in that very area. It is conflicting forms of religion which are clearly at the root of that conflict; this is the characteristic of the feet of mixed iron and clay, that will not cleave to each other.

Revelation is written in Greek but is clearly a Hebrew book. We can safely assume that the *ge /* "the earth" in view is the same as the Hebrew *eretz*- the land of Israel. And this is indeed how *ge* is often specifically used in the New Testament in speaking of the land of Israel. In Matthew alone: Mt. 2:6,20,21; 5:35; 9:26; 12:42 the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost part of the *ge*, the land promised to Abraham; 17:25; 23:35 "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth"; 27:35. And almost every reference to *ge* in Revelation can be understood as the land promised to Abraham [this of course is not the same as the territory currently occupied by the state of Israel].

The great sword was "given unto him". Again the idea is that these invasions of the land are allowed and even empowered by God. The idea of being given a sword likewise implies that the horse and rider are executing judgment from God. This is how present day Israel are crying out for serious Divine judgment, from the immorality of Tel Aviv to the arrogance of the IDF, overarched by a refusal to repent for crucifying God's Son and refusing Him to this day.

The Greek translated "sword" is the word for a knife; being given a great knife has connotations of sacrifice. We think of Islamic State beheadings, publicized by them with pictures of jihadists holding a knife over their victims. This is exactly the picture we have here. This is what we are seeing before our eyes on the media.

6:5 *And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying: Come! And I looked and beheld a black horse, and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand*- The black horses of Zech. 6 were sent into "the north country", associating this horse with the invasion from the latter day Assyria / Babylon. It could be that the message is simply that there will be terrible famine in the land, and tiny amounts of food will cost much money. But the rider has the balances in his hand, as if he is the merchant and seller. We think of the prediction that none will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast; the suggestion may be that the invading power sells food to some within the land for high prices. Islamic militants insist upon conversion to their form of Islam but will make concessions if a *jizya* tax is paid. So it may be that we have here a description of how famine will come about for God's people as a result of such actions.

6:6 *And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A measure of wheat for a denarius and three measures of barley for a denarius*- Comparing the prices here with those mentioned for food during the siege of Samaria in 2 Kings 7, these prices are very high but not as great as when "an ass's head was sold for 80 shekels, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five" (2 Kings 6.25). The figures are not such as we would expect if real famine, and particularly the famine conditions of a siege, were in view. A man could buy three times as much barley as he needed for a day's wage. This isn't talking about actual death by famine, but rather food being sold at grossly inflated prices compared to income- that's surely the impression being created. This would fit my suggestion that the dominators of Israel are pictured as selling food at grossly inflated prices to those under their

control, in a manner reminiscent of the Jewish ghettos of central Europe under Nazi domination. Corn, wine and oil were the three main crops of Palestine, and the three are mentioned together in Dt. 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Hos. 2:8,22. We are again being told that these events are specific to the land of Israel and not the whole world. Shortages of these things were the result of Israel's disobedience to the covenant; and they would be given again if Israel were obedient (Lev. 26:26; Ez. 4:16).

And do not damage the oil and the wine- The GNB appears to be closest to interpreting this: "Do not damage the olive trees and the vineyards!", as if this is a command or edict. Perhaps the allusion is to the way that during the famine in the time John was writing, Domitian ordered the prosecution of those who allowed their vineyards to go out of cultivation or who cut them down in order to grow food. In this case, we have a picture of extreme famine, along with prosperity- to the point that the ruling elite ordered that the vineyards must not be cut down, lest they have no wine. This was how it was during the famine in Domitian's time- a shortage of grain but an abundance of wine. This is exactly the kind of inequality we see in the world today and which will be seen in the land promised to Abraham in the last days. Possibly Jewish wealth contrasted to Arab need.

The Greek translated "hurt" occurs several times later in Revelation, also in the sense of hurting or damaging. The Angel of Rev. 7:2,3 is told not to "hurt" the physical land until God's servants have been sealed. And likewise in Rev. 9:4, there is the proviso that men must be hurt, but not the plants of the land. The word is used about the hurting of the people on the earth (Rev. 9:10,19), and the faithful are initially not "hurt"- until they are killed after they have completed their witness (Rev. 11:5). The voice that states "hurt not the olive trees and the vineyards" comes from between the four beasts- it is an Angelic limitation placed upon the damagers of the land / people in the land promised to Abraham. The sense may be that initially, the physical land is not to be damaged; the people of God, and then the entire dwellers in the land, are to be 'hurt', and not the physical land. Therefore the lack of food created by the rider on the black horse would not be because of famine, but rather as I suggested- because of selling food at high prices as a form of destruction of those who refuse to convert to the Islamic State.

Another consideration is that the phrase could be rendered "Hands off our oil and wine!". Oil and wine occur together in pictures of abundance and luxurious living (Num. 18:12; Dt. 7:13; 8:8; 28:51; 2 Chron. 11:11; 32:28; Prov. 21:17; Jer. 40:40; Joel 2.24); and note especially that these are part of the luxury of the Babylon-beast system in Rev. 18:13. The implication could be that the desolators of Israel enjoy a brief period of opulence, having grabbed the wealth of Israel and the Jews, and submitting those they have conquered to heavy *jizya* tax and exorbitant prices for food.

6:7 *And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying: Come!*- See on :1.

6:8 *And I looked and beheld a pale horse, and he that sat upon him. His name was Death, and Hades followed behind him. And there was given to them authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the wild beasts of the earth*- The plural "given unto *them"* presumably refers to death and hades. It's unclear whether "the fourth part of the earth" is geographical, or refers to a quarter of the population. The idea which we meet in the Revelation of 'parts' of the land and people being damaged or killed is in line with the Koran, which speaking of judging "the children of Israel" says that Moslems are "to cut off a part of those who disbelieve" (Sura 7.127).

As it stands, it seems redundant to say that death and the grave [*hades*] kill with sword, famine, wild beasts and death. How can 'death' be one of the four listed methods of killing? Perhaps it refers to some specific kind of death- a death penalty of execution (the word is used in this way in Mt. 10:21; 15:4; 20:18). Likewise how can any one horse rider have power over wild animals? The first century fulfilment was clearly in Christians being thrown to the lions; a related word is used for how Paul fought with wild beasts (1 Cor. 15:21). I would suggest that the latter day fulfilment will be in that those who refuse to convert will meet their end in one of four ways at the hands of this horse rider- death by the sword, i.e. in battle; by controlled and enforced starvation, as in the Nazi death camps; "death" in the sense of the death penalty; or death by being thrown to wild animals, as was done to the early Christians by the Romans.

The Greek word translated "sword" here is *rhompaia*, which has already been used of that proceeding from the mouth of the Lord Jesus (1:16; 2:12,16). It is connected not so much with killing in battle or war, but with deliberate, judicial, putting to death. This recalls the Islamic jihadist approach to killing those who will not convert to Islam- they are seen as being killed in a judicial sense, before a court of Moslems who are both judge, jury and prosecution, as well as the execution squad.

The four judgments mentioned here clearly allude to the judgments upon the land of Israel for disobedience (Lev. 26:21-26), and also to Ez. 14:21: "I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!". The 'fourth part' of the land that is thus judged is therefore likely to be Jerusalem. Again we see that the location of the 'earth' is not the entire globe but the land promised to Abraham. The Ezekiel passage goes on to say that out of those judgments will come forth a repentant remnant- which is the same picture we have throughout latter day prophecy. It is this remnant which will enable the return of Christ to Israel. The same pattern is to be found in Ez. 33:27-29; the four judgments on the land, involving a total desolation, result in the repentance of the remnant: "Thus says the Lord Yahweh: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him who is in the open field will I give to the animals to be devoured; and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; the pride of her power shall cease and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate [i.e. not producing food- leading to famine], so that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am Yahweh, when I have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed".

6:9- see on Lk. 18:7; Dan. 5:23; Rom. 14:8,9.

And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held- All the people of God make "testimony". That is a major theme of Revelation. The image here may not, therefore, have to refer to the deaths of some specific martyrs at a specific point in time. The allusion is to how "The blood of the bull the priest shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering" (Lev. 4:7). We are all committed to a sacrificial death, because we were baptized into the death of Jesus. We are living sacrifices. They were told that vengeance for them would only come when the full number of martyrs had been made up; and that rather sounds like the idea of there being a specific number of believers, which once arrived at will trigger the Lord's return [when "the full number of the Gentiles are come in", Rom. 11:25]. We are all

the martyrs. That is the idea. The Jewish Christians were tempted to look to the Maccabean martyrs and emulate them. But the true witness / martyrdom was for the witnesss of Jesus, following Him who was the faithful and true witness. We are all to make that witness, rather than merely being supporters of others who are showcased as martyrs.

The fact the people are 'slain' on the altar connects with our comment on 'death' in 6:8. These are those slain by the Islamic militants for refusing to convert to their false religion. The allusion is to the blood at the base of the altar from the sacrifices, representing the blood or lives lived of the faithful who had been sacrificed. It is blood which is under the altar; the "souls" are represented by the blood. The witness of their lives, who they essentially were, cried out to God, just as Abel's blood cried out. Cain, his brother, becomes the prototype of Israel's latter day persecutors- it is their own half-brothers, their Arab neighbours, who slay them. The Hebrew for 'Cain' is the root of the word 'Canaan'. The persecutors of the faithful are Canaan- the inhabitants of Canaan, Israel's aggressive neighbours

In their death they as it were died with their Lord, the slain lamb (Rev. 5:6). The Greek suggests to be butchered, which is absolutely the behaviour of the jihadists to their victims. Note that those in view are not necessarily Western hostages, but those who are butchered for the sake of their witness to God's word. What we are seeing in the butchering of any who get in the way of the Islamic militants in the 'earth' / land promised to Abraham is a precursor of what can be expected on a wider scale, especially of true Christians witnessing to God's word.

The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk.), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal domination of the flesh which it can appear.

Their preaching God's word was a *marturia*, a legal testament at court, and this was the basis of their martyrdom. The jihadists believe that all who refuse to accept their version of Islam must in some form come before an Islamic court, often presided over by themselves as both judge and prosecution, and then be legally butchered as a result. From their perspective, they are not guilty of wanton butchering; they claim they are doing it in fulfilment of Muslim legal requirements. The parallel is in Rev. 20:4: "Them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God; and such as worshipped not the Beast nor his image and received not his mark". The 'slaying' is particularly by beheading; and Islam is the only world religion today which legitimizes and practices beheading. And they are publicly doing it.

Seeing that there is no conscious survival of death, could this not refer to the guardian Angels of the former martyrs, crying out for the blood of their charges to be avenged? They are *so* closely identified with them that they can ask for "our blood" to be avenged. It's apparent enough that this is not the people themselves speaking- for they are dead. Surely then it refers to their Angels, who identify so strongly with them? Perhaps in the same way, Rev. 5:10 has guardian Angels thanking Jesus for making "us" king-priests to reign on earth. And when the believers are finally glorified, there is an ecstatic voice in Heaven, exalting that the Lamb's wife has made herself ready (Rev. 19:6). Surely this must refer to the Angels rejoicing that their charges have finally made it to salvation? We, for whom they laboured perhaps for centuries, preparing our genetic pool [note how the Angels "prepared" Edom unto destruction long before it happened, Ez. 35:6), and the myriad of circumstances we would meet which were designed to bring us towards the Kingdom. No wonder they

will be so ecstatic. Or in another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given "white robes" and being told to rest a bit longer. Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of one of our children who has died. We know of course that there is no immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

6:10 *And they cried with a great voice, saying: How long, O Master, the holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*- Just as the Lord cried with a loud voice at His death (Mt. 27:46,50; Lk. 23:46). The suffering and even death experienced by the faithful during the tribulation will identify them with the crucifixion sufferings of their Lord. In Revelation, it is usually an Angel who 'cries with a loud voice' (Rev. 5:2,12; 7:2,10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12,15; 12:10; 14:2,7,9,15; 16:1,17; 18:2; 19:17- a very considerable theme). We have here another example of Revelation's theme that the believers on earth have their position reflected in Heaven, by Angels in the court of Heaven. Their representative Angels loudly proclaimed to the court of Heaven the injustice done. It was not so much they themselves who cried out, seeing that death is unconsciousness, but the witness of their lives [their 'soul', the 'blood'] represented by their Angels before the throne of God in Heaven.

There is no conscious survival of death. But the lives of believers are remembered before God, and He has dialogue with them in the sense that we have chats in our mind with our loved ones who have died. For they live on in our hearts, as proclaimed on many gravestones. The fact God has such conversations with us after our death... simply shows His love for us. The faithful calling for vengeance on their adversaries is clearly based upon the parable of the widow crying out for justice in Lk. 18. She is promised that vengeance will come "speedily", just as here the response is that after a "little longer" (:11), vengeance will come. Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10). But this is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon". But the woman in Lk. 18 prayed during her lifetime, not after her death. The extension of

the idea here in Rev. 6 may therefore lead us to understand that our prayers are remembered by God, and the answer is still 'worked on' even after our death.

Rev. 6:10; 13:15; 14:9 describe the persecuted Christian remnant of the last days in the language of Daniel. The conclusion is that they (we?) will find strength to endure through the understanding of prophecy. Daniel's spirit of "How long...?" is so exactly reflective of the attitude of all God's children down the years that it is hard to deny that Daniel is being framed as the representative of all the saints. Indeed, these very words are quoted in Rev. 6:10 concerning the attitude of the slain saints of the last days.

"How long, O Lord" is clearly alluding to Is. 6:11-13: "Lord, how long? He answered, Until the cities are waste without inhabitant and houses without man and the land becomes utterly waste, and Yahweh has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stump remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stump". The context is the same- an utter desolation of the land by an 'Assyrian' invader, resulting in the repentance of the remnant. This is the context of many other 'How long?' laments in the prophets- the answer is 'Until Israel repent!' (Jer. 4:14 "Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?"; 4:21; 12:4; 23:26; 31:22 "How long will you go here and there, you backsliding daughter?"; Hos. 8:5 "How long will it be until they are capable of purity?"; Hab. 1:2). Particularly relevant is Zech. 1:12: "How long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah". The significance is in the fact that the vision of four coloured horsemen is based upon Zechariah 1, and so the "how long?' theme continues the allusion. Again we note that the territory in view is Jerusalem and the land promised to Abraham. The answer of Dan. 12:6,7 to the question is more precise; effectively it is the same as the answers which said 'How long? Until Israel repent!': "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished". Daniel's answer to 'How long?' appears to be 'Until the three and a half year period is finished, and God's people have been thoroughly broken in pieces'. For it seems it is only then that the necessary repentance will occur. Those interested in trying to work out a chronology of events might take note that these particular believers must be killed earlier in the tribulation period. The cry 'How long until justice?' is answered by the news that three and a half years tribulation must pass, and more must yet be killed.

The "holy and true" Lord is defined earlier in Rev. 3:7 as the Lord Jesus. This is not the usual Greek word translated "Lord'. We have to think long and hard as to why a word with such negative connotation as *despotes* should be used about the Lord Jesus. Why not the more natural *kurios*? I suggest that the more tyrannical and draconian *despotes* is used exactly because a despot, the antichrist, is then reigning over the land, and has caused the death of these believers. But for them, their *despotes*, their Lord, is not him, but the true Christ. Hence they address Him as the "holy and true" *despotes*- hinting that there is a false one, one that is *not* holy, to whom they have refused allegiance.

"Do You not judge" perhaps needs the emphasis placed on 'You', seeing they have been judged by some human court and punished with death; see on 6:9 *Their testimony*. The same words for "avenge our blood" are found in Rev. 19:2- the blood

of God's servants is avenged at the hands of the "great whore". The horse riders of the seals are therefore part of the beast system dominated by the whore. The avenging of Israel's blood will be by God's "sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates" in the latter day of Yahweh's vengeance, the day of the Lord of Hosts (Jer. 46:10). This suggests again that the shedders of Israel's blood are those from the north country, Babylon / Assyria, who come from the Euphrates. And this is the current source of jihadist Islam.

Their call for vengeance means 'Avenge our blood on those men who shed it'. To describe those men as 'earth dwellers' seems somehow redundant and rather too obviously self-evident- unless there is some particular significance to being an earth dweller. We need to understand the 'earth' here as specifically the land promised to Abraham, and not the whole planet. The significance of the murderers as being 'land dwellers' is perhaps because these people have come over the Euphrates, the northern border of the land promised to Abraham, and they are invaders now dwelling in the land. The other NT references to dwelling in the earth / land are specifically about dwelling in the land promised to Abraham; Abraham moved into the land of Canaan, in which land the Israelites now dwelt (Acts 7:4); Abraham dwelt in the land of promise (Heb. 11:9). The earth / land dwellers are singled out for particular judgment because of how they have persecuted God's people (Rev. 8:13; 11:10; 12:12). It's as if being an earth dweller is a cause for judgment; this is far more understandable if we understand the term to refer to neighbouring invaders who are now dwelling in the land promised to Abraham in the last days. The earth dwellers are those who worship the beast and give power to him (Rev. 13:8,12,14; 17:2). The domain of the beast is the 'earth' or land promised to Abraham, seeing it is based upon the fourth beast of Daniel 7, whom we have demonstrated to have this specific dominion. Rev. 14:6 draws a distinction between the earth dwellers and every nation, tongue and tribe- which would lend support to our definition of them as the invaders who now dwell in the land promised to Abraham in the last days.

Ez. 32:30, Rev. 6:10 and some other passages give the impression that the dead are somehow alive. And yet we know from an impregnable array of Bible passages that the dead are unconscious. These 'difficult passages' are surely giving us a window on God's timeless perspective. Apart from the death state, there are other examples of where future things are spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 39:29). God's future actions are simply spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 32:18). Living believers are called "martyrs" even before they are killed, because God foresees that they will be killed (Rev. 11:7).

6:11- see on Mk. 13:13.

And each one was given a white robe, and they were told that they should wait a little longer- The gift of the white robe is in response to their cry for justice. And they are comforted that venegeance will come in a "little" time; and they are given white robes, the sign of acceptance at the wedding banquet. He that overcomes is given a white robe (Rev. 3:4,5). But it is given on their death. The whole judgment process is a metaphor, and it is for our benefit. The "judge" has already decided the outcome on a man's death. White is also the colour Revelation uses for victory, and Roman generals wore white robes after victory. From Heaven's perspective, they have 'won'. The empire had in fact lost; and through their death, the martyrs were in fact the victors. The desire for vengeance is therefore 'only' a desire to see the victory manifest on earth openly. It is the deep sense of our own personal salvation, by utter grace, which is to be the comfort that God will finally judge this world, and justice will be

given. But we are reminded that justice will be given by being reminded of our own salvation- by grace. And that tempers our desire for justice and vengeance. For we ourselves were saved by grace alone. The desire for vengeance is natural to us all. But we are not to judge, but to leave judgment to God. And we are assured here that the coming of His Son in judgment is going to meet all those human needs for recognition and vengeance; and therefore, we will not in fact meet those needs by trying to take things into our own hands in this life. God's comfort to the oppressed is that He will wipe away their tears (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Revelation speaks particularly to those being persecuted. And "wipe away" is the word used in the LXX for the wiping away of evil people and systems from the face of this earth (Gen. 7:4,23; Ex. 17:14; Dt. 9:14). But it is also used of the wiping away of our sins (Ps. 51:3; Is.43:25). The two ideas go together. The final comfort will be that truly we have been forgiven for our own serious sins; and also, in the same comfort, there is the assurance that the evil of sinful men has also been permanently taken away. The cry "How long...?" is based upon Zech. 1:12: “Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, with which you have been angry with these seventy years?”. Again, the idea is that the cry for action is not simply for vengeance but also for the grace of forgiveness. A deep awareness of our own personal failure and dependence upon grace... gives dimension to our desire to see vengeance upon others. This too is the message of the white robes being given in response to their cry for vengeance; because they ave “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:13,14). White robes are a sign that they have repented and been forgiven and counted righteous. And that is the response to the cry for 'justice now' and revenge.

Those who come through the great tribulation of the last days are clothed in the same way (Rev. 7:9,13,14), and this tribulation is clearly that which the Lord in the Olivet prophecy predicted for the last days immediately prior to His coming. Revelation aims to give us Heaven's perspective on events on earth; the martyred believers are counted as being clothed in white robes, they are assured of salvation. This is an interesting parody of the belief of Islamic jihadists, that their martyrdom will assure them of salvation. This will in fact be the case for those whom they kill. It is Angels who are presented as clothed in white robes (Mt. 28:3; Mk. 16:5; Jn. 20:12; Acts 1:10; Rev. 4:4). Again we see how the martyred believers have representative Angels whose clothing is as theirs will be finally. The promised reward of white robes is also for those who "overcome" whatever they must pass through in their generation (Rev. 3:4,5,18). Our sufferings are in that sense no less than the terrible persecution unto death which is in view here in Rev. 6 and 7 for the latter day believers in the land promised to Abraham. The Lord is intensely aware of the suffering and death of every individual believer in Him; hence "Unto every one of them...".

The same word for "rest" is used in Rev. 14:13 about those blessed ones who die in the very last days before the Lord's coming, during the great tribulation: ""Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!"". The "little season" is the very same term used in Rev. 20:3 of the "little season" during which the dragon is let loose on earth after his 'death' in the bottomless pit and he has recovered from his deadly wound. This connection strengthens the suggestion that Rev. 20:3 speaks of events at the time of the establishment of the ‘1000 years’, and not at their end [AV "fulfilled" can be translated 'established']. The 'season', Gk. *chronos*, "time", is perhaps part of the time, times and half a time of the tribulation

period of Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14.

Until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been, was completed- Note the AV makes a mess of translating this. The significance of "every one of them" is that God is working to a precise number. Paul speaks of how the full number of the Gentiles must come in (Rom. 11:25). God is working to an exact number, and this is why the calendar date of the Lord's return and the outworking of these prophetic possibilities is to some extent open ended. The sooner that number come in, the sooner the number to be slain are slain, then He will come. "Killed" doesn't have to mean that this passage only refers to those martyred in violent death. The idea is rather of sacrifice, that the life of every believer is poured out as an offering to God; we are all living sacrifices, and our death is the final outpouring of our blood, to flow to the bottom of the altar. There were runnels on the altar to enable this to happen. In this sense, the blood of the believers is associated with the altar, which represents the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10 "We have an altar...").

Note how the work of preaching is paralleled with the experience of suffering for that latter day witness which makes the converts. The full number of Gentile converts will be reached when the full number of preachers have died. We can expect there to be conversions to Christ despite the obvious risk of death for making that conversion. That is what happened in the first century, and that is the power of the Gospel. The Gospel must be preached for a witness to all nations, and the end shall come (Mt. 24:14). But *marturion*, “witness”, can simply be a legal term referring to testimony or witness in a prosecution; through the Islamic 'trials' of those who refuse to convert, the Gospel will be spread by the witness of those who are slain for their testimony and refusal to convert to Islam. The "times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24) appear to refer to the time of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, and yet it is reapplied to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25.

"Fellowservants" suggests those who serve the same Master, the Lord Jesus. The difference between fellowservants and brothers may be intentional. Perhaps the group in view are Jewish Christians of the last days; their fellowservants are their fellow Christian believers, and their brothers may refer to other Jews. Of course the two terms may be used in simple parallelism, referring to the same group. Another insight is that "fellowservant and brother" is only elsewhere used in Revelation about the Angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). There must be some purpose in this. Perhaps the hint again is that these slain believers have their representative Angels in the court of Heaven. Their agony and crisis, just as for all of us, is intensely recognized and portrayed in Heaven. This is why there is an Angelic voice *in Heaven* rejoicing that the false accuser "of our brothers" has been cast down (Rev. 12:10). The Angels see us their charges on earth as their brothers. Truly man is not alone, beyond the steely silence of the skies there is huge Angelic activity and support for all our witness for His sake. Note how in 19:10 the brothers have the testimony of Jesus; in 22:9 the brothers are the prophets. A prophet is strictly one who speaks forth God's word, not necessarily a predicter of the future. The prophets in the new Israel therefore are the preachers, the forth tellers, of God's word. The view of Judaism was that the prophets were a category of white faced saints somehow of an altogether higher category than ordinary members of God's people. But the Lord Jesus created a new Israel in which all His people were preachers, and thus all are prophets.

The sixth seal concludes with the great day of the Lamb coming, with the fig tree casting her immature figs (cp. the fig tree parable), and great changes in Heaven and earth. This must have some reference to the second coming. If it does not, then where is the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture? This sixth seal appears to be an extension of the fifth seal, where persecuted believers plead for vengeance to be shown against their persecutors. They are assured of their salvation (by being given white robes), and rest "for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (6:11). Once these brethren were killed, the Lord would take vengeance- by His second coming. It follows that this violent persecution of brethren is going on before the second coming. Perhaps the "little season" refers to the three-and-a-half-year period? The persecuted souls under the altar would then describe the early sufferers in the persecution. It should be noted that once a set number of believers have been slain, then the Lord will come (Rev. 6:11 Gk. and modern versions). This must mean that there will be violent slaying of believers going on right up until the Lord's return (so the Greek for "killed" implies); which suggests that we have yet to see violent persecution before the second coming.

A further indication that the fifth seal concerns the last days is in the obvious connection between the altar scene and the parable of the widow crying for vengeance on her persecuting adversary; she would be avenged "when the Son of man comes" (Lk. 18:3,5). Thus the intense prayers of the persecuted saints of the last days are what prompt the second coming; at least, this is how God wishes us to see it. If our prayers were that fervent now, perhaps the tribulation could be avoided. Revelation 7 then describes how the 144,000 are sealed to ultimately survive the persecution, and due to the accumulated intense prayer of the persecuted believers, the seventh seal of judgment is poured out on the world (8:3,4), resulting finally in the establishment of the Kingdom.

After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given "white robes" and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11). Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of a child who has died. We know of course that there is no immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

6:12 *And I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon turned the colour of blood-* This along with the sun becoming dark recalls the Lord's crucifixion, and is another reason to think that the sufferings of the believers in the tribulation lead them to a close identity with His sufferings, that they might share in His resurrection. And that principle in fact works out in all our sufferings, in whatever generation and context we live in. Mt. 24:7 says that there will be a number of earthquakes in the last days. And it may be that the various earthquakes recorded in Revelation are not all referring to the same earthquake. Zech. 14:5 associates an earthquake with the coming of Christ after Jerusalem has fallen to her latter day enemies. The seals appear to refer

to the sufferings experienced by God's people (both natural and spiritual) in the land promised to Abraham; just as the horses of Zechariah 1 speak of the judgments upon the land, and then the horses of Zechariah 6 speak of the judgments upon those nations. The seven vials and the various judgments upon the beast system include similar language, but appear to refer to the Divine judgments upon the persecutors of His people. These judgments will be similar to those they meted out to Israel, according to the principle that the beast system is tormented with the same things they brought upon their victims (Rev. 18:7), being made to drink the same cup she gave others (Rev. 18:6). The earthquake of Rev. 6:12 is matched by the earthquakes of judgment upon Israel's persecutors in Rev. 11:13,19; 16:18.

"The sun became... black" is a clear example of the language of the Olivet prophecy about the last days being developed in Revelation. The allusion is to Mt. 24:29: "During [Gk. *meta*, AV "after"] the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light". We are clearly being pointed to a distinctly latter day interpretation. Whatever application this had in the first century (Acts 2:20), the final and main fulfilment is in our last days. The first century fulfilment may have included a literal element in the events of AD70 and the Lord's crucifixion, and so it may also be in the last days. But sun, moon and stars are introduced to us in Joseph's dream as symbols of Israel. We have here for sure a prediction of the total destruction of the Jewish system. It may be that initially a third part of the sun and moon are darkened (Rev. 8:12)- which suggests a literal darkening is not primarily in view. Rev. 9:2 says that the sun is darkened as a result of the beast system arising from the bottomless pit, the deadly wound healed and the vicious revival of the beast system [after an initial Western destruction of them?]. The sun being darkened and the moon turning into blood is the sign that the day of the Lord is about to come (Joel 2:31,32). We are to understand this event as happening immediately prior to the Lord's coming.

"Black as sackcloth of hair, the moon became as blood" are terms hard to interpret. Hair sackcloth would suggest mourning; but why would the sun mourn in this context? And why would the moon become blood? What really could that mean in terms of symbology? I see no very credible explanation in terms of symbology. But I came across online Special Paper 186 [1981] of the Geological Society of America, by Troy Pewe: *Desert Dust: Origin, Characteristics and Effect on Man* . In this very technical article, the author makes the throwaway comment that the words "Black as sackcloth of hair, the moon became as blood" are a superb description of an approaching dust storm coming out of the desert. The Americans called their 1991 military operation in Iraq 'Desert Storm'. The picture is of an army coming out of the desert; and this is exactly relevant to the invasion of Israel by the hordes who burst across the Euphrates and move across the desert to engulf God's land and people.

6:13 *And the stars of the heaven fell to the earth*- This would continue the usage of sun, moon and stars as in Joseph's dream- as symbols of the Jewish system (Gen. 37:9; Dt. 1:10). The sons of Jacob, the stars, will fall into the earth, losing their power and station. This is a direct quotation of the Lord's words about the situation in Israel and Jerusalem specifically in the very last days (Mt. 24:29). We note that the King of Babylon sought to exalt himself above the stars (Is. 14:13)- the Jews in Jerusalem. The connection may imply that the latter day king of Babylon is briefly successful in this, and those stars fall. The latter day little horn, the antichrist, succeeds in

dominating God's people and casting them down like stars to the ground, and stamping upon them (Dan. 8:10). This is the basis for the Lord's prediction that Jerusalem shall be trodden down, stamped upon, by the Gentiles. We note the repeated focus upon the fate of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

As a fig tree casts her unripe figs when she is shaken by a great wind- The fig tree and fruit on it is a Biblical picture of Israel's spiritual state. The "winter fruit" or "unripe fruit" refers to fruit that came covered in leaves in the Summer, but never turned ripe. It therefore remained until the Winter, and the strong Winter wind blew it off the tree. The reference is clear- Israel had time to produce spiritual fruit, but they didn't; and so the falling of their stars to earth is precisely because they had not brought forth spiritual fruit. The falling of the figs is parallel with the falling of the stars. The same word for "shaken" is used of the shaking of the Jewish heaven and earth / system in Heb. 12:26. The "mighty wind" continues the allusion to a desert dust storm which has caused the moon to look like blood (see on 6:12). The wind is representative of both an Angel and also an army. Recall how the four winds / Angels blow on the sea to cause the beasts to arise in Dan. 7. The mighty wind of the invaders is Angelically directed by God. The day of judgment at Christ's coming is likened to a mighty wind in Mt. 7:25,27. This mighty wind is to be connected with the four winds we will soon encounter in Rev. 7:1, which will blow upon the earth / land in judgment but will not affect the sealed, righteous remnant. The strong wind blows away the unripe fruit. It could be that the singular mighty wind prepares the way for the four winds of chapter 7, replete as they are with connection with the four winds of Daniel 7 which cause the beasts to arise in domination of the land.

6:14 *And the sky was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up*- Remember this is all in the context of the scroll being opened by the lamb. For that book to be opened, the scroll / heaven [NEV "sky"] of political Israel has to be closed and removed for ever. The Old Testament passage in view here in this section is clearly Is. 34:4-8. This however speaks of God's final judgment of Edom, which is Esau (Gen. 36:1,8). Revelation 6 is talking about judgments against Israel; but the point is that what latter day Esau / Edom does to Jacob will be done to them: "All of the army of the sky will be dissolved, the sky will be rolled up like a scroll, and all its armies will fade away, as a leaf fades from off a vine or a fig tree. For My sword has drunk its fill in the sky. Behold, it will come down on Edom and on the people of My curse for judgement. Yahweh's sword is filled with blood, it is covered with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen will come down with them and the young bulls with the mighty bulls; and their land will be drunken with blood and their dust made greasy with fat. For Yahweh has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion".

And every mountain and island were moved out of their places- In the first century application, the removal of every mountain would refer to the Roman legions flattening the approach roads: "[Vespasian] sent both footmen and horsemen to level the road, which was mountainous and rocky" (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.7.3). Having outlined the mountainous setting of Jotapata, Josephus says that Vespasian decided "to raise a bank against that part of the wall which was practicable" (*Wars* 3.7.8).

I mentioned in notes at the beginning of Revelation 6 that the things done to Israel / the land during the seals are then repeated to Israel's abusers during the trumpets and vial judgments. The cup they made her drink must be drunk by them. And in keeping with this, the same ideas are found in Rev. 16:20- when Babylon falls,

"every island fled away, and the mountains were not found". However, the repetition of the terms shows that literal islands and mountains are not in view- they cannot totally disappear twice. The supporters of Israel, the powers represented by mountains and islands, those who seemed so stable and eternally fixed in their place, will remove; just as the figurative mountains and islands supportive of Babylon will likewise. I have explained elsewhere that the West must fall or be rendered ineffective.

The final tribulation of Israel will be at the same time as the Elijah ministry; and the intention is to bring down the mountains, making a smooth way for the second coming of the Lord Jesus (Is. 40:4; Lk. 3:5). These judgments, involving mountains moving, are all part of that preparatory process.

6:15 *And the kings of the earth, the princes, the chief captains, the rich, the strong and every slave and freeman*- The kings of the land are parallel with the stars who fall from the sky, the heavens and earth who are rolled up. The leading lights of the Jewish system are the kings of the land. The kings of the land are described later in Revelation as facing judgment for their support of the beast against Israel. The current Jewish rulers of the land are to be replaced, therefore, by a new set of rulers of the land; who will be punished with the same judgment they meted out to the rulers whom they overthrew. The "princes" (AV "great men") translates the same Greek word found in Rev. 18:23 about how the great men of the earth supported Babylon but would now be judged. Indeed, the terms used here in 6:15 are elsewhere found about those who will be judged in the land for having supported Babylon. The Jewish mighty ones, the stars and heavens, will be replaced, however briefly, by those of the Babylon / beast system. Likewise "chief captains" is found again in Rev. 19:18. The wide range of people listed here in 6:15 stretch right across society; and similar words are used about the entire range who accept the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16) and follow the beast (Rev. 19:18). Jewish society in the Israel of today is to be replaced by that of their invaders and the system of the beast. We note that the whole fabric of society is included here- from kings to slaves. God's judgment will affect all. None are exempt.

Hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains- This hugging of the earth is a result of the stars and unripe figs falling to the earth (:13). The kings of the land are thus connected with the stars and unripe figs- representative of Israel's unspiritual leadership. The allusion is to Is. 2:19-21, which was initially addressed to the proud Jews who were in Jerusalem just prior to the Assyrian invasion. They are the prototypes of arrogant, self-assured Israel in the land today: "Men shall go into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the earth from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day men shall cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold which have been made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the caverns of the rocks and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily". But Isaiah 2 speaks of this hiding in the rocks as part of the preparatory process for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, on the tops of the very mountains where men only recently had been hiding themselves (Is. 2:2-4). Yet again, we are dealing with last days language, and also specifically about the situation in and around Jerusalem.

The hiding in caves from the face of the Lamb recalls the desire of those in Jerusalem living just before the Babylonian invasion: they wanted to hide themselves from the Lord's presence (Jer. 23:24). Likewise the Jews of Amos 9:3 sought to hide

themselves in the mountains of Carmel. The idea of hiding from the Lamb very much suggests the kings of the land in view are Jewish rulers of Israel. The Lamb's wrath was being manifested through the events of the seals, and the Jewish leadership desperately seek to hide from it.
Living in the caves and mountains recalls the behaviour of the faithful in Heb. 11:38. Perhaps that connection is purposeful, to hint that through all this suffering, a minority will come to faith in Christ and repentance.

In the first century fulfilment, the ideas of hiding in caves, wishing the rocks to fall on them etc. refers to how the Jews hid underground in the 67-70 war. "On the following days [the Romans] searched the hiding places, and fell upon those that were underground and in the caverns" (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.7.36). The Lord had told the women who watched His death that they would ask the mountains and hills to fall upon them to cover them (Lk. 23:29,30 cp. Mt. 24:1,2,19,34).

6:16 *And they said to the mountains and to the rocks: Fall on us*- This again is a quotation from the Lord's words about the judgment to come upon Israel because of their crucifixion of Him (Lk. 23:30). It is also a quotation from Hos. 10:8, when because of "the sin of Israel... they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us". My point is that these passages are all talking specifically about Israelites; the kings / rulers of the land of the sixth seal are Jews in the last days within an Israel that is to be crushed amidst unspeakable abuse and atrocity, as the pent up Moslem and Arab wrath of centuries explodes upon them. The Hosea passage in its context speaks of Israel lamenting that they have no human leaders any more (Hos. 10:3,7) and how "the nations shall be gathered against them" (Hos. 10:10). This is precisely the message of the sixth seal- the heavens / stars of the Jewish system fall, sun and moon no longer shine, and all nations are gathered together against Jerusalem at Armageddon.

And hide us from the presence of Him that sits on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb- There are multiple Old Testament statements that in the final time of Israel's sufferings, God will hide His face from them (e.g. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Ez. 39:29; Mic. 3:4). This is from their perspective- the reality is, according to this insight here, that Israel themselves seek to hide from His face [NEV "presence"]. If the reference is to God enthroned in Heaven, this fear seems rather misplaced. Would sinful men experiencing judgment really feel they were in the presence of the throne of God in Heaven, and wish to run away from the one enthroned? The reference is more appropriately understood in a futuristic sense. In some sense, Jesus is now visibly enthroned, on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and the sinful Jews slink away from His throne, just as the rejected are pictured doing in 1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.. Rev. 4:2,9 have introduced the Lord Jesus as enthroned *at His return*. These sinful Jewish leaders have some sense of this, and wish to slink away from His presence in rejection. These people seek to be hid from the face / presence of the wrathful Lamb, but in 14:10 we read of how some will be tormented in the presence / before the face of the Lamb. Their desire to escape His judgment doesn't come to anything.

Note the juxtaposition of ideas in 'the wrath of the lamb'. It is not simply that the Lord died as a lamb but returns as a rampant lion. He will have both lion and lamb aspects at His return. God's character is not just partly severe, partly gracious. His grace and His judgment of sin are wonderfully interconnected within His character. Thus destruction comes from Shaddai, the fruitful, blessing one (Is. 13:6); and the meek, harmless Lamb has great wrath (Rev. 6:16,17).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Who He was then, as He walked around Palestine 2000 years ago, the lamb for sinners slain, is who He will

essentially be at His second coming and judgment. It's not quite so that He was once a meek lamb but will roar back as an angry aggressive lion of Judah. Revelation brings out the paradox of "the wrath of *the lamb*"- not the roaring lion. Even in condemning men, His basic passion for humanity, His pain for the lost, comes out. Thus He will call those whom He rejects "Friend", just as He addressed even Judas, a man not fit to breathe the same air as He did. And in any case, it was in His role as the lion of Judah that He opened the seals through His death, not at His return. In His mortality He was the one who served rather than the one who sat at meat; and when He returns He will again come forth and serve us, His Divine nature notwithstanding. He so earnestly desired that even the wicked children of Jerusalem who did Him to death should be gathered together into His Kingdom. As He was, so He will be, and so He is even now.

6:17 *For the great day of their anger comes, and who is able to stand?*- The situation clearly refers to the last day. The Old Testament 'day of wrath' is usually against Israel and her leaders; and these are in view here, the kings of the land. The Babylonian invasion was the day of wrath (Dt. 29:28; Jer. 32:31; 44:6; Lam. 1:12; 2:1.21.22; Zeph. 2:2,3). The same word translated "wrath" is used by the Lord in the Olivet Prophecy concerning how there shall be "wrath upon this people". The people of Israel are therefore those who suffer under the sixth seal. "The great day" is Joel's "great and notable day of the Lord", the second coming. Jude 6 uses the very expression in talking about "the judgment of the great day", "the great day of God Almighty" of Rev. 16:14.

"And who shall be able to stand?" alludes to Mal. 3:1-3 concerning the coming of the latter day Elijah prophet to Israel: "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, He comes! says Yahweh of Armies. But who can endure the day of His coming? And *who will stand* when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like launderer's soap; and He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver". At the time of the sixth seal, Elijah (or the Elijah ministry) will be active in Israel amongst Jewish people. Those who do not respond to this ministry will be unable to stand before the Lord.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

Revelation 7: The 144,000

The seals speak of the latter day outpouring of judgment and trouble upon the land and people of Israel, perhaps throughout the entire territory of the land promised to Abraham. God's judgments on His people are never simply the wrath of a powerful Deity; they are intended to elicit repentance. They are His appeal to men. After the seals, we read of the sealing of 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. This could be all purely symbolic- 12 tribes multiplied by the 12 disciples, making 144, and thousands of them, speaking therefore of Jews who had come to Christ. But the laboured repetition of the "12,000" and the names of each tribe is striking. It may simply be that the Lord wishes to stress how every single one of those latter day believers is known to Him. Or it could be a literal number, and the ethnicity / tribal origins of the Jews is known to the Lord. But I somewhat doubt that kind of literalism is to found in Revelation or the entire apocalyptic genre. Perhaps there is a

geographical reference- Jews from the entire extent of the land and tribal allotments of Israel.

The Seals and Islam

Reading through the seals is like reading parts of the Koran and Hadith which speak of the judgments which Islam wishes upon the Jews. This is not simply because the Koran is full of garbled allusions to the Old and New Testaments [e.g. Sura 2.249 confuses several Bible stories: “And when Saul set out with the army, he said: Lo! Allah will try you by [the ordeal of] a river. Whosoever therefore drinketh thereof he is not of me, and whosoever tasteth it not he is of me, save him who taketh [thereof] in the hollow of his hand. But they drank thereof, all save a few of them. And after he had crossed [the river], he and those who believed with him, they said: We have no power this day against Goliath and his hosts. But those who knew that they would meet Allah exclaimed: How many a little company hath overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave! Allah is with the steadfast”]. The reality is that radical Islamists, in strict obedience to the Koran, will seek to bring these judgments upon the people and land of Israel because they think this is what the Koran tells them to do; and in so doing they will fulfil Revelation. For the kind of brutality they practice is only possible for a person who has been brainwashed with religious or political philosophy. That’s why jihadist volunteers are firstly sent for weeks of ‘teaching’ before being sent to fight. The kind of extreme, severe abuse of Israel which is required by the language of Revelation and Daniel 7 is such that it would require people fuelled by deep religious programing to execute it. The Quran often speaks of God’s severity against the Jews because of their supposed sins against Mohammad and refusal to accept Islam, e.g. Sura 2.211: “Ask of the Children of Israel how many a clear revelation we gave them! He who altereth the grace of Allah after it hath come unto him [for him], lo! Allah is severe in punishment”. This is the reasoning which will inspire the Moslems to abuse the Jews so intensely. “Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews… we have prepared for those of them who disbelieve a painful doom” (Sura 4.160,161). Unashamed aggression is taught by the Koran multiple times, e.g. Sura 9.123 "O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you". “Then seized I those who disbelieved, and how intense was my abhorrence!” (Sura 35.26). And so we could continue:

"Fight (slay and kill) those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the last day (judgement day), nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor they follow the religion of truth (the religion of Islam) out of those who have been given the Book (Jews and Christians), until they pay the tax, in acknowledgment of superiority and (recognition that) they are in a state of subjection (to Islam)" (Sura 9:29).

"Worst among men in enmity to the believers (Muslims) wilt thou find the Jews and pagans" (Sura 5:82).

"O ye who believe, take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors. They are but friends and protectors to each other, and he amongst you that turns to them for friendship is one of them Verily, Allah guideth not a people unjust (Jews and Christians)" (Sura 5:51).

"Those who reject Islam among the people of the book (Jews and Christians) and among the polytheists (all other religions) will be in hell fire to dwell in there for ever and they are the worst of creatures" (Sura 98:6).

Not only Revelation, but many other latter day prophecies are full of language strikingly similar to that found in the Koran. The jihadist Moslems seek to obey the

Koran, and by doing so, they will be fulfilling Bible prophecy about the last days. For example, Joel 2:6 LXX speaks of how in the final day of the Lord, Israel will be invaded by a latter day Assyrian, "a numerous and strong people" (:2), and "Before them shall the people [of Israel] be crushed: every face shall be as the blackness of a caldron (AV "gather blackness")". The Koran in Sura 7.106 speaks of this happening at the last day, when Moslems will blacken the faces of those who refuse to convert to their religion: "On the Day when [some] faces will be whitened and [some] faces will be blackened; and as for those whose faces have been blackened, it will be said unto them: Disbelieved ye after your [profession of] belief? Then taste the punishment for that ye disbelieved".

The punishments of the seals are the very punishments which the Koran says must be brought upon the Jews in order to make them repent and accept Islam and that Mohammed was a messenger to them: "We shall test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits [so that] when afflicted with calamity [they will] say, Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return" (Surah 2.155,156). These calamities will indeed cause a remnant to repent- but return to the God of Israel, rather than convert to Islam. Surah 4.160,161 and the Hadith [expansions] upon it speak of starving the Jews and torturing them, which is how I interpreted Rev. 6:5-8: "Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews we forbade them good things which were [before] made lawful unto them, and because of their much hindering from Allah's way, and of their taking usury when they were forbidden it, and of their devouring people's wealth by false pretences, We have prepared for those of them who disbelieve a painful doom".

Sura 17, *Al-Isra*, is about future Moslem judgments upon "The children of Israel". Sura 17.7,8 speaks of how latter day Moslems will repeat the historical judgments of the Jews upon them. This explains why some Jihadist groups see themselves as the revival of Babylon and Assyria: "So, when the time for the second [of the judgments] came [we roused against you others of our slaves] to ravage you, and to enter the Temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting. It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment], and we have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers". The language of utter wasting and taking the temple mount is exactly that of latter day Bible prophecies about what is to happen to Israel in the last days. The Hadith and some Suras of the Koran are full of such language of what shall be done to the Jews and Israel: "we annihilate it with complete annihilation... or punish it with dire punishment... There is not a township but we shall destroy it ere the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with dire punishment" (Sura 17.16,58). And radical Islam is all set up to fulfil it. The same Sura continues to liken that final destruction of the Jews to a book of judgment being opened: "We shall bring forth for him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. [And it will be said unto him]: Read thy Book" (Sura 17.13,14). Likewise Sura 17.58: "There is not a township but we shall destroy it ere the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with dire punishment. That is set forth in the Book [of our decrees]". This is the significance of the judgments upon Israel in the last days being likened to a scroll / book being opened.

7:1 *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree*- When we come to Revelation, especially bearing in mind its' constant allusions to the Old Testament, the 'earth' can generally be understood as the land of Israel. All the weight of Biblical evidence is in this direction. There are undeniable

similarities between the events of the seals and vials, and what happened in the land in AD66-70. The whole idea of pouring out judgment upon the 'earth' refers to the OT images of such judgments being poured out upon the land. Consider too how Rev. 7:1: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth…". If the earth has corners, it can't really be the globe, rather, an area such as the land.

There seems to be an association between the "four winds", the four "living creatures" and the four "beasts" mentioned at various points in Scripture. It is suggested that these all refer, even if indirectly, to a literal four cherubic Angels. Rev. 7:1 is the clearest evidence: "I saw four Angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth". The stress is on "the four winds". Dan. 7:2,3 connects the winds and the beasts: "Behold, the four winds of Heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea". The "four winds" may refer to Angels- God makes His Angels spirits or winds.

"The four corners of the earth" is proof enough that the earth / land doesn't refer to the whole planet but to a specific territory on the planet- the land, promised to Abraham, with defined borders. The Hebrew word translated 'borders' in the context of the borders of the land is also translated "corners". We think of Ez. 7:2: "You, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh to the land of Israel, An end: the end has come on the four corners of the land". The four Angels on the borders of the land connect with the four Angels on the Euphrates, the northern / eastern border of the land, who shall release the hordes they are holding back to surge towards Israel. That process may already be in operation. We are here introduced to the idea that there are Angels holding back the winds of destruction on the borders of God's land and people. This explains the miraculous survival of the state of Israel since 1948. The hordes of neighbouring enemies have been restrained- by the Angels on the borders of the land. But they will remove that restraint, and we can see that already happening. It's worth noting that the key enemies of Israel in the Old Testament are described as dwelling in the corners of the earth / land (Jer. 9:26; 25:23; 49:32); and Israel are described as going into captivity in the corners of the earth / land promised to Abraham (Dt. 32:26; Is. 11:12). So it's appropriate that the winds of destruction come from these same corners of the land. Rev. 20:8 defines "the nations which are in the four quarters of the land" as being "Gog and Magog"; clearly the Ezekiel 38 Gog is being defined as the epitome of the nations along the borders of Israel, who both historically and currently are Israel's main enemies.

The four winds of the earth / land create a picture reminiscent of Dan. 7:2; the four beasts which dominate the earth / land of Israel in the last days all arise as the result of the four winds / spirits / Angels operating over the sea of nations. Now, the four winds / spirits / Angels are told not to blow upon the land and sea until the faithful have been sealed. The connection would teach that the final domination of the land by the beast systems occurs after the events of the seals; or perhaps, the seals are part of that domination period, but there is a break, the winds of destruction are held back, so that those Jews who have responded in repentance can be sealed. In Ez. 37:9, the wind from the four winds comes to spiritually revive the spiritually dead Israel who have returned to their land from dispersion. But here in Rev. 7, these four winds are the winds of destruction. It is from them and the desolation associated with them- that spiritual life is breathed into Israel. The winds are controlled by the four Angels who 'stand' or 'are appointed' at the four corners of the land- it may be that they were appointed from Old Testament times, not least in Daniel 7.

Significantly, the Koran likens the judgment of Jews and apostates to the coming of winds. The whole of Sura 77 is entitled *Al-Mursalat* (The Emissaries, Winds Sent Forth). These winds of judgment come "when the stars are put out, and when the sky is riven asunder, and when the mountains are blown away" (Sura 77:8-11). This is all very much the language of the seals, trumpets and vials. The judgments upon Israel are brought by the Moslems in terms of their own understanding of condemnation. And they too will be judged in the same way- the thing they greatly fear comes upon them, the cup they give Israel to drink, they must drink.

We noted at the beginning of the seals in Revelation 6 that the first four seals, the four horsemen, are based upon the horsemen of Zechariah 1 who desolate the land of Israel and scatter her people. Here in Revelation, the thought then moves on to the four winds- and the same is to be found in Zechariah, where Zech. 2:6 associates them with the scattering into the provinces of Babylon and Persia: “flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I will gather you from the four winds of heaven” (LXX). The land of the north (Babylon, where Judah were in captivity in Zechariah’s time) is “the four winds” because its territory covered much of the land promised to Abraham. The same Hebrew words are found in Zech. 6:5, where the four horses responsible for desolating Israel are “the four winds [AV “spirits”] of the heaven”. Judah were also gathered from the four winds in the sense that the Angels were with them, as demonstrated by Ezekiel’s vision of the four beast cherubim. This is surely the idea of Mark 13:27: “Then shall He send His Angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth [land] to the uttermost part of Heaven”. The earth / land in view is that promised to Abraham, and the heartland of Israel’s enemies is [and always has been] at the uttermost part of it, at the Euphrates border. The parallel between Heaven and earth here in the Lord’s teaching is in line with what we find so often in Revelation- the situation on earth is reflected by the Angels in Heaven who stand in the Heavenly throne room.

The four winds / four Heavenly cherubim beasts are the Heavenly antithesis of the four winds and four beasts of Daniel 7 on earth who desolate the land. The four horns which arose from the third empire were “towards” the four Angelic winds of Heaven; there was a connection between them (Dan. 8:8; 11:4). There is no such thing as radical evil- even the worst desolators of God’s people are under direct Angelic control. We note too the prophecy of the four winds in Jer. 49:36 against Elam, modern day Iran: “I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven. And I will scatter them to all those winds”. The “quarters” of Heaven suggest that Heaven, like the earth / land with its corners, is a territory. I suggest that ‘Heaven’ here is a reflection of the earth / land promised to Abraham. Elam / Iran will likewise be judged by the Arab nations living in the corners of the land promised to Abraham, and will be scattered into those areas.

The four winds [plural] are spoken of as one wind (7:1). This is rather like how the four beasts are effectively one beast. Scattering to the four winds was scattering to “the land of the north” (Zech. 2:6). The four cherubim beasts of Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 are effectively one system, moving the same way. We shouldn’t therefore be necessarily looking for four distinct entities to dominate the land in the last days. The ‘four’ refers to Heaven’s organization, and how it is reflected on earth.

"Holding the four winds" is better 'restraining'. This sounds similar to the idea of the Angels restraining the hordes which then burst over the Euphrates to desolate the land; and to the restraining influence which stops the antichrist being revealed in 2 Thess. 2:5-7. This period of restraint is maybe seen by John in order to serve as a dividing point between the suffering of the six seals, and the fact that some in the land

repent as a result of this. These are sealed, and then the trumpet judgments are poured out, and then the desolating powers are destroyed, as outlined in the seven vials. But there may not be an actual period of time required to 'seal' the 144,000. The language of winds blowing is that of the final judgment in Mt. 7:25,27.

7:2 *And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea*- The East is 'the sunrising'. The idea of the sun rising connects with the language of the Lord Jesus returning as the sunrise (Mal. 4:2). Again the time is located around the second coming of the Lord. The allusion may be to the Lord's description of His coming as a bright shining arising from the East (Mt. 24:27).

Other references to sealing refer to a mark being placed on a person by God which *He* recognizes, although the world doesn't see it. Thus Paul's converts were a seal of His apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2)- to God, but not to men. The seal of God is simply that "The Lord knows them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19). We are sealed by being given the Spirit in our hearts, very privately and intimately (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). But that knowledge is to Him, and is not publicly displayed. For people to be sealed, they are as it were known by God, stamped with His mark. It might even be that there is a mass baptism into Christ of Jewish people in the land- that would certainly be a point at which believers are sealed. This would admirably fulfil the otherwise strange prophecy of Zech. 13:1, that a fountain will be opened in Jerusalem in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem can be washed from their sin.

The outline idea is of an Angel putting a mark on God's people so that other Angels don't harm them with the judgments they are pouring out. And this of course recalls the Passover Angel hovering over the homes of the Israelites who had placed the mark of the Lamb on their doorposts, so that "the Destroyer" Angel would not destroy them. Ez. 9:4 is similar- a mark is placed upon the forehead of those in Jerusalem who are repentant, so that they are not hurt by the judgments of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the temple. These allusions further encourage us to understand the 144,000 as Jewish Christians within the land / earth.

"The four Angels" connect with how in Daniel 7 it is the four beasts who do the hurting of the land. But these are but the earthly counterparts of the Heavenly cherubim, which are portrayed also as four beasts. And here the point is made explicit- there are four Angels coordinating the desolation of the land in the last days.

"To whom it was given to hurt" again reminds us of the constant comfort that it is God who allows the desolation and even ultimately empowers it.

7:3 *Saying: Do not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees*- Significantly, the Koran stipulated that trees are not to be damaged during campaigns against infidels. The same word for "hurt" was used in 6:6, where the oliveyards and vineyards were not to be then hurt. This may mean that now the judgments upon the land are poured out upon it.

Until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads- This sealing of the 144,000 is presented at the beginning of Revelation 14 as the counterpart to the sealing of the other inhabitants of the land with the mark of the beast in *their* foreheads which we find at the end of Revelation 13. The faithful who come through the traumas of the six seal judgments of chapter 6, refusing to take the easy way out by receiving the mark of the beast in their forehead, are sealed with the Father's Name in their foreheads. They are known by Him, and they know Him. The presence or absence of 'marks in the forehead' decides whether the beast system will persecute people or not; and in response to this, the Divine judgments will likewise be upon

those who lack the Father's Name but instead have the beast's name (Rev. 9:4; 13:16; 14:1,9; 20:4). And it is those who have the Father's Name in their foreheads who will again be given it yet more permanently at the day of judgment (Rev. 22:4). This means that their response to the beast's persecution is in effect their day of judgment ahead of time; because they refuse to accept his mark in their foreheads, therefore the Father will give them His mark in their foreheads- which is the reward of the faithful at the last day. This is a feature I commented upon extensively in *The Last Days*- that our response to the tribulation is effectively our judgment day. And this has an appropriacy to it- for if the generation alive at the Lord's coming will be the only one to never die, they need to be prepared in a unique way for the passage into eternity which they will experience. And this will be achieved through their experience of the tribulation.

The mark of the beast in the forehead is clearly intended to be understood as the inverse of the "seal of God" which is in the forehead of the believers (Rev. 9:4). The word *sphragis* used there definitely means a seal, and it is matched by the "mark" of the beast. That mark can be understood, therefore, also as a seal- and what more likely than the seal of Mohammed? It may be that signet rings are used to stamp documents, or it forms part of an insignia without which no business can be done in the land. The Koran itself speaks of how true Moslems will have the mark of Mohammad on their foreheads as a sign that they worship: "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. Thou [O Muhammad] seest them bowing and falling prostrate [in worship], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration" (Surah 48.29). In Revelation 14:9,11, having the mark of the beast is connected with worshipping him. The Islamic jihadist movement set to take over Israel is a highly religious movement, seeking to strictly obey the Koran. They are highly conscious of these verses. They perceive those who don't have *their* mark in the forehead as having the mark in the forehead of condemnation (Surah 9.35); the idea of a seal being placed upon non-Moslems who refuse to convert to Islam is found also in Sura 7.101: "Thus doth Allah print upon the hearts [minds / foreheads] of disbelievers". All this is in fact the picture presented in Revelation of sealing with forehead marks. We have either the mark of the beast [Islam], or of the Father. And so the Koran also says in This is exactly the idea of Sura 7.46,48: "And on the Heights are men who know them all by their marks... the dwellers on the Heights call unto men whom they know by their marks". Islam believes that the unbelievers are sealed by God in their unbelief- whilst the Moslems are sealed as believers. "Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment" (Sura 2:7). Note too that the Koran and Hadith repeatedly speak of faithful Moslems as the servants of Allah, with Mohammad as the supreme servant. The description of the 144,000 as "servants of our God" is purposeful in this context; in the time of Moslem domination of the land, they will be the *true* servants of God, in opposition to the Moslems who falsely claim to be His servants. In this context it's worth noting the claim that "The value of the word "Muhammad" equals the value of the word "Jesus." (Jesus = 444, Muhammad = 444). Therefore, "Muhammad seal" and "Jesus seal" both equal 666".

The seal is the Name of the Father, Yahweh (14:1). The only personage in the Old Testament who had the Yahweh Name in their forehead was the High Priest, who on his mitre had written 'Holiness / Dedicated to Yahweh'. The idea was that all of the 144,000 are as the High Priest- in that they are "in Christ" and all that is true of Him is true of them.

7:4 *And I heard the number*- This is added to highlight the contrast with the "great multitude which no man could number" (7:9). This 'hearing' contrasts with how John "saw" the great multitude. I suggest that the same group are in view, just seen from different perspectives. He heard something happening in Heaven- there, the 144,000 are marked off or sealed. There is not necessarily any physical mark upon the faithful, repentant Jewish remnant, apart from that they refuse to wear the mark or seal of the beast, which I have suggested is the seal of Mohammed. There will therefore be a tension between the seals- the seal of Mohammed, the mark of the beast, which is visible; and the invisible seal of God which is seen only in Heaven.

Of those that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand- The 12 x 12 is obviously intentional, as if to say that this group is the true Israel. The thousands would refer to their being 'many'. The sealing of a group of faithful within Israel parallels the 7000 "reserved" by God out of Israel for Himself at the time of Elijah's ministry. The three and a half year ministry of the historical Elijah looks forward to the latter day Elijah ministry during the tribulation for the same period. As 7000 faithful were 'reserved' by God for Himself at that time, so the 144,000 are in the last days. The 7000 remnant in Elijah's time were "left" or 'remained' to God (1 Kings 19:18). The same word is used of the latter day remnant within Israel: "He that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem" (Is. 4:3). This is the same idea in essence as in Rev. 7- the 144,000 are numbered and written, carefully noted by God. The same word is used of the latter day Jewish remnant in Is. 11:11,16; 17:6; 24:6 (the few men that will remain when the earth / land is made desolate); 37:31 (the faithful remnant in Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion which typifies that of the last days); 49:21; Jer. 21:7 (the remnant who remain after the plague, sword and famine of the Babylonian invasion have devoured them, all of which are the source material for the events of the six seals which the 144,000 have come through); 50:20 ("I will pardon them whom I reserve", speaking of the forgiveness of the latter day repentant remnant); Amos 5:3 (the ten percent of Israel who 'remain'); Zeph. 3:12 (the 'remnant' of the "afflicted and poor people" who "shall trust in the name of the Lord"); Zech. 9:7 (the remnant who will "be for our God" after the destruction of the majority of Israel); 12:14 (the 'remaining ones' who weep in repentance for crucifying Jesus).

The 144,000 are the antithesis of the followers of the beast- these follow the Lamb wherever *He* goes. It's highly significant that Muhammad is supposed to have had 144,000 followers or *Sahaba* [Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, "Ashab"]. This is supposed to connect with the claim that there are 144,000 prophets in Islam [Elwood Morris Wherry & George Sale, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran*]. The 144,000 who follow the Lamb are thus in purposeful contrast with the 144,000 who are supposed to have followed Mohammad wherever he went. This confirms the entire thrust of our exposition- that whatever previous historical fulfilments there have been, the latter day application of Revelation is to events in the land promised to Abraham in the last days whilst it is under Moslem domination.

Revelation is full of language which is also found in the Koran- because Islam, like Babylon, Assyria and Rome before them, are offering God's people a fake replica of real spirituality and the true Hope of Israel. They are an anti-Christ, an imitation Jesus, a false 12 tribes of Israel rather than the true. This explains why the promises of the Kingdom of God in Revelation are full of language which is also used in the Koran for the reward of faithful Moslems. Revelation will have intense relevance to the persecuted under Moslem domination- the rewards offered by Islam will be seen to be a fake Kingdom of God. Thus in Sura 2:25,266: "Give glad tidings [cp. 'the

Gospel'] to those who believe [Moslems]... for them will be gardens under which the rivers of Paradise flow... they will be provided with a fruit therefrom... trees with all kinds of fruit… they will abide therein for ever". The final visions of Revelation offer eternal residence in a restored Paradise and eating the fruit of the tree- to those who refuse to accept the religion of the beast, Islam.

Sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel- This makes more poignant the omission of Dan and Ephraim from the list. Due to their apostasy, they are no longer numbered amongst the children of Israel. The order of the tribes is also not according to their age, but it may be according to their faithfulness to God. This is therefore the picture at the time of final judgment, when the true Israel have finally been made up and numbered.

The very laboured mentioning of 12,000 faithful within each tribe may be because they are the antithesis to some yet unseen aspect of the beast. In the ISIS magazine *Dabiq* No. 4 (October 2014) the Islamic State on the back page (p. 56) quote a hadith which states: "They will then gather for the *Malmanah* (the grand battle before the Hour) [the equivalent of Biblical Armageddon], they will come under eighty banners, with each banner there will be twelve thousand people". The IS wish to consciously fulfil such Islamic prophecies in order to hasten the coming of the antiChrist and then the Mahdi. Perhaps in an attempt to fulfil these predictions, there will be groups of 12,000 Moslems who play some role in the earth / land promised to Abraham. Their antithesis- the Jews who refuse to convert to Islam- are therefore here presented as twelve tribes of twelve thousand.

The Koran claims that the twelve sons of Jacob were in fact 'Moslems', and that current Jewish claims to being descended from Jacob's twelve sons are false (Surah 2.140 "Or say you that Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob) and Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)] were Jews or Christians? Say, "Do you know better or does Allah (knows better; that they all were Muslims)? And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony)". Again we see the relevance of the sealing of people from the 12 tribes of natural Israel- if at the very time this happens, they are being accused of not being from those 12 tribes, and that in fact it is Arab Moslems who are the true 12 tribes. This situation is reflected by the way in which the descriptions of the 144,000 are in terms elsewhere used by the beast system. Thus they are sealed, just as the beast seals his followers; the great multitude who proclaim "Victory!" before the throne (7:10) are parodied by the beast's followers doing the same in 13:4.

It is worth noting that two thirds of the Jews within the land are to be "cut off" in the holocaust, meaning that a third survive it (Zech. 13:8,9). Having spoken of this period in Rev. 6, Rev. 7:4 speaks of 144,000 Jews as surviving it. A third of the Jews in Israel is about 1.4 million people; it may be that only a tenth of those will ultimately be found worthy. The 144,000 are sealed so that they avoid God's judgments, which would fit the idea of the righteous remnant miraculously surviving in an Arab occupied Jerusalem.

7:5 *Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand*- See on :4 and :8.

7:6 *Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand*- See on :4 and :8.

7:7 *Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand*- See on :4 and :8.

7:8 *Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand*- See on :4. It's been

observed that the tribe of Dan is excluded from the list of the redeemed tribes in Rev. 7. Dan didn't take possession of their inheritance; they despised it. And so they excluded themselves, rather than being excluded for e.g. bad behaviour. The other tribes all had their moments of terrible failures; but these didn't exclude them. The only one excluded was the one who didn't want to be there.

7:9 *After these things I saw and beheld a great crowd, which no one could number*- An allusion to how the seed of Abraham would be innumerable (Gen. 13:16; 16:10; 32:12; Hos. 1:10). The great multitude are the true Israel, and are thus parallel with the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel.

Out of every nation, comprised of all tribes, peoples and tongues- The reference is limited by the context to the tribes of the earth / land promised to Abraham; see on "All nations" later in this verse. This is the same term used about the nations, tribes, peoples under the domination of the beast (17:15), and seems almost a title of the beast system in 11:9. The great multitude are therefore being parodied by the followers of the beast, who also claim [as the Jihadists do] to be universal in their support base. This is just as the 144,000 followers of the lamb are parodied by the supposed 144,000 followers of Mohammad. The events of the last days will bring about the final and ultimate clash of God's Kingdom and the kingdoms of men.

Standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and with palms in their hands- They "stood before the throne", as men will "stand before" God at the day of judgment (Rev. 20:12 s.w.). They had white robes, a term used about those slain at the start of the tribulation (6:11). In this we see the connection between the seals and the sealing of the 144,000 / great multitude. A specific group is in view- those who were slain in the tribulation.

Of all nations- The multitude came 'out of' [*ek*] "great tribulation" (:14); yet they also come *ek,* out of, the nations, peoples, languages of :9. The suggestion would be that this group of various peoples are those where the tribulation has occurred. The very same Greek phrase "nations, tribes, peoples and languages" is used later in Revelation for the peoples within the land promised to Abraham who support the beast system (11:9; 17:15). The beast / whore rides upon them- and her dominion is over the earth / land, which is therefore where these tribes and peoples are located. This also solves the logistical problem of imagining that literally every tribe and language group of the Amazon or central Africa or Pacific islands must come under the direct control of any one world system. We can legitimately translate *ek* as 'out of'; the same word is found in Rev. 18:4 where "My people" are asked to come "out of" Babylon and the beast system- the mass of peoples and tribes within the land promised to Abraham from Euphrates to Egypt, which is under the control and religion of the beast. It's a typical Western stereotype to assume that all the people living in that area are simply 'Arabs'. That's as facile as saying that Europe is inhabited by 'Europeans'. The area is full of various tribes and ethnicities, as the conflicts in Iraq and Syria have demonstrated. So the statement that the great multitude had come *ek* out of the various nations and tribes is not merely a statement of fact, it is a commendation of the fact that they had spiritually 'come out of' those peoples. Rev. 15:2 repeatedly uses the word *ek* to speak of how the faithful had come out of the beast system: "Them that had gotten the victory over [*ek*, out of- "over" is not the correct translation] the beast, and over [*ek*, out of] his image, and over [*ek,* out of] his mark, and over [*ek*, out of] the number of his name". Rev. 7:9 says that the faithful come *ek* out of the *phule*, the tribes [AV "kindreds"]. But we have just read with painstaking repetition of how the 144,000 have come *ek* out of the *phule*, the tribes, of *Israel*! We must not fail to give this due

weight in interpretation. The 144,000 come out of the tribes of Israel, and the great multitude come out of the tribes who are willingly dominated by the beast. The picture is that the tribes of Israel submit to the beast, but the faithful refuse to do so. Such a covenant is suggested by Dan. 9, and I have commented upon this elsewhere in writing about the Antichrist. This coming 'out of' the beast system may be in view in Mt. 24:31, where we learn that the Lord will gather His elect *ek*, out of, "the four winds". And Rev. 7:1 in this very context speaks of the four winds of desolation to come upon Israel, from which the 144,000 are preserved.

Think of the misunderstood Jesus, welcomed by the crowds with palm fronds in hope of an immediate Messianic Kingdom. Surely John intends us to think back to that when we read in Rev. 7:9 that the Lord will be welcomed by another large crowd, from every nation, carrying palm fronds and calling out praise to Him for dying on the cross and redeeming them. Here are those who truly understand Him. The Lord had in mind this contrast between the crowd and those who would truly understand Him when He said that "Now is the son of man glorified" in the things of the cross (Jn. 12:23) in contrast to the crowds who were shouting "Glory in the highest!" at the prospect of Him there and then inaugurating the Messianic Kingdom (Lk. 19:38). See on Jn. 5:23.

7:10 *Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne*- See on Jn. 20:28. Revelation is full of allusion to Roman imperial court scenes and rituals. In its first century application, it was an appeal for Christians to not convert to the imperial cult, even at the risk of persecution and death. In its latter day reference, Revelation may well be found to be full of reference to and parody of the culture and structure of the entity which dominates the land in the last days. In the first century, the Caesar declared himself as the 'saviour'. The Roman emperors often gathered people from all nations and languages within the empire, who stood before his throne and cried 'Victory!' or 'Salvation!' to the Caesar. This was seen as legitimizing the Caesar as chosen and approved by the entire empire. Radical Islam loves to use the cry of 'Victory!' and to talk of how each town they overrun has been liberated or saved. They also like to claim that they have support from worldwide and not simply from Arab Muslims. The crowd of believers here parodies their claims by giving the true international worship to the true God rather than the false one.

7:11 *And all the angels were standing round about the throne and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God*- The implication is that the Angels are deeply impressed when they see these things working out. They are struck by the wisdom and power revealed in the whole Divine design (:12). This gives a window into what immortality will be all about. We will still be impressionable; able to observe new things with wonder and a sense of praise; and not necessarily able to precisely imagine how plans shall work out.

7:12 *Saying: Amen. Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might to our God for ever and ever. Amen*- As noted on :11, this gives some insight into what it will be like to have the kind of immortal nature which the Angels now have. They are presented as observing how things work out in God's plan, and then being deeply impressed with the whole wisdom and wonder of it all. In seeing God's power and might manifest in such a way, they wish that this shall for ever be the case. And so it shall be. "Amen".

7:13- see on Rev. 6:9.

And one of the elders asked me: These that are dressed in white robes, who are they and from where did they come?- This is the clothing of Angels; they are presented as at one with their Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven. The Lord Jesus is likewise presented as clothed both in white and in a red "garment dipped in blood" (Rev. 19:13). The whore who leads the beast is also described as clothed in white linen (Rev. 18:16) and also in *porphura* (Rev. 17:4), a word which can mean 'dyed red'. The external clothing of the real Christ and the antiChrist is similar; because the antiChrist is indeed a fake Christ. Moslems also believe in dressing in white robes; it's as if this group who come out of the Moslem dominated land of Israel are the antithesis of their persecutors.

"From where did they come?" carries the idea that they had come out of something, namely, the beast system (:14). See on :9 *Of all nations*.

7:14 *And I replied: My lord, do you know? And he explained to me: These are they that came out of the great tribulation*- The great tribulation in latter day Israel of Mt. 24:9,21,29. 'Coming out' can be a Hebraism for coming forth successfully from a trial- e.g. "When He has tested me, I shall *come forth* as gold" (Job 23:10). These are the group who respond to the traumas of the six seals and repent. Their white robes connect with those given to those who die during the tribulation under the fifth seal ("And each one was given a white robe", Rev. 6:11).

And they washed their robes- Perhaps a reference to mass baptisms into Christ in the beast dominated Israel of the last days?

And made them white in the blood of the Lamb- It is the function of the three and a half year Elijah ministry [which will occur at the same time as the tribulation] to be "like fullers' soap" so that Israel may "abide the day of [Messiah's] coming" (Mal. 3:2). Fullers' soap is what makes white. The reference is to those in Israel who respond to the Elijah ministry and make their clothes white. These are the 144,000 or great multitude.

The 144,000 are redeemed from all the tribes of Jewry in the last days, and they wash their robes [through baptism] in the blood of Jesus as a result of "the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14 RV) which they pass through. This great multitude are Jews yet out of every nation and language (Rev. 7:9)- for as Ron Abel shows in *Wrested Scriptures*, the great multitude and the 144,000 are to be read as identical. The witness to them will thus be world-wide. This "great tribulation" is one of many links discernible between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. The Lord had prophesied that the "great tribulation" such as never was for Israel will occur in the very last days before the return (Mt. 24:21). It is only for the sake of "the elect" that the days of the great tribulation are shortened. This elect are surely the 144,000 of Rev. 7- Jewish brethren in Christ, converted during the very last days. It is this "elect" which is to be gathered from "the four winds" (Mt. 24:31) by the Angels. This suggests that they are not just Jews in the land who are converted, but those throughout the world-wide Diaspora. For the time of Jacob's trouble, worse than anything they have ever experienced (including the holocaust) must affect all Jewry world-wide. And this includes the USA and other apparently pro-Jewish or tolerant nations.

We must face the questions: Are the 144,000 the same as the great multitude? And are these 144,000 the same as the 144,000 in Revelation 14? I believe they all refer to the same group of faithful believers, perhaps literal Jews, who repent during the early part of the tribulation which is described in the six seals. But each passage gives different aspects of the same picture. The seven trumpets are the tribulations brought about by the four winds of 7:1. These can still be responded to by those within the land. The 144,000 group are preserved from them, just as Israel

experienced the first plagues to come upon Egypt but were preserved from the later ones (cp. Is. 26:20). The seven vials are clearly based upon the plagues upon Egypt, and they are part of the extensive description of the beast's judgment which [interspersed with visions of the faithful] dominate the rest of the book of Revelation.

But are these 144,000 the same as the 144,000 in Revelation 14? The differences don't necessarily have to make them different; John hears the 144,000 and then sees the great multitude, just as earlier John hears about the Lion but turns to *see* a Lamb (Rev. 5:5,6); and so it could be that he is *told* about the 144,000 and turns to *see* a great multitude. It would be facile to suggest that the Lion and Lamb are two different beings. They are simply different aspects of the same personage- the Lord Jesus. And this is common in Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic generally. So the differences are not fundamental, but rather presenting to us different aspects of the same group. In one sense they are the innumerable seed of Abraham, in another sense they are the 12 tribes, the true Israel. The great multitude are dressed in "white robes"- and this has just been used about those slain at the start of the tribulation (6:11). A specific group is in view- Jewish believers who suffered in the land at the hands of the beast during the time of the seals.

There are similarities between the 144,000 and the "great multitude". The 144,000 of Rev. 14:3 are "before the throne" just as the "great multitude" of Rev. 7:15,17 are. If the 144,000 represent the church generally, it's hard to understand why there should be such a laboured enumeration of them as coming from the various listed tribes of Israel. The idea surely is that they are Jewish Christians from within the land- perhaps the mention of the 12 tribes is to show that they will come from the entire geographical inheritance of Israel.

The great multitude have palms in their hands (:9) as if they are lining the streets of Jerusalem to welcome Jesus as King (Mt. 21:8). The term "great multitude" is repeatedly used in the Gospels for the crowds who followed Jesus. So although they do refer to the group of Jewish Christians of the last days, they are clearly to be understood as looking forward to the entire community of Jesus-followers. Rev. 7:14 says of the great multitude: "These are they which came out of great tribulation". The many connections with the Olivet Prophecy would surely mean that the tribulation in view is partly that of the last days (Mt. 24:21,29).

7:15 *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them*- There is maybe the suggestion here that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph reassuring his brethren.

7:16 *They shall hunger no more nor thirst any more*- Quoting from Is. 49:10 about the repentant Jewish remnant of the last days. Hunger, thirst, no more burning [AV "heat"] and the sun no longer falling upon them [Gk.] all has reference to the experiences in the land during the six seal judgments. The comfort for that group is that these things will be no more.

Neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat- The sun is symbolic of the Lord Jesus, but those who have passed through the tribulation will have been under the heat of the anti-Christ, the fake "sun" (cp. Mt. 13:6). The "heat" could refer to the heat of torture or to nuclear warfare. The word literally means a glow or burn. There seems no doubt that the Islamist elements within the earth / land promised to Abraham would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons in their assault upon Israel. However the Hebrew used in Is. 49:10, which is being quoted, refers to the *sirocco* or

scorching desert storm wind, an idea used earlier for the Islamist invasion of Israel in the last days.

7:17– see on Lk. 13:15.

For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of living water- Again we have a kaleidoscope of images. The Lamb is both in the midst of the throne and leading them as a shepherd. he Lamb, once a sheep, is the appropriate shepherd; His shepherding is on the basis of His own human experience, as a sheep.

The "springs of living water" to which they are led could refer to us; for repentant Israel will be given teachers to teach them (Jer. 3:15). In John's languages, the spring of living water is the gift of the Spirit given in the Lord Jesus. It is ultimately the spring which gives the water of life eternal (22:1). This last generation of repentant Jews will indeed be given the life eternal.

And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes- Quoting from Is. 25:8 about the resurrection and immortality of the last day (thus it is quoted in 1 Cor. 15), again about the repentant Jewish remnant of the last days. In the context, this happens on Mount Zion, which is where the 144,000 are found in Rev. 14, at a time when “Moab” and Israel’s neighbour enemies have been destroyed. Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. When we read that the Lord will “wipe away” tears from their eyes, this is the same word used in Acts 3:19 to describe how the sins of repentant Israel will be “blotted out” when the Lord returns. The conclusion seems to be, therefore, that the Lord Himself will comfort them with the reality that their sins and being unworthy of the Kingdom is all truly forgiven. The judgment will have achieved its end for them- a true realization of sinfulness.

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

The trumpets of Rev. 8-11 are clearly based upon the plagues of Ex. 7-12. Yet those plagues were each one designed to induce repentance in Egypt; there were various possible futures and outcomes related to each of them. If, e.g., after plague eight, Pharaoh had truly repented- then the other plagues wouldn't have happened. And perhaps it will be the same with the trumpets of the last days. See on Rev. 16:12.

The six seals of Rev. 6 brought judgment upon God’s people Israel within the land or earth promised to Abraham. A minority responded and were “sealed” in Rev. 7. Now there are seven trumpets, which are judgments on the Jews who are impenitent, and also on others within the land. But trumpets are warnings. In these judgments there is still an appeal being made, even though time is more than up for both Israel and her enemies. The trumpet judgments begin with desolations upon the physical land, in order to help people in the land understand what is going to happen to them. After the trumpets, there is yet another desperate appeal for repentance; and then in 15:7,8 the temple is closed, and the vials are poured out- of final and utter destruction. The vials come in rapid succession, because they are not intended to elicit repentance. Their finality is implied by the words "the seven *last* plagues". Whereas under the seals and trumpets, only a third or quarter of things were destroyed, under the vials there is total destruction. The language of the trumpets and vials is similar- because Babylon is being made to drink the cup of judgments which she gave others to drink during the seals and trumpets:

:

Trumpets	Vials
1st. earth	earth
2nd. sea (salt water)	sea (salt water)
3rd. rivers and fountains (fresh water)	rivers and fountains (fresh water)
4th. sun, moon, stars	sun, moon, stars
5th. sun and air darkened	kingdom of beast full of darkness
6th. River Euphrates	River Euphrates
7th. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord"	"It is done"

This explains why the trumpet judgments are effected through a variety of agents, some of them evidently human. The vials, however, are all poured out by Angels.

It should be noted that the seven signs, relating to the destruction of the beast, are also related to the seven trumpets:

Trumpets (Chapters 8 -11)	Signs (Chapters 12 onwards)
A great star falls from heaven (8:10)	The dragon is cast out of heaven (12:9)
A third part of the stars is smitten (8:12)	The dragon's tail casts down a third of the stars (12:4)
"Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth" (8:13)	"Woe to the inhabiters of the earth" (12:12)
The beast that comes out of the bottomless pit . . .	The beast that comes out of the sea . . .
. . . makes war against the witnesses and overcomes them . . .	. . .makes war against the saints and overcomes them . . .
. . . they of the people and kindreds and tongues . . .	. . . power over kindreds and tongues and nations . . .
. . . they that dwell upon the earth... (11:7-10)	... all that dwell upon the earth . . . (13:1-8)
Resurrection and judgment (11:18)	Resurrection and judgment (20:4 and 11-13)
"Thy wrath is come" (11:18)	The vials of God's wrath (chapters 15,16)
Temple of God opened (11:19)	Temple of God opened (15:5) Voices, thunders, earthquake and hail (16:18,21)
Lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake and hail (11:19)	

8:1 *And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven for about half an hour*- Literally "*whenever* he opened the seventh seal...", as if there is an element of doubt as to whether it will be opened. See on :13. On 6:1 I discussed whether in fact the seventh seal is opened, or has anything in it; hence the silence.

But the silence is also an allusion to the silence in the temple at the time of the incense offering (see on 5:8). The run up to the final tribulation will provoke a "praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man" (Lk. 21:36). Perhaps this intense latter day praying of the faithful is what Rev. 8:1 refers to, in speaking of "silence in heaven" when the seventh seal was opened- for this is one of Revelation's continual allusions to the temple service: "In the Temple, when the incense was offered, the people retired from the court and prostrated themselves in silent prayer".

8:2 *And I saw the seven angels that stood before God; and there were given to them seven trumpets*- The presence of the article "the" indicates these seven Angels have already been referred to. But the only time we have so far read of them in Revelation is in the description of the seven Angels of the churches who represent the believers before God (Rev. 1:20). The seven Angels feature later in Revelation, pouring out the vials of Divine wrath upon the land and the beast system. The Angels responsible for God's people are the same ones who pour out such terrible calamities upon the land. This is the power of our representation before God in the court of Heaven. This is exactly in context, because we go on to read that because of the prayers of the believers, things are poured out upon the land and Angels blow trumpets. This is the power of prayer, and it will be especially evident in the last days.

The theme of 'seven' judgments coming upon the land surely connects with the claim that Mohammad waged seven military campaigns against the infidels in the land [promised to Abraham]. The Hadith several times speaks of the "seven military expeditions led by the Messenger of Allah himself (may peace be upon him)" (e.g. Book 19.4469), or of the "seven battles" he was victorious in (Book 19.4462). This would explain the seven fold structure of the seals-trumpets-vials, and the feature of 'seven' judgments in various others way within the Apocalypse. The Muslim pretenders to the pattern of Mohamad bring seven judgments upon Israel, and are punished by likewise receiving back seven judgments, drinking the cup they made others to drink.

The Hadith claims that Mohammad predicted three cycles of calamities in the last days, which would be subdivided into various other calamities: "Hudhaifa b. al−Yaman reported: By Allah, I have the best knowledge amongst people about every turmoil which is going to appear in the period intervening me and the Last Hour; and it is not for the fact that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) told me something confidentially pertaining to it and he did not tell anybody else about it, but it is because of the fact that I was present in the assembly in which he had been describing the turmoil. and he especially made a mention of three turmoils which would not spare anything and amongst these there would be turmoils like storms in the hot season" (41.6908). This is exactly the Biblical picture- of three cycles of judgments and turmoils in the land (seals-trumpets-vials), subdivided into various specific calamities. As the jihadists strive to obey the letter of their writings, they will thereby be fulfilling the outline picture of the last day crisis which is foretold in Revelation.

It's noteworthy that the seven seals and seven trumpets and seven vials all conclude with the seventh being the establishment of the Kingdom. So there are actually six judgments in each case. The Hadith (Book 41.7040) speaks of six signs before the last day: "Hasten in performing these good deeds (before these) six things (happen): (the appearance) of tribe Dijjal, the smoke, the beast of the earth, the rising of the sun from the west, the general turmoil (leading to large-scale massacre) and death of masses and individuals". These six are very similar to the things spoken of in the seals and trumpets- signs in the sun, mass death, smoke, beasts of the earth. The jihadists are seeking to consciously fulfil the Hadith and so, due to the allusions the Hadith and Koran make to Revelation, they will end up fulfilling God's word of their own volition.

The Angels "stood before God". We have just read of how the great multitude, the minority of the Jews in the land who repent as a result of the six seals, stand before God (7:9), as do their representative Angels (7:11). They are "before God" in that their representative Angels are literally in His presence in the throne room of

Heaven. Now, those Angels act on behalf of those believers. And the prayers of the believers are likewise before God (:3). There is only one mediator, the Lord Jesus. The Angels do not mediate those prayers, but Heaven is aware of the prayers on account of their Angels. Our final 'standing before God' at judgment day (20:12) is effectively going on now. We are right now in the presence of His judgment throne.

Again we note the idea of "given"; they were "given" the trumpets. The judgments and calamities to be poured out are not because of any radical human evil, unrestrained in the world. These things are all under God's direct Angelic control. The trumpet sound is very much associated with the return of Christ to earth (Mt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16). Our change to immortality will be when the *last* trumpet sounds (1 Cor. 15:52); and the seventh trumpet announces the full establishment of God's Kingdom on earth (11:15). These trumpets therefore speak of events immediately surrounding the Lord's return.

The trumpet judgments contain several of the plagues on Egypt:

	Trumpets	*Plagues on Egypt*
1.	Fire from the altar cast upon the earth.	Dust of the furnace (of the altar) sprinkled abroad.
2.	Hail and fire.	Hail and fire.
3.	Sea became blood.	Waters turned to blood.
4.	Darkness.	Darkness.
5.	Locusts.	Locusts.
6.	Abaddon, the Destroyer.	The Destroyer Angel (Ex. 12:23).
7.	Men slain by angels.	The firstborn slain by angels.

The seal judgments of chapter 6 came upon Israel to bring them to repentance, and a majority repented, as explained in the sealing of the 144,000 in chapter 7. Now, that repentant remnant are spared the plagues on Egypt, as it were; but the impenitent amongst Israel will suffer along with 'Egypt', the unbelieving world. This is as predicted in Dt. 28:59,60- the plagues of Egypt will come upon unbelieving Israel: "Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues… He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt".

8:3 *And another Angel*- Perhaps representative of the Lord Jesus, seeing He is the mediator of prayer.

Came and stood over the altar- "Over the altar" gives the image of the Angel standing next to the altar but taller than the altar, in order to take fire off it. The bronze altar of sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple had steps going up it, according to the Mishnah.

Josephus says it also had a ramp; so that the priest could be "over the altar" to place sacrifices upon it, and [as in this case] to take fire off it for the censor of incense. This altar is clearly distinguished from the *golden* altar, i.e. the altar of incense which although outside the Most Holy Place is often described as being 'before Yahweh' as it is here called "before the throne". This is because it was just in front of the curtain dividing the Most Holy from the Holy Place, and the incense from it entered in to the Most Holy. In this sense the incense altar provided "a perpetual incense before the LORD" (Ex. 30:8), before Yahweh's presence over the ark in the Most Holy. Just as we are not actually in God's literal presence, and yet our prayers and status in Christ mean that effectively we are. This is the wonder of prayer. We can get that close to God. Ex. 40:5 implies that effectively, the curtain dividing the incense altar from the ark was not there: "You shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony". And moreso, in Christ, that veil is torn down. This also explains the otherwise strange description of the incense altar in 1 Kings 6:22 as "the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary". On the Day of Atonement, the veil was effectively removed, and in that context Heb. 9:3,4 can say that "behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies having ['to which pertained'] the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant". If this is not a Day of Atonement allusion, then the Greek for "having..." can legitimately be read as meaning 'to which pertained...', because there was such a strong association between the incense altar and the Most Holy Place.

Ex. 30:6 speaks of the incense altar as "where I will meet with you". And yet this is said of the ark within the Most Holy Place: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Ex. 25:22;; Num. 17:4). But when did God actually commune with men from the mercy seat in the ark? The High Priest only entered the Most Holy Place once per year on the day of Atonement. So when Ex. 30:6 appears to say that it was the altar of incense "where I will meet with you", we are to understand that the God who dwelt over the ark actually communicated at the altar of incense. The context of Ex. 30:6 is all about the incense altar. And it is there, in prayer, that God meets with man. LXX has "wherein I will make myself known to thee from thence". This suggests that God from the Most Holy ["from thence"] makes Himself known to man at the incense altar, i.e. in prayer. This is why the tabernacle generally is described as the place "where I will meet with you, to speak there to you" (Ex. 29:42). It was "the tent of meeting" in that the God who met man in the Most Holy Place came out of that place to meet man at the incense altar. The incense altar was therefore the place of communion between God and man. The incense wafted through into the Most Holy Place, and God met with man in His word "from thence". Relationship with God is therefore two way. We speak to Him in prayer, and He speaks back through His word. This is why prayer and Bible reading are so critically important. All this clearly teaches that prayer is not a list of requests. The many prayers in the Psalms have very few requests compared to simply talking with God in communion. "Pray without ceasing" [alluding to the constant offering of incense morning and evening] cannot mean that we send up an unbroken barrage of requests. Rather does it mean that we are to be in unbroken communion with God.

There are two altars in view here. The Angel takes fire from the bronze altar of sacrifice, which we have recently encountered in 6:9 as the symbol of the sacrifice of the faithful during the tribulation, under which is their blood which cries out for vengeance, and uses this to ignite the incense on the golden altar of incense, which we again encounter in 9:13. The sacrifice of the faithful remnant, their endurance unto death, gives power to the prayers offered for the coming of Christ. The sacrifice of the

believers during the tribulation in 6:9 gave rise to the prayer "How long...?", the begging for the Lord's coming. And it was because of their sacrifice that their prayers were heard. That is represented here by the fire from the blood covered altar of sacrifice being used to ignite the incense of prayer on the incense altar. Our lives are in that sense a prayer, and give credibility and integrity to our words of prayer. Otherwise, prayer is mere words. But those prayed words cannot be powerful unless they are rooted in a life lived before God. God is not a magician and prayer is not of power just because of the words, otherwise prayer is merely like a pagan incantation. If this were not the case, then answers to prayer would simply go to those who know how to wordsmith their language nicely and persuasively. That is a mistake made by so many Orthodox believers, but we can all tend to believe it too.

The cry of the blood of the martyrs was "How long, O Lord, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:9,10). That prayer was now being answered. There is no conscious survival of death. Those people were dead, but their prayers were as it were still active in God's mind, and He was working to respond to them. And the events of AD70 were a partial answer to them, judging "those who dwell on the earth / land [of Israel, in the primary context]" (Rev. 8:13). The scene here is also clearly based upon that of Israel under persecution in Egypt. "I have surely seen the affiction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry" (Ex. 3:7). God's response was to send the plagues. Here, the incense ascends to God and He sends the sequence of trumpet plagues which clearly allude to the plagues on Egypt (hail, fire etc., :7). My point is that the cry of Israel was not specific words, but a situation which God took heed to. Likewise incense is not simply representative of words prayed, but of the life and life situation behind them. And it was likewise responded to by God in the first century in the events of AD70, as it will be in our last days.

Having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne- One Angel is given much incense- i.e. prayers- presumably by the individual guardian Angels. He then offers this up on the altar (Christ) to God, and the response from God comes in the form of the Angels sounding their trumpets. It is interesting to note that actually these Angels had already been prepared for what they were going to do (Rev. 8:2) when they had been earlier before the throne of God. God knows our prayers before we say them. He knew what the prayers of the people at that time would be, and had earlier prepared the Angels to answer them, and this was unleashed by their cumulative prayer. But without that prayer- that human part of the equation- the prepared answer would not have been put into action. The prayers were offered up by one Angel- this either means there is one Angel with overall responsibility for offering up prayers to Christ (the altar), or that there is one Angel who collects together the prayers from one period of time or about one particular subject and then offers them up to Christ. The fact "much incense" is mentioned presumably means that there was much prayer made at this time, and this was added to the "prayers of all saints" (v. 3) which had already been made about this.

The sky, the trillions of kilometres between Heaven and earth, are in fact no ultimate distance. That's the simplest message of those visions. In Revelation we see the incense of human prayers arising into Heaven, resulting in Angels coming to earth, pouring out bowls, blowing trumpets, and major events happening on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). Prayer is noticed; it brings forth quite out of proportion responses.

Rev. 8:3-5 as well as Rev. 11:6 certainly allude to Elijah as a pattern for our latter day witnessing. Much incense of latter day prayer is added to the existing incense, resulting in fire being brought down on earth after the pattern of Elijah (Rev. 8:3-5 RV). The especially intense prayers of the latter day remnant are added to the cumulative prayers of former generations, and result in the second coming and the beginning of the final judgments.

8:4 *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand*- The same Greek words for 'smoke ascended up' are found in Rev. 14:11; 19:3 concerning the smoke of the destruction of the beast system. This ultimately will be brought about by the prayer of the latter day remnant. As I point out in *The Last Days,* much emphasis is given to prayer in the latter day prophecies. But the ascending up of the smoke of their prayers is also to be compared with the ascending up of the smoke from the bottomless pit in 9:2, which gives rise to the locust invasion which torments those in the land. This judgment on the land is therefore a direct response to human prayer. And God finds our prayers pleasant, just as the Mosaic sacrifices and the sacrifice of Noah were a "pleasing odor" to God (Gen. 8:21). But the smell of sacrifices was not pleasant to human smell. But it was to God. Likewise Eph. 5:2, "Christ gave Himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God". Prayer likewise may seem a bizarre exercise to the secular man. For sweet smelling incense is the symbol of prayer: "May my prayer be counted as incense before You" (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8). It gives God joy: "Oil and incense make the heart glad" (Prov. 27:9). But that incense must be "beaten small" in humility: "he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small; and he shall bring it within the veil" (Lev. 16:11-14). The impression we get from Lev. 16:12 is that as much as possible should be brought: "a censer full of coals of fire... two handfuls of sweet incense". As much coal and incense as possible. The idea is that we should indulge in prayer, and not be minimalists. As there was always fire on the altar (Lev. 9:9), so prayer can always be offered.

8:5- see on Rev. 5:8.

And the angel took the censer, filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it upon the earth- The fire from the bronze sacrifice altar was used to ignite the incense on the incense altar; see on :3. The earth / land has the fire of judgment thrown at it because of the prayers of and about those who were slain in it during the tribulation. This is the scene at the altar in 6:9; the blood on the altar leads to a promise of judgment against those who shed it. The Lord perhaps foresaw all this when He used the same words about how He came not to cast peace on the land but fire and a sword (Mt. 10:34; Lk. 12:49)- because Israel refused to accept Him. The scattering of fire on the land recalls Ez. 10:2, where fire is scattered over the city of Jerusalem; and the Babylonian desolation which this primarily refers to is a prototype of the latter day desolation of Jerusalem. Clearly, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth" (Lk. 12:49) required the incense of prayer to trigger it. The events of AD70 were therefore in response to the blood of the martyrs of Rev. 6, "the souls under the altar", arising as prayer-incense and triggering this response from Heaven. We see here how God's people were totally uncompromised with the Jewish world around them, who of course were praying and fighting for the preservation of Jerusalem and victory against Rome. But the Roman judgment of Jerusalem and the temple with fire, was in fact all sent from the Lord Jesus, triggered by prayer and the blood of those slain by the Jewish system. The judgments are thrown onto the earth / land directly from the

incense altar to show that it was the lives and prayers of the faithful that brought about those judgments. Whereas in the world systems around the believers, prayer was to be offered for Jerusalem and the land [by Jews] and for the empire [by Romans].

The cry for vengeance of the blood of the souls under the altar in Rev. 6 is answered throughout the visions of judgment in the rest of Revelation- e.g. "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgements are true and righteous; for... He has *avenged the blood* of his bond servants on her" (Rev. 19:1,2). But this was all brought about by the incense of prayer. Just as the incense ascended up, so the judgment of their persecuters is "smoke" that "rises up forever and ever" (Rev. 19:3). And this is why in Rev. 16:6,7 we find the altar apparently speaking: "They poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy. And I heard another ["another *angel*" is not in the original] out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments". The dialogue from the altar is because the voice of prayer is the voice of the lives of the martyrs, and being dead they still speak from God's perspective, as does the blood of Abel (Heb. 11:4 "he, though being dead, still speaks"; "the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel", Heb. 12:24). Likewise when the sixth trumpet sounds, John hears "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God" (Rev. 9:13). The vials etc. which form part of the sixth trumpet were all triggered by the voice from the incense altar- God's voice responding to the voice of the incense / prayer which had been offered there, and the voice of the martyrs of Rev. 6:9 which came from that altar.

The direct connection between prayer and the outpouring of judgments is continued in Rev. 15:7, where "one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God". In Rev. 5:8, the golden bowls are filled with incense, which is stated there to represent prayers. The similarity of the "golden bowls" is to show how prayer results in the triggering of the outpouring of Divine judgment. On one hand, God is sovereign and does as He wishes; and yet He also will only do what He does in response to man. The fire thrown onto the earth in Rev. 8:3-5 is thrown from the incense altar. And that fire came from the altar of sacrifice where the blood of the martyrs cries for vengeance. The clear idea is that prayer is directly related to God causing major geopolitical events and judgments on this earth. This is where understanding Revelation changes our whole perception both of ourselves and of the world around us.

There followed thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake- Whatever the specific fulfilments of these things, we must not fail to gather the overall impression which would have been taken by a first century illiterate Jewish audience. Thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, seven trumpet blasts and an earthquake all go together with the classic theophanies whereby God 'comes down' to earth with a great trumpet sound (Ex. 19:16-19; Is. 19:6; Rev. 11:19; 16:18). And this is triggered by the incense of prayer.

What was seen in the Heavenly throne room at the start of the vision (4:5 cp. 11:19). This awesome Divine activity in the temple of Heaven, the throne room (11:19), is triggered by the prayers of men on earth. Voices, thunder, lightning and earthquake are all experienced in the events which make Babylon fall in 16:18 under the seventh vial (16:17). The voice of thunderings proclaims the establishment of God's Kingdom in 19:6. Putting these things together, we see that the voices, thunders and lightnings are all part and parcel of the same final judgment of the beast system

and establishment of God's Kingdom at Christ's coming. There is no way that these various passages refer to events over a 2000 year period. They are the events of the very last days. The earthquake which is associated with voices, thunders and lightnings is clearly that of 16:18, for the same words are used. The literalistic, linear thinking mind would expect that there must be a progression of chronological events between chapters 8 and 16. But that is not how apocalyptic works, nor do we find such a chronological development in Old Testament Bible prophecy. Rather are we given repeated snapshots of the same events from different angles, and often the end point is declared and then there is an explanation of how that position was arrived at. This is true of Biblical language generally- consider how in 2 Samuel 24 we are told that the Lord spared Jerusalem because of David's prayer, but then the text reverts in time to explain how that came about.

The same earthquake is in view throughout Revelation (6:12; 11:13,19; 16:18). We naturally think of the great earthquake which is to accompany the return of the Lord Jesus in Zech. 14:5. The earthquake is described in various parts of the Revelation prophecy because chronological order is not very significant in apocalyptic. The images overlap, giving a kaleidoscope effect.

The language in 8:5 and indeed throughout the trumpets is alluding to the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction in Isaiah 29:
"I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation... I will encamp against you all around... and you will be brought low... in an instant, suddenly, you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night... so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion... In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD... For the ruthless [the Islamic Jihadists] shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off... Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale... those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding". It's hard to find a complete historical fulfilment of this- when God revealed Himself to deliver a besieged Jerusalem with thunder, earthquake and great noise, which then results in the repentance of a remnant in Israel. This time is yet to come, and it is the time spoken of in Revelation 8. The earthquake which fells Babylon is Jerusalem's salvation, and it comes at a time when Jerusalem is surrounded by enemy armies. This is the scenario of Zechariah 14- Jerusalem surrounded by armies, who are judged by the Lord's return and a huge earthquake.

8:6 *And the seven Angels that had the seven trumpets*- The blowing of trumpets is commonly used in the OT for preparing war against Israel's enemies. The war being prepared is against Israel's latter day desolators. The obvious connection is with the seven priests blowing the seven trumpets which caused the fall of the great city Jericho (Josh. 6:4,6). Israel's latter day enemies are the equivalent of the Canaanites, the non-Jewish inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham. The Angels are as it were the priests, and we have read earlier in Rev. 8 of the Angels as it were doing priestly duty in the Heavenly tabernacle. The blowing of the trumpets is preparing for the fall of the great city Babylon, the epitome of the beast.

Prepared themselves to sound- We imagine them lifting the trumpets to their mouths. The detail adds to the general impression that all the calamities of the last days have been carefully prepared. They are not at all the outcome of random evil which has got out of even Divine control. That point is repeatedly made doubtless because it might well appear like that to those who endure those things. There is a strong theme in Revelation of things being prepared by the Angels and then happening on the land (the locusts are prepared for battle, 9:7; four Angels are prepared for action at a precise moment, 9:15; the persecuted woman has a placed of refuge prepared for her, 12:6; the hordes from the East are prepared for release from the Euphrates, which is what we are seeing in the preparation of the jihadist hordes in that very area today, 16:12; the bride is prepared through all her tribulations, 19:7: 21:2). It is that preparation process which we are seeing today in the development of the radical Islamists.

Num. 10:8-10 clearly associates the sounding of the trumpets with the deliverance of God's people from their enemies: "When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and be saved from your enemies". We have an example in 2 Chron. 13:14,15: "When Judah turned around, behold they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah". Again we see that the context in Revelation is likewise Israel. The judgments which follow are therefore against the enemies of the true people of God. But we must remember that this is all in response to the incense, which was initially the cry of the lives of those martyred by Jewish and Roman systems in the first century. The true Israel were persecuted by the fake Israel, and so there is an element in which these judgments came upon the land of Israel in AD70.

8:7 *And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood; and they were cast upon the earth*- One reason why there are such similarities between the seven vials and the seven trumpets [see introduction to this chapter] could be that the vials refer largely to the judgments to come upon the world, and the trumpets to the latter day tribulation of the saints. See on Rev. 11:3.

Seven Vials	Seven trumpets
16:2	8:7
16:3	8:8
16:4	8:10
16:8	8:12
16:10	9:1
16:12	9:13
16:17-21	11:15

The hail is seen prepared in Heaven in 11:9; now it is sent to the earth. Hail is one of the final bowls that is poured upon the beast system in 16:21. What the beast does to those on the land is done to them; the cup or bowl they gave others to drink, they must drink at the time of the bowls being poured out. The idea of "hail and fire mingled" is clearly alluding to the plague upon Egypt, of hail mingled with fire (Ex. 9:24). But the hail plague did not touch the Israelites in Goshen (Ex. 9:26). This is exactly as we would expect- the seal judgments led a remnant of Israel to repent, and

through the symbology of the 144,000 in Rev. 7, they are declared the true Israel. They are sealed so that the judgments of the trumpets don't come upon them. So the allusion to a plague on Egypt which didn't touch Israel is appropriate. Is. 32:19 describes the repentant remnant of Israel as being unharmed by hail in the last days. Note that the plagues on Egypt were intended to elicit repentance in Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and that is likewise the purpose of the trumpet judgments upon the beast system. We gasp at God's grace- that He even wants jihadists to repent. We recall too how a confederacy of five kings of the earth / land, under the leadership of the antichrist figure Adonizedek ('Lord of righteousness', a fake Christ), were likewise destroyed by hail during the conquest of Joshua-Jesus (Josh. 10:11).

Hail cast down to the earth is exactly the language of the judgment upon the impenitent amongst Israel in the last days who do not accept the Messiah, the corner stone laid in Zion; those who are not amongst the remnant who repent (Is. 28:2,5,16,17); those Jews who will not 'come out of' the Babylon system will experience her judgments, if they are not part of the repentant Jewish remnant, the 144,000. In similar manner, the impenitent Jews at the time of the restoration were struck with hail, albeit as part of a program intended to bring them even then to repentance (Hag. 2:17).

Hail and blood are used by God to "plead" with Gog (Ez. 38:22). Ezekiel 38 is a latter day prophecy, but we again must note that the judgment of hail, blood, plague etc. is in order to plead even with Gog to repent. Only when the warning trumpets are ignored are the vials of complete destruction poured out and the temple is closed to men (15:7,8).

"Fire mingled with blood" is all part of the Lord's second coming, for He comes with flaming fire in judgment upon those who have refused to know Him (2 Thess. 1:7); thus the eyes of Jesus in Revelation are as a flaming fire (Rev. 1:7; 2:18; 19:12). This is the picture of Him at the time of His coming in judgment to earth. Yet the Angels are His eyes, according to Revelation 1 and 4:5, and they are therefore made a flaming fire (Heb. 1:7). Thus the actual, mechanical outworking of His coming in judgment in fire will be through the medium of Angelic activity. And this is what we have spoken of here in Rev. 8:7.

Casting fire on the land [of Israel] recalls Amos 7:4, which also mentions locusts, whom we will meet in the fifth trumpet: "The Lord God contended by fire... and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land (R.V., LXX: "the Lord's portion"). The context goes on to predict that "the high places of Isaac (where Isaac was offered- Moriah, the temple mount) shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries [the great sanctuary?] of Israel shall be laid waste". Notice once again that the punishment by fire is Yahweh 'contending'. It is again an appeal for repentance.

The third part of the earth was burnt up, as was the third part of the trees; and all green grass was burnt up- In Ez. 5:1-5 Ezekiel shaves his hair and is told to divide it carefully into three parts, except for a mere few bound in the hem of his robe. These three parts are then consigned to destruction by fire, sword or scattering. We have just read in chapter 7 of the 144,000 faithful remnant. They will be saved, but the three parts of Israel who remain apart from them are to be destroyed. Note that the context of Ezekiel 5 is specifically Jerusalem. Zech. 13:8,9 speaks of two thirds of Jews *in the land* being killed, and a third being refined. Zech. 14:2 has half of Jerusalem going into captivity. Bearing in mind the difference between Jerusalem and the whole land, these proportions aren't necessarily contradictory. The point is, these Old Testament prophecies of a partial desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Israel are being alluded

to in Revelation; and the context is of the last days, rather than of some period in past history.

Not all trees were destroyed by the hail. This is in intended contrast to how the hail upon Egypt destroyed *every* tree of the field (Ex. 9:25- although some escaped, 10:5,12,15) as well as all the grass. Here, all the grass is destroyed but only a third of the trees. We may not need to think in terms of literal grass and trees. Perhaps the point is being made that yes, the situation is analogous to Israel in Egypt and the plagues upon Egypt, but still they are more restrained than those upon Egypt. This would be because God wants the beast system to perceive the similarities [perhaps therefore literal hail will be used], and to repent- before the bowls are poured out, which speak of utter destruction of the beast system. We note that in this case, Moses before Pharaoh must have a latter day equivalent, and we see this in chapter 11, where the two witnesses have similarities to Moses at this time.

The destruction of trees recalls what Babylon did to Jerusalem: "For thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew down her trees (RVmg.), and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her" (Jer. 6:6). Likewise Ez. 20:47: "Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein". These words were applied by the Lord to Jerusalem's future judgment, both in AD70 and therefore also in the last days (Lk. 23:31). The idea is that the Babylonian judgment upon Israel is to be repeated in the last days. And that may simply be the point of reference to the trees- perhaps we don't need to look for any literal application. It could be that as in the Lord's latter day parable of the fig tree, trees represent nations within the land / earth promised to Abraham. Another Old Testament allusion to be aware of regarding trees is
Zech. 11:1,2: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down". These words preface a prophecy of the rejection of Jesus and of the resultant judgment for that in the last days.

It's not my style in this exposition to unduly dwell on the very evident application of Revelation to the run up to AD70, for we want to know the relevance to our days. But it's worth noting that there was a literal removing of trees then. Josephus claims that trees were felled indiscriminately to build engines of war and even the crucifixion of prisoners had to cease through lack of timber to make crosses. There has been an especial attempt to reforest the land of Israel since 1948. This is typical of the way that natural Israel have sought to bring about the fulfilment of Bible prophecies about the fertility of the land- in their own strength. And all that reforestation will be burnt up in the tribulation.

We note that the olive and vine trees were not to be hurt during the time of the seals (6:6). But now, a third of them are. The Hadith records how generally, trees should not be destroyed by Moslems when on campaigns: "The first Caliph Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) gave to his army while sending her on the expedition to the Syrian borders[commands] permeated with the noble spirit with which the war in Islam is permitted. He said: "... Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful" (The Hadith, Book 19 Jihad and Expedition (*Kitab Al−Jihad wa'l−Siyar*). As often happens, the jihadist may go well beyond their own

religion. Or it could be that these particular judgments on the land are brought about by non-Moslems.

"Burnt up" is the same word used about the burning up in judgment of the last day when Christ returns (Lk. 3:17; 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:10) and the burning up of Babylon (Rev. 17:16; 18:8). The weeds are gathered together and burnt up (Mt. 13:30), and this is effectively a latter day prophecy of the gathering together of the nations to Armageddon and their being burnt up in the land. "Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:40-42). The furnace is specifically defined as Jerusalem under judgment at the hands of Babylon-Assyria (Is. 31:9; Ez. 22:18), the latter day Sodom and Egypt which are also described as a furnace (Gen. 19:28; Dt. 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jer. 11:4). Sodom and Egypt are Jerusalem of the last days (Rev. 11:8; Is. 1:10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Ez. 16:46). The prophecies about this will therefore be fulfilled in stages within the last few days around the coming of Christ. The furnace of Rev. 9:2 must be understood likewise; the overthrow of Babylon is as when God overthrew Sodom (Is. 13:19; Jer. 49:18; 50:40).

The specific mention of *green* grass may suggest that this happens at Passover time (cp. Mk. 6:39). *Chloros*, here translated “green”, is the same word used about the *chloros* [AV “pale”] horse” of the seals (Rev. 6:8). This similarity with the seals is because what was done to Israel is now being done to those who did it. Babylon is drinking the cup she gave others.

8:8 *And the second angel blew his trumpet and as it were a great mountain*- This can refer to Israel and Mount Zion: “Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done” (Mt. 21:21). “This mountain” was Zion, before which the Lord stood at that time, with its altar fire, which never went out. Yet the great destroying mountain is also Babylon (Jer. 51:25). The punishment upon Babylon will come upon an Israel who fail to come out of her.

The mountains had been moved out of their places in the seal judgments (6:14), and now this is in turn done to the enemies of God's people. For the mountain falling represents the destruction of Babylon in the Old Testament. But it also represents Judaism. The fall of Israel as an entity is framed in the same terms as the fall of Babylon. They had failed to come out of Babylon, and so Babylon's judgments come upon them. We're dealing here with a double symbol- of both falling Babylon and falling Israel. By contrast, the "great mountain" of God's Kingdom, the Mount Zion, stands secure (Dan. 2:35; Rev. 14:1; 21:10). The clearest Old Testament allusion is to Zech. 4:7: "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the corner stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'". The corner stone is the Lord Jesus, whose second coming will mean the fall of the "great mountain". The creation of a plain instead of elevated land is the language of the required levelling of Israel by the work of the Elijah prophet before the coming of Messiah (Is. 40:4). The immediate context of Zech. 4:7 speaks of how the mountain of opposition to Zerubbabel would be removed so that the restoration of Israel's Kingdom could come about. And that opposition was from local Arabs such as Sanballat who were opposing it. Zerubbabel failed to restore the Kingdom and become the Messiah figure he could have become. The essence of the prophecy is to be fulfilled in the last days, when the Lord Jesus will be in perfection the Messiah of

Israel. The great mountain will then speak of the fake kingdom of God established by the Babylon beast, which shall be cast down.

Burning with fire- This burning with fire is part of the outworking of how fire was cast into the land as a result of the prayers of the faithful remnant (8:5). The mountain is cast down, burning- just as fire is cast onto the earth from above. Yet burning fire is a feature of God's latter day judgment upon the beast, as often spoken of later in Revelation. The Lord Jesus will sit in judgment on the beast enthroned with wheels of burning fire (Dan. 7:19), replete as that language is with reference to the Angel cherubim (Ez. 1:13), the four beasts of Heaven. Again, we are clearly to see in this the language of the last day. The lamps of fire burning before the throne in Rev. 4:5 speak of the view of the Heavenly throne room as it will be in the last day. Finally, the lake of burning fire- fire burning on water- is the end of the beast system. And this same image, fire cast into water and the water burning, is found here in the second trumpet (and also in the third trumpet, where fire hits water again, the rivers). Perhaps we could understand that this is a foretaste of the final judgment of the lake of fire. Only a third of the water is affected, and then a third part of the rivers, unlike the symbology of the entire lake of fire burning. There is again the implication that even at this late stage, men can see what condemnation will be like and avoid it in repentance. This would be in keeping with how God has worked so many times- He gives worked examples of condemnation to men to warn them of where their path shall lead them. Quite simply, because He wishes their repentance. Significantly, the Koran several times claims that the judgment of unbelievers will be severe exactly because they have rejected warnings (especially Sura 54.16-24). The Moslem followers of the beast will be treated exactly in accordance with their own perceptions of Divine judgment.

Was cast into the sea- In this sense, there is a sea of glass mingled with fire in 15:2. The sea of glass speaks of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, but the picture is mingled with fire because the throwing of fire into the sea is what brings about the Kingdom. We see again how apocalyptic is not interested in precise chronology- the events are run together. Different aspects of the same picture are given. What this means, however, is that the casting of the mountain of fire into the sea is definitely a picture of latter day events, immediately around the time of the establishment of the sea as glass, the Kingdom of God on the sea of nations.

The wicked are as a troubled sea (Is. 57:20). But closer examination of that passage reveals that is talking about the Jews at the time of the Assyrian invasion who chose not to be amongst the righteous remnant. This exactly fits our context. And the Hebrew word translated "troubled" means literally 'sent away', and is also translated 'divorced'. The metaphor of divorce is certainly used about God's relationship with Israel, and the destruction of the faithless majority of Israel at the time of the end will be the final climax of that great divorce. such troubling of the sea will be the lot of the majority in Israel, but "Peace, peace" to the repentant remnant (Is. 57:19).

And the third part of the sea became blood- In the AD70 application, this may refer to the mass killing of Jews in the Sea of Galilee. Josephus recorded: “One might see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight, there was on the following days over the country. In this way thousands were slain” (B.J. 3:10:9). Likewise, on the Mediterranean coast: “The sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime ports were full of dead bodies ... and the number of the bodies that were thus thrown out of the sea was 4,200” (B.J. 3:9:3). Perhaps something similar will happen in the last days.

Water becoming blood is obviously a reference to the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 7:20). The continual allusion to those plagues suggest that there has been an abuse of Israel by a latter day Egypt. In *The Last Days* chapter 5 I work out in more detail the typology of Egypt's domination of Israel, with the Passover deliverance being a type of the second coming. That might explain the reference to "green grass", associated as it is with Passover. Bother "rivers" and "waters" are described as being turned into blood in Egypt (Ps. 78:44; 105:29), and both rivers and waters are spoken of here in the trumpets.

A burning mountain coming into the sea would create the impression of a sea of fire- and the lake of fire is the picture of the beast's final destruction (Rev. 19:20; 21:8). There may therefore be no specific symbology in the 'sea' or water beyond this.

Fire destroying things in water is surely an indication that this is from God. The Hadith (Book 41.7012) says that the Antichrist of the last days will do the same: "The *Dajjal* would appear and there would be along with him water and fire and what the people would see as water that would be fire and that would burn and what would appear as fire that would be water". The Muslims will therefore see the entity bringing these things about- the Lord Jesus- as the antiChrist and thus be the more motivated to engage in mad warfare against Him, to their own destruction.

In Rev. 8:8 we have an Angel casting a mountain into the sea. This must surely connect with the Lord's encouragement that we can cast mountains into the sea by our faith (Mk. 11:23). Therefore... it surely follows that our prayers have a direct effect upon the Angels. They throw mountains around because of our faithful prayer... Inevitably we see a connection with Ps. 46:2, which comforts us not to fear when mountains are cast into sea. Surely the point is that we shouldn't be scared when we perceive the awesomeness of the power of prayer and its influence upon Angels. It's all too easy to ask for things without perceiving how it would really be if that prayer were answered. We need to have specific and focused faith in what we ask for, realizing that legions of Angels are potentially able to operationalize what we ask for. See on Is. 6:7.

Jer. 51:25 calls Babylon a "destroying mountain" which is to be judged by fire to become "a burnt mountain". The use of identical language in Rev. 8:8 must make that passage have some reference to the fall of latter-day Babylon. "Destroying mountain" is the language of Dan. 2:44 concerning the little stone destroying the image and growing into a mountain, symbolizing God's Kingdom. Jer. 51:20-23 stresses no less than nine times how 'Babylon' is to be "broken in pieces", which is another connection with Dan. 2:44 concerning the breaking in pieces of the nations who are confederate with 'Babylon', the head of gold.

8:9 *And there died the third part of the creatures (even they that had life) which were in the sea, and the third part of the ships were destroyed*- The connection is clearly with Rev. 5:13, where the "creatures" [s.w.] in the sea all give glory to the Lamb enthroned. To get to that end point, the creatures in the sea who will not give Him glory must be judged. The seals, trumpets, vials and descriptions of the judgments upon the beast and whore can be read as being all aspects of the final judgment. But it could also be that the last judgment of the unbelieving world comes in stages. Here in the trumpets, a third of the sea creatures die; in 16:3, the sea becomes as the blood of a dead corpse "and *every* living creature died in the sea". The same Greek word for "died" is used there as here in 8:9. As commented previously, God gives warning of His final judgments, in the hope that men will learn from the condemnation of others and repent. We marvel at His patience, portrayed as it is

throughout the various judgments we read of. Our human sense would be to simply liquidate the entire unbelieving, abusive system in one shot. But He works, with all the intricacies of the systems of seven interlocking, interrelated judgments, in order to try to elicit repentance at every turn. Truly, as Emil Brunner observed, "the wrath of God is the love of God". Even in His style of condemning wicked men and systems, we see shining through His urgent desire for human repentance and other, better outcomes. "The sea" is the area from which the beast arises (13:1). We can therefore interpret it as the power base of the beast- the nations and peoples within the land promised to Abraham. This would explain the repeated judgments upon the "sea" in Revelation. The emphasis given to "the ships" being judged would therefore speak of the mercantile activities within that area. The only other references in Revelation to "ships" are when we read that the ships associated with the Babylon-beast system are destroyed in her final judgment (Rev. 18:17,19). At the time of the trumpet judgments, only a third of them are destroyed- but finally, they are all destroyed. The destruction of a third of them is again a portent of the final total destruction- and is therefore an appeal for repentance. Likewise we read that this third part of shipping was "destroyed" but the word is found elsewhere in Revelation only when we read of the total 'destruction' of those who had destroyed the land (11:18).

8:10 *And the third angel blew his trumpet, and there fell from heaven a great star*- The Olivet prophecy speaks of the stars falling from Heaven (Mt. 24:29), and the context begs us interpret this as referring to the collapse of the Israelite ruling system. The imagery can equally refer to the ruling system of any entity. It seems a specific star or leader is in view, and his fall will result in damage on the earth / land. A great star falling from Heaven to earth recalls Isaiah 14, the parable of the fall of the king of Babylon. And this surely looks forward to the last days. Stars represent rulers or leaders, and Rev. 17:10 speaks of how the five kings supporting the beast system 'fall' [s.w.]; here in the trumpets we have detail of the fall of at least two of them.

Burning as a torch- This is the language of the earlier vision of the Heavenly throne room, where the seven lamps of fire burn before the throne (Rev. 4:5). The implication is that this is a result of Angelic involvement in the judgment. But there is also a continuation of the theme that the beast kingdom is a fake kingdom of God. It has just been described as a "great mountain", which is the language of *God's* Kingdom. Perhaps the leader who falls will be known as the burning torch or lamp.

And it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the waters- See on 8:8 *burning with fire.* Such judgment on water courses is predicted in prophecies about latter day events in the land of Israel. "The mountains of Israel... Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers (R.V. "water courses"; the reference is to wadis) and to the valleys" (Ez. 6:3). Ez. 36:4, 6 uses identical language about the land of Israel, again in a latter day context. Before the Assyrian invasion, typical of the latter day desolation of Israel, Joel 1:20 records that "the rivers of waters are dried up".

The Koran and Hadith speak hundreds of times of paradise as being a place of rivers and fountains of waters. The contrast is with the *living* "fountains of waters" which the repentant 144,000 come to (Rev. 7:17). The "fountains of waters" of the beast system are turned to blood and dried up in the various judgments brought upon them. They are *dead*. The Muslim concept of paradise will be destroyed and inverted. In seeking to establish a caliphate in the land promised to Abraham, with Jerusalem as its capital and the temple mount as its central point of worship, radical Islam is seeking to establish a fake, imitation Kingdom of God- just as Assyria offered Judah a land where each would sit under their own vine and fig tree, appropriating the

language of *God's* Kingdom to their own. Whilst there may be a literal element to these judgments upon the waters, I suspect that the judgment must be understood in terms of the Islamic conception of paradise.

8:11 *And the name of the star is called Wormwood*- This is Old Testament imagery for the bitterness of Israel's judgment at the hand of their neighbours, especially Babylon at the fall of Jerusalem: "Behold I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the nations" (Jer. 9:15, 16; Lam. 3:15,19). "Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land" (Jer. 23:15 cp. Jer. 6:26). The allusion is also to Numbers 5, the trial of the bitter waters of jealousy, for the woman who has been unfaithful to her husband. And that woman is clearly enough representative of Israel, according to many Old Testament allusions.

Sura 37.62 of the Koran speaks of a similar plant that Muslims believe is the food of dwellers of Hell-fire, part of the diet of *Adh-Dhari*, bitter fruit, which intensifies their torment (Sura 69:36,37). The similarities with the Koran could suggest that the victims of these judgments will be subjected to an Islamic judgment of condemnation, i.e. ministered by Islam. Or the hint could be that the self-righteous jihadists will understand that they are being condemned, they will feel their condemnation in terms they understand.

And one third of the waters became bitter-tasting; and many men died because the waters were made so bitter- The parallel is between the waters 'becoming wormwood' and the waters being "made bitter". There may not be too much significance in the term "wormwood", rather is the idea being developed of a curse and bitterness. The judgments of the trumpets are partly upon those in Israel who didn't repent during the seals, and thus weren't sealed in chapter 7; and partly upon their desolators, or others within the land promised to Abraham. The language of bitter waters obviously alludes to Israel's experience at Marah in Ex. 15:23. The bitter waters were cured by a tree being cut down and cast into the water. This clearly looked ahead to the tree of the Lord's crucifixion, through which the bitter waters were made sweet. The unbelieving Israelites were tested / tried at the bitter waters (Ex. 15:25). We could reasonably infer that the way only a third of the waters were made bitter is a hint that this partial judgment is intended to lead Israel to repentance, and to acceptance of the tree / cross of the Christ whom they crucified. Again we marvel at God's ever saving intention, ever desiring human repentance and salvation. After leaving Marah, and learning the lesson of the tree, Israel came to Elim, where there were "fountains of [living] water" (Num. 33:9). The contrast between bitter water and living water is only really found here in Rev. 8:10 and 7:17, where the repentant 144,000 come to living fountains of waters. Those who don't accept the crucified Christ have the bitter waters of Marah, from which they will not move on to Elim.

8:12- see on Rev. 18:8.

And the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars- The darkening of a third of the stars and a third of the sun and moon is very much the picture in Rev. 12:4, where a third of the stars fall to earth. The picture of a part of the heavens falling is exactly how the Koran envisages the last day judgment of apostates- "A fragment of the heaven falling" (Sura 52.44). The judgment they envisage upon others will come upon them, and it will be articulated in terms appropriate to their cultural understanding. This, I suggest,

is the significance of the similarities between the Biblical pictures of the latter day judgments, and the wording of the Koran and Hadith.

Harry Whittaker sums up the various usages of sun, moon and stars as symbols of Israel: "(a) Joseph's dream, where sun, moon and stars stand for his father, mother and brethren, *i.e.* the whole family of Israel.
(b) Revelation 12:1. The woman clothed with the sun and with the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars similarly represents the nation of Israel. From this starting point the chapter yields a coherent and highly relevant interpretation (ch. 27).
(c) Genesis 22:17: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven."
(d) Jeremiah 31:36: "If those ordinances (sun, moon and stars; v. 35) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever."
(e) Joel 2:10: "The sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" - the final invasion of Israel in the Last Days (cp. ch. 3:15).
(f) Daniel 8: 10: "The little horn waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them."
(g) Amos 8:9: "I will cause the sun to go down at noon" is coupled with: "I will turn your feasts into mourning."
(h) Luke 23:45: "And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple rent in the midst." Strange conjunction of phenomena in one verse except it is that both are symbolic of the same thing - the end of the Mosaic economy".

They are "struck", using the same word as is used in the LXX of the smiting of Israel by the Assyrians (Is. 1:5; 9:13), who represent Israel's latter day invaders.

This meant that the third part of them were darkened; and the day would not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner- Darkness coming upon the earth is the presage of a new creation (Gen. 1:2). The Old Testament prophets use the metaphor about the latter day invader of Israel bringing darkness upon the land (Is. 8:22; Am. 4:13), but that darkness is the necessary precursor for the Lord arising in glory upon the land (Is. 60:2). This language of a darkened earth is therefore the signal that we should expect imminently the active manifestation of God, through the return of His Son. These events therefore specifically reference the time of the immediate return of Christ. The unnatural eclipse of heavenly bodies recalls the period of darkness at the crucifixion. As so often in Revelation, the message is that the sufferings of the last days will enable people to identify with the crucifixion sufferings of Christ, and through that identification with Him to come to share in His resurrection. The essence of this means to salvation in Christ has gone on throughout the lives of all the Lord's people, at whatever time they have lived. However, the victims of the trumpet judgments are those who did not respond to those of the six seals. We again draw our breath in marvel at how the Lord will even seek with those stubborn people to bring them to identity with Him. Note that many of these judgments are a reversal of creation- for God initially made the sun, moon and stars to shine upon the earth (Gen. 1:15,17 s.w. LXX).

8:13 *And I saw and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice*- According to Vine, "It means, properly, the meridian, the highest point in the heavens which the sun occupies at noon; not the space between heaven and earth". The appeal from the place of the sun at its zenith surely speaks of the Lord Jesus. *En* (AV "through") would be better translated "at", with reference to this specific point. The warning that the next three Angels have very serious judgments to declare must serve

some kind of function. It may be to give the impression that these judgments are not to be understood in chronological sequence; they are known before they are pronounced. Or perhaps the declaration is made because, yet again, it is an appeal to repentance.

Woe, woe, woe!- This can be read as an invitation to weeping; the weeping of repentance. There is still just about time for repentance, even from those who have turned down the appeals of the six seals. The Muslim jihadists believe they are to pronounce woe upon the enemies in the last hour: "When a decisive surah is revealed and war is mentioned therein... Therefore woe unto them!" (Sura 47.20). The trumpets speak of judgments which are to come on both the beast and the impenitent Jews. But the judgments are brought about by the Moslem beast itself, which is exactly how God's enemies have met their end in history- by destroying themselves. Rev. 17:16 speaks of how the horns of the beast destroy the beast. So the bringing of "Woe" upon those in the land is what the jihadists are preparing to do.

For those who dwell on the earth- This talk of "inhabitants" seems rather redundant; until we realize that the reference is likely to those who have but recently invaded the land promised to Abraham, grabbed the wealth of the Jews and are now 'inhabiting' it as their own land.

By reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound- But only two of the woe trumpets appear to be sounded (9:12; 11:14). This recalls how there is no seventh seal either- just a pointed silence in Heaven, instead of an expected outpouring of calamity (see on :1). And now it seems there is no seventh trumpet either. This may be because we are intended to see 'the end', the final establishment of the Kingdom, as the seventh trumpet and seventh seal. But the seals and trumpets are of calamities happening to the land and people, not blessings. It could well be that God planned a final calamity which will not happen, just as the seven thunders are prepared but not recorded. His grace and pity may make Him relent; or quite simply the prayers of the faithful for 'the end' are powerful in bringing about some measure of shortening of His work. The Old Testament parallel would be in Joseph apparently cutting short the more extended program of education which He had intended for his brothers.

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

9:1 *And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star from heaven fall to the earth*- If the physical movement of Angels from Heaven to earth to perform certain tasks can be taken literally, Rev. 9:1,11 and certain other passages taken on a more literal slant: "I saw a star (symbolic of an Angel) fall from Heaven unto the earth: and to Him was given the key of the bottomless pit… the Angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:1,11). It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

And there was given to him the key to the pit of the abyss- The key to death and the grave is in Christ's hand (Rev. 1:18). This person is therefore an anti-Christ. We note how the locusts who are released from it are specifically obedient to their king-leader (9:4,11). The idea of course is that if you're thrown into a bottomless pit ["abyss"] which is locked, there's no way you can ever get out of it. But locusts,

representing the desolators of the land, do arise out of it. The figure is similar to that of receiving a deadly wound, a wound that makes one die, and then resurrecting. This is what is said of the beast and its horn (13:3,12). The locusts are connected to that entity. We should be looking, therefore, for the entity which will finally dominate Israel to receive a wound which apparently makes it dead. This could be from Western and / or Israeli intervention against them. There would then be a brief period of worldwide relief- the "peace and safety" period of 1 Thess. 5. But the entity then revives. This scenario is possible as we see from the Western conflict against the Islamic jihadists.

So many of Revelation's allusions to the Old Testament are to material specifically concerning Jerusalem. One could almost argue that the prophecy could have a specific application to the latter day city of Jerusalem. The language of the bottomless pit likewise has specific reference to Jerusalem: "In the floor of the small cave (measuring about 14 feet square with a six foot ceiling) under the great foundation stone in the Dome of the Rock is round marble slab closing a well shaft known as "the well of the souls" (Bir al Arwah) … A Muslim tradition holds this is the entrance into the bottomless pit, the abyss. The souls of the dead awaiting judgment are said to be audible beneath. The Talmud claims that this is the abyss above the primeval waters of creation and of the Flood" Lambert Dolphin, *Early History of the Temple Mount*.

The language used here is specifically relevant to latter day Islam. Mawdudi writes of how Muhammed and his message came out of "Arabia- the Abyss of Darkness" (Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 8th ed. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: National Offset Printing Press, 1986), p.63).

9:2 *And he opened the pit of the abyss and smoke went out of the pit*- This is the same figure used in 14:11 for the destruction of the beast worshippers. But here it speaks of what they did to deserve that destruction- their actions against Israel and the land promised to Abraham is the grounds for their condemnation. The Hadith mentions smoke as one of the ten signs that the last day is coming: "Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) came to us all of a sudden as we were (busy in a discussion). He said: What do you discuss about? They (the Companions) said. We are discussing about the Last Hour. Thereupon he said: It will not come until you see ten signs before and (in this connection) he made a mention of the smoke, Dajjal [Antichrist], the beast, the rising of the sun from the west, the descent of Jesus son of Mary (Allah be pleased with him), the Gog and Magog, and landslidings in three places, one in the east, one in the west and one in Arabia at the end of which fire would burn forth from the Yemen, and would drive people to the place of their assembly" (Book 41.6931). Again, we see the crisis in the land in the last days foretold in terms which Moslems will relate to. Sura 44 of the Koran is entitled *Al-Dukhan*, 'The Smoke'. It speaks of how painful smoke will be the punishment of God's enemies in the last days: "But watch thou [O Muhammad] for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment. [Then they will say]: Our Lord relieve us of the torment" (Sura 44.10-12). It could be that jihadists bring smoke upon others in an attempt to judge them according to Islam. And they will be judged likewise, drinking the cup they made others to drink. This means that they will be judged as apostates within their own frames of reference.

Like the smoke of a great furnace- See on 8:7. The language of Sodom (Gen. 19:28) and Egypt. Both these places are used to describe Jerusalem under domination of her enemies as the place of particular suffering for God's people (11:8).

The invading hordes come out of the bottomless pit- both the locusts (:3) and the beast arise from here (Rev. 9:1; 11:7; 17:8). They come up out of the "bottomless pit", the abyss, the "great furnace" (Rev. 9:2). But the beast arises out of *the land* [promised to Abraham] in Rev. 13:2. We can therefore understand the bottomless pit and great furnace as being within the land promised to Abraham. The locusts of Joel 2:3 are pictured as coming upon Israel as if it is the garden of Eden, and leaving it as a desolate wilderness. This could connect with the revival of the land of Israel since 1948 as the garden of Eden (Ez. 36:35); or it could be that Eden is the same as the land promised to Abraham. Is. 31:9 speaks of Jerusalem surrounded by the Assyrians as a furnace. Judah's captivity in Babylon was as it were in a furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10; Ez. 22:18,20,22). The deliverance of the faithful Jews from the furnace in Dan. 3:6,11 was an acted parable of Judah's deliverance from captivity in Babylon / Persia and her empire- throughout the land promised to Abraham. And yet in Rev. 20:3, the beast is again cast into the bottomless pit, clearly representing condemnation and judgment. So it would seem that the judgment upon the beast / locusts occurs several times- they are condemned / judged and put in the bottomless pit, and then released, and then placed there again. This probably speaks of various stages in the judgment upon them. But it would be foolhardy to try to work out an exact chronology ahead of time.

And the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit- Israel's extremist neighbours will not think twice about using nuclear weaponry against her, and one wonders therefore whether this will have a literal dimension. The sun is spoken of as being darkened by the smoke. But the sun itself would not be darkened; that is presented here as it appears from the standpoint of an observer on earth. So often the Bible is written this way, from the Genesis account of creation to the language of demons in the New Testament. Failure to appreciate this leads to wrong interpretation. The darkening of the sun is another connection with the account of the Lord's crucifixion (s.w. Lk. 23:45), the point being that the tribulation of the last days will connect the saints with His sufferings; and having suffered with Him, that generation shall live eternally with Him. It is also a quotation from the Olivet prophecy (Mt. 24:29). This again confirms that we are reading of things to happen in the very last days, before the Lord's return- and not at some point between centuries before that. The darkening of the sun is the very figure used for the latter day suffering of Israel at the hands of her invaders (Joel 3:15; Mt. 24:29).

9:3 *And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power*- The locusts of the fifth trumpet act in a very un-locust-like way. Unlike real locusts, they have a king. And, astonishing to relate, they are forbidden to touch grass or any vegetation! Once again the instruction seems to be: "Hurt not the earth, nor the trees"- only on this occasion it is given to locusts. *Akrab* being the Hebrew for scorpion, we may be justified in seeing here an allusion to the word 'Arab', the likely ethnicity of many of the boots on the ground of the last days. :3 The connection between these specific locusts and their place of origin is in line with how the Bible uses plant and animal imagery. "The prophets, when they used symbolical language to denote any events, commonly, at least, employed those which had a local or geographical reference; thus, in the symbols derived from the vegetable kingdom, when Judah is to be symbolized, the olive, the vine, and the fig-tree are selected; when Egypt is referred to, the reed is chosen; when Babylon, the willow. And so, in the animal kingdom, the lion is the symbol of Judah; the wild ass, of the Arabs; the crocodile, of Egypt, etc." (Elliott, *Horae Apoc*. i. 394-406). Being consumed by locusts was one of the punishments upon Israel for their

disobedience (Dt. 28:38,42; Ps. 78:46; Joel 1:2). Again, we are to understand this language as specifically applying to Israel.

The parallels between Joel and Revelation 8 and 9 are certainly impressive.

		Joel	*Revelation*
1	Locusts.	1: 4	9:3.
2	Symbolic of a nation.	1:6.	9: 4, 7.
3	Teeth like lions.	1:6.	9:8.
4	Trees and pasture withered and burnt up.	1: 12, 18-20.	8:7.
5	Destruction from the Almighty.	1: 15.	9: 11.
6	Fire.	1: 19; 2:3, 5.	8:7; 9:17.
7	Rivers of waters dried up.	1:20.	8: 10; 9:14
8	Blowing of trumpets.	2:1, 11, 15.	8:6.
9	Darkness.	2:2.	9:2.
10.	Horses.	2:4.	9:7, 9.
11.	Chariots.	2:5.	9:9.
12.	Torment.	2:6.	9:6.
13.	Earthquake.	2:10.	8: 5.
14.	Sun, moon, and stars darkened.	2:10, 31; 3:15.	8:12, 9:2.
15.	“Turn ye to me ... “	2:12.	9:20, 21.
16.	The locust army goes back into the abyss.	2:20.	9:1.
17.	Deliverance for the faithful remnant.	2:32.	9:4.

Locusts in Joel

Joel's prophecy is full of reference to the army of locust-horses which invade Israel in conjunction with the Palestinians (Joel 3:4), resulting in the repentance of a remnant who stand on Mount Zion (Joel 2:32), the destruction of the northern invader [another term for the locust army] after their holy war [jihad, Joel 3:9], and then the final establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. He describes the invading army in Joel 2 in terms of a locust swarm, and they come to their end as locust swarms often do in Israel- in the Dead Sea and Mediterranean. In more detail, Joel 3:2,12 speaks of a final conflict in the valley of Jehoshaphat, when the Gentiles "round about" Israel are gathered together and judged- spoken of in Revelation 16 as the battle of Armageddon (which likewise is primarily concerning the peoples "round about" Israel rather than the whole planet). The degree of damage done to the land and people of Israel was

limitable- if Judah repented. Hence the frequent appeals for repentance. This prophecy could have had potential fulfilment in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Judah; but the prophecy is alluded to in Revelation and in other latter day prophecies, as if it has specific and complete fulfilment in the last days. The overall context is exactly as presented in Revelation- the seal judgments appeal for Israel's repentance, the minority who respond are the symbolic 144,000 who stand on mount Zion; and then there are the trumpet and vial judgments, which are full of allusion back to Joel. The frequent appeals for repentance mention the possibility that the program of judgment and desolation can be limited- if Judah repent. And finally, Joel speaks of the establishment of God's Kingdom and physical restoration of the decimated land, into the wonder of God's Kingdom on earth at Christ's return. Joel opens by saying that the destruction of the land he was burdened to portray had no parallel in the past, and the Jews would tell their children of it and the account of it would be passed down throughout future history (Joel 1:2,3). This is another way of saying that this prophecy is about a time of trouble for Israel such as never was, and never will be in the future. And that is precisely the language of the Lord Jesus, Jeremiah and Daniel about the latter day tribulation of Israel.

The Arabs and Muhammed have a unique connection to the locust: “In the Bedoween romance Antar, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites. And it is a remarkable coincidence that Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Muhammed, bearing on their wings this inscription – ‘We are the army of the Great God.’” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, Vol. 18).

9:4 *And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree*- There are many allusions in this section to the anatomy and style of the locust; the highlighted difference here with locusts [who usually eat up the grass] is therefore intentional. The people represented by the locusts were therefore going to be made to act uncharacteristically due to the charismatic individual controlling them. The reason for this is because these locusts have a king- which, again, locusts typically do not (see on *king over them*). And locusts eat grass and green things; but these locusts are commanded by God's word not to do what is natural to them. We have a simple lesson there as to the power of God's word, to make men do what is against their natural inclination and wiring. That word is as powerful in our lives. This is the force of the simple statement that "It was *said* to them that they should not hurt the grass....". This is how alcoholics stop drinking, and how small minded secular houseproud town mice are converted into loving, passionate Christ followers.

Keil in his commentary on Joel 2 describes the geographical origins of the locusts which descend upon Israel: "Swarms of locusts come from south, west, north, and east. Their home is not confined to the desert of Arabia, but they are found in all the sandy deserts, which form the southern boundaries of the lands that were, and to some extent still are, the seat of cultivation, viz., in the Sahara, the Libyan desert, Arabia, and Iraq; and Niebuhr saw a large tract of land, on the road from Mosul to Nisibis, completely covered with young locusts. They are also met with in the Syrian desert, from which swarms could easily be driven to Palestine by a north-east wind... Such a swarm as this might be called the *tsephōnī*, i.e., the northern one, or northerner [Joel 2:20], even if the north was not its true home". These are the very areas from where jihadist fighters are emerging in their tens of thousands, and uniting together to

establish an Islamic state and destroy Israel. This geographical connection cannot be merely coincidental!

Concerning trees and vegetation, the Koran says: “When you fight the battles of the Lord… destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit trees…” (Quoted in Barnes, *op. cit*).

Albert Barnes makes the following commentary upon the statement that the locusts would be commanded to not harm the grass: “The often-quoted order of the Caliph Aboubekir, the father-in-law and successor of Muhammed, issued to the Saracen hordes on their invasion of Syria, shows what was understood to be the spirit of their religion: “Remember that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgment, and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not the victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose to themselves to serve God in that way; let them alone, and neither kill them (‘and to them it was given that they should not kill them,’ ver 5), nor destroy their monasteries,” etc. (Gibbon, iii. 417, 418). So Mr. Gibbon notices this precept of the Koran: “In the siege of Tayaf,” says he, “sixty miles from Mecca, Muhammed violated his own laws by the extirpation of the fruit-trees,” ii. 392. The same order existed among the Hebrews, and it is not improbable that Muhammed derived his precept from the command of Moses Dt. 20:19, though what was mercy among the Hebrews was probably mere policy with him. This precept is the more remarkable because it has been the usual custom in war, and particularly among barbarians and semi-barbarians, to destroy grain and fruit, and especially to cut down fruit-trees, in order to do greater injury to an enemy”.

But only such men as do not have the seal of God on their foreheads- They also don't have His seal. So perhaps we are intended to read in an ellipsis: 'Have not [received] the seal of God'. The idea would then be that those who have not responded to the appeal to repent (as a result of the seal judgments) are targetted.

Job is being shown to represent "those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Rev. 9:4). The idea of sealing is associated with being justified by faith rather than by the Law in Rom. 4:11. If "the earth" in Rev. 9 is read as "the land" and the chapter given a Jewish interpretation, the allusions to Job as representative of unsealed Jewry still depending on the Law become even more relevant. Note the clear connections between Rev. 9 and Job:

Rev. 9	Job
:5 "To them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented"	Satan could not kill Job, but was given power to torment him.
:6 "Men (shall) seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die,	Job said he was one of them "which long for death, but it comes not; and dig for

and death shall flee from them".	it more than for hid treasures" (3:21,22)
The marauding Saracen bands	The Sabean bands
:11 "A king over them, which is the Angel…"	The satan/Angel of Job?
:11 "A king... Abaddon... Apollyon" ('Destroyer').	"The king of terrors" attacking Job's tents (18:14)
:11 "The bottomless pit"	"Hell is naked before Him, and destruction (cp. 'Abaddon') has no covering" (26:6).

9:5 *They were told*- AV "It was given". We are surely to read in the ellipsis, that a commandment was given to them. And it is jihadist Islam which forbids damaging trees and plants during military campaigns. Or it could be that the idea is that these jihadists are actually 'told' something by God indirectly communicating with them.

That they should not kill them- As locusts don't usually cause death but rather suffering.

But that they should be tormented- The same word used about Babylon (18:7,10,15) and the beast worshippers being "tormented" (14:10). The language of torment is not, therefore, reflective of an angry God being mean to sinners. Rather will they drink the cup they gave others to drink.

Five months- It could be argued that the book of Revelation will 'come alive' during the three-and-a-half-year tribulation in the land, and it's possible that this is a literal period. In any case, it is based around the fact that the season for locusts is five months, from May to September. Five months is their lifespan, so the idea may be that at the end of it they too will come to their end. Always in Revelation there is the simple message that even the most awful suffering must at some point come to an end- and the tormentors are time limited, and shall meet their eternal end.

The locusts / scorpions judge the people in the land for five months (Rev. 9:5)- part of the three and a half year tribulation period. When it happens, it will all be clear enough. But for now, the point is that these locust / scorpion hordes, the beast, are restrained and yet then released, to come and destroy the unbelievers in the land / earth promised to Abraham; see on :14,15. It is this restraint which we are now seeing released, as the hordes develop and begin to gush forth from the Euphrates.

The AD70 fulfilment could have been in the terrible suffering of the people of Jerusalem for 5 months from May-September AD70. That is exactly the typical life period of locust swarms, between May and September. This period is specifically mentioned by Josephus. The scorpions would then refer to the poisoned arrows used by the Romans during the siege of Jerusalem. 'Scorpion' was a term used for the archers who shot them. But the fulfilment is shadowy, because not all elements of the

prophecy here had a clear fulfilment at the time. But that is typical of primary fulfilments of prophecy. The wider fulfilment was possible, but various preconditions were not met [e.g. the repentance of Israel, the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world]. And so we are left with a partial fulfilment, looking ahead to the total fulfilment at the last times.

Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man- See on :3. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (*Wars* 5.1.5).

9:6 *And in those days men shall seek death and shall in no way find it, and they shall desire to die and death will flee from them*- Whatever the historical fulfilments, this will be the situation of all those who face God's final judgment at the last day. Those who in that day will "seek death" are those whose behaviour in this life was effectively a seeking of death (Prov. 21:6). They were and are living out the condemnation experience right now. See on 1 Cor. 10:13. In the latter day application, the Koran in Sura 75:10,11 speaks in similar terms of the final judgment of the condemned: "On that day man will cry: Whither to flee! Alas! No refuge!". Islamists will therefore seek to do this to the Jews whom they believe it is their duty to condemn, and in turn they will drink the same cup, seeking death but not finding it.

9:7 *And the shapes of the locusts were like horses*- Clearly the locusts represent fighters charging to war. The Arab Bedouin call locusts *Farras el Jundy,* 'soldiers' horses'. The description of these horsemen from the East accurately fits the Parthians, who were massed to the East of the Roman empire. There was much angst amongst the Romans of the first century as to whether the Parthians would invade; they did not. But the similarity is explained if we accept that Revelation is open to many possible fulfilments. It could have all happened in the first century, and God moved the players into place. But due to human failure, the whole scenario was delayed to our last days.

"Like unto" continues the idea that John is seeing in outline form something he finds hard to describe, and he keeps likening the vision to things he is familiar with. Hence "As…as… like unto… as it were". This is understandable if he saw modern military hardware.

Prepared for war- This is the process we see ongoing around us. The Joel allusions encourage us to see this as Joel 3:9: "Prepare war, wake up the might men". The gathering of thousands of fighters to support an Islamic State in the land promised to Abraham is surely the fulfilment of this.

And upon their heads as if crowns of gold, and their faces were as men's faces- The *stephanos* may suggest they are victorious, for a brief period, over the land. But John saw their appearance *like* this. Turbans as worn by Moslems today were not used in his day. If he saw, as I suggest, hordes of latter day Moslems streaming into Israel to proclaim a radical Islamic state, then this is how he would've described them- wearing something like a *stephanos*. The Greek literally means something wrapped around the head. This is the picture of Moslem turbans and jihadist headgear. The Hadith records Mohammed as saying "And turbans are the crowns of Arabs". "Like gold" means he saw a yellow colour. Perhaps this group of jihadists will have yellow headgear or turbans? According to Suyuti's Commentary on the Koran, there are Hadith which make this association: "Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr: The latter was wearing a yellow turban on the day of Badr, so the angels descended wearing yellow turbans... the

Prophet himself came wearing a yellow turban... The day of Badr the angels came down on piebald horses, wearing yellow turbans" [view these quotations online at http://www.sunnah.org/fiqh/islamic_dress.htm].

9:8 *And they had hair as the hair of women*- The long hair of the jihadist fighters.

And their teeth were like that of lions- The quotation from Joel 1:6 means that these forces will be a latter day Babylon or Assyria invading Israel. Lions are a common OT symbol of Babylon-Assyria, the historical prototype of Israel's latter day invader.

9:9 *And they had breastplates, like breastplates of iron* - Another allusion to how the locust has a firm and hard cuticle on the forepart of the breast, which serves for a shield or defence. ""Breastplates of iron" speak of the Arabs' armour. The poem Antar makes at least four references to a warrior's cuirass or breastplate. The Koran says, "God hath given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars" …" (Quoted in Barnes, *op. cit*).

And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war- Alluding to the noise made by locust swarms. They are similar to chariot horses in that the locust's head is similar to that of a horse. The locusts of Joel 1 which invade Israel are also described as war horses in Joel 2:4-6: "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle". The similarity with locusts is in the springing motion of chariots on mountain paths. This was surely the first century way of trying to express helicopter gunships and other modern military technology advancing into the land promised to Abraham in final judgment. Joel 2:8 speaks of how this locust army will not be deterred by weaponry: "they fall headlong through weapons [*shelach* means literally a missile], and do not cut themselves in pieces". The greatest missiles and military technology of the IDF and the West will be unable to restrain their ever forward march into the land. Currently, it is superior weaponry that enables Israel to survive and the West to control the jihadists. But the picture of the locust swarm is that absolutely no weapon can stand in their way. Perhaps it is by sheer force of suicidal numbers that the jihadists win- and thousands of Muslims are already flocking to Syria and Iraq to enlist in this great army. In Joel 2, the locust army attacks because Judah failed to respond to the call to repent made in Joel 1. But even at that late stage there is the possibility of repentance: "Yet even now, is the saying of Jehovah, turn ye to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). This fits the context of the trumpets admirably. The seal judgments in Revelation 6 appealed for repentance; those few who respond, the symbolic 144,000, are sealed and stand on Mount Zion; and then the trumpet judgments come. But even then there is the chance of repentance, so that God would leave behind a blessing, i.e. the harvest-produce which could be used for a meat offering and drink offering (Joel 2:14)- even though this had "all" been destroyed by the locusts (Joel 1:9, 13). And as a result of this, a remnant of repentant Jews is likewise pictured by Joel standing on Mount Zion (Joel 2:32).

The reference is also to the language of the cherubim chariots; Ez. 10:5 is the only other place in the Bible where we read of the sound of wings as chariots are in motion. The invaders will be led by the Angels, just as the locust army of Joel 2 is described in terms of the irresistible march of the Angels. But there may also be the

hint that the invaders see themselves as a cherubic system, continuing the theme of the anti-Christ being an imitation Christ.

9:10- see on Mt. 24:37; Mk. 13:20.

And they have tails like scorpions and stings, and in their tails is their power- At first blush, this appears to not be true to the figure of locusts. But Smith's *Bible Dictionary* gives a picture of "a species of locust, the *Acridium Lineola*, a species commonly sold for food in the markets of Baghdad, which has a sting in the tail". We may infer that these symbolic locusts come from Iraq, specifically from the area of the Euphrates. This is in harmony with the later picture within this same chapter of hordes of attackers swarming into the land promised to Abraham from the same area- the Euphrates. The only other reference to a "tail" in the NT is in Rev. 12:4, where the dragon uses his tail to cast down one third of the stars. It could be that we are being shown part of the same process here.

To hurt men- Significantly, the same word is used in Lk. 10:19 about how those who are preaching the Lord Jesus will not be hurt by scorpions. This is the context here- these trumpets are part of the judgments which will be restrained from falling upon those who have responded to the seal judgments, the symbolic 144,000. The same word is used in 7:2,3 of how the 144,000 will not be "hurt". And chapters 10-15 teach that the resistant believers at this time will be engaged in witnessing to Jesus.

For five months- See on :5.

9:11 *They have over them as king*- Prov. 30:27 observes that locusts have no king. As noted above, this is the power of God's word in history, amongst men and nations, and also in our own hearts as believers. We are transformed by a higher power, no matter how radically independent and anarchic we may be by natural wiring. There is likely an allusion to Am. 7:1 LXX "and behold one locust grub [was] Gog the king". The picture presented is of an unusual and uncharacteristic unity of the locusts under the leadership of a "king" or caliph, the 'Gog' of Amos 7. This is what students of latter day prophecy are taught by the image's toes of Daniel 2. The components of the final entity to abuse Israel are divided, but uncharacteristically united in their domination of Israel. This will be brought about by the locusts having a king- just as the disparate materials of the image are united in the form of a man, a latter day Nebuchadnezzar.

The Angel of the bottomless pit- This presumably is the same as the fifth Angel, who opened the pit at the beginning of this section. As in Daniel, so here, the Angel refers both to an Angel in the court of Heaven, and to the person on earth whom that Angel represents before God. Again we see how that even the terrible individual on earth spoken of here is in fact represented in the court of Heaven and under the control of God's Angel. The allusion is to the destroying Angel of the Passover deliverance (Ex. 12:23; 1 Cor. 10:10). The Angel comes in judgment upon the Egyptians and also upon any unfaithful Israelites who would not trust in the blood of the Lamb; hence all the allusions to the plagues on Egypt here in the trumpet judgments. The locusts unleased by the destroyer Angel therefore come forth to punish people for what they did to God's people Israel, and also to punish those of Israel who will not trust in the blood of the Lamb / Jesus.

His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue- The two languages are perhaps mentioned because both Jews and non-Jews in the land suffer from this invasion. The locusts have an Angel-King over them, called Abaddon / Apollyon- the destroyer. The idea is that their leader has an Angel representative in Heaven. Again, emphasis is placed upon their having a specific leader, the antichrist. 'The destroyer'

was the Angel who destroyed the unfaithful Israelites (1 Cor. 10:10), and the charge of the locusts and their leader is against the same group, within the land promised to Abraham.

Apollyon- This is the noun from the verb *apollumi*. Lk. 21:18 says that not a hair of the faithful will be *apollumi* in the latter day tribulation, and this is clearly what the Apollyon Angel is responsible for. There are many word plays upon and indirect allusions to Caesar worship in Revelation. Rev. 9:11 is an example- the condemned King of the bottomless pit is called "Apollyon", which G.B. Caird takes to be an allusion to Domitian, "who liked to be regarded as Apollo incarnate". We see here a radical inversion of all the images and beliefs of the cult of empire which surrounded the early believers. And we are called to no less a radical inversion of values of our world; Christianity truly is a counter culture, and therefore there can be no compromise with the world. It is a huge tragedy that Christianity compromised with the Roman empire, which is presented in Revelation as a system that cannot at all be assimilated into.

Often, Angels are described in terms of the men, empires or armies they control- the frequent descriptions of human armies in language which refers to Angels too provides proof of this (e. g. Is. 66:15; Ez. 26:7,10; Joel 2:5; Nahum 2:3,4,13). Rev. 9:11 is another example: "They (the Arabs?) had a king over them, which *is* the Angel of the bottomless pit". This Angel is both a Heavenly Angel and the earthly leader over which the Angel has charge. Rev. 9:16 says that "the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand"- cp. "thousand thousands" of Angels in Dan. 7:10. Rev. 9:17 continues: "Horses... and them that sat on them". Horses and riders in Rev. 6 and Zechariah have clear Angelic connections (Chapter 11); "the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions"- lions and Angels are linked in Rev. 9:17; 10:1,3.

The locusts have a specific leader- an Angel called Abaddon or Apollyon. Angels as in the Divine beings do not sin, as I've demonstrated in chapter 2 of *The Real Devil*. But Daniel 10 and other passages are clear that situations, nations and individual leaders on earth have an Angelic representative in Heaven, before the court of God. The antichrist figure on earth therefore has a representative Angel in Heaven, just as the prince of Persia did in Daniel 10. 'Abaddon' means 'the destroyer', and the term is used of the destroying Angel of Passover, the same Angel who destroyed the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10)- and it is also used of the Babylonian invader (2 Chron. 36:19; Is. 14:20; Jer. 4:7; 15:3; 22:7 "I will prepare destroyers against you"; 36:29), the Midianite invasion of Israel (Jud. 6:4), the Philistines / Palestinians (1 Sam. 13:17; 14:15), the Assyrian invader (1 Kings 18:25) and the Syrian invasion (2 Chron. 24:23). All these nations and incidents were from the territory of the IS, and prefigure the latter day invasion of Israel. The point is, there is a specific, singular leader- and this fits well with the Biblical requirements for an antichrist figure to lead the enemies of Israel in the final jihad against her. The destruction, wanton and conscious, wrought by Islamic jihadists surely justifies the leader of the entity being called 'the destroyer'.

The Islamic world has always been divided, and the neighbours of Israel have likewise been characterized by their historical divisions. What is going to be remarkable, therefore, is their temporary unity against Israel. This is the picture presented of the iron and clay not cleaving to each other, but standing together, however fragile, in brief domination of the land promised to Abraham on the eve of Christ's return. This unity will be under one strong leader, the antichrist. The metaphor in Rev. 9 makes this point, by saying that the invading hordes will be as

locusts who have a king over them, called Abaddon (Rev. 9:11). Locusts do not have much centralized structure in their movement, and Prov. 30:27 specifically states that locusts have no king over them. But these latter day locusts will have such a king- for a brief period. Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Mohammed, bearing on their wings this inscription - 'We are the army of the Great God.'"

There can be little doubt that Revelation 9 speaks of the very last days. The smoke and resultant darkening of sun and moon is obviously alluding to the Old Testament prophecies about these things happening in the context of an invasion of the land of Israel in the immediate prelude to Christ's coming: "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine" (Is. 13:9,10). "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Joel 2:30,31).

9:12 *The first Woe is past. Behold, hereafter there come two other woes*- This could seem relatively pointless information, until we perceive that the idea is to appeal for repentance, even now at a time when the window for repentance provided by the six seals and sealing process of chapter 7 has already passed. I have mentioned earlier that the third of the three woes never seems to happen- perhaps because there is repentance, or because God's mercy is such that He restrains the final destruction. Or perhaps the third woe is the pouring out of the bowls of final destruction upon the beast and impenitent.

9:13- see on Jn. 16:23.

And the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God- This is the incense altar, and the voice suggests that the combined prayers of the faithful bring forward the execution of God's purpose, causing Angels in Heaven to sound and do things on the earth / land. The words / voice of those prayers really is "before God", just as the incense from the incense altar penetrated beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place. This an attempt to relay the degree to which human words in prayer really are rehearsed before God's very presence, and result in a word of command appropriate to the word of those prayers. Horns are connected with Angels in Zech. 1:18; Hab. 3:4, and these four horns on the altar suggesting reference to the Angel cherubim.

Let's be encouraged by the fact that the sixth Angel releases the hordes from behind the Euphrates because of "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God" (Rev. 9:13). This is the incense altar, and earlier in the scene we have seen the prayers of the faithful ascending from that altar, eliciting Divine action from Heaven upon the earth (Rev. 8:3-5). The releasing of the peoples beyond the Euphrates which we are seeing before our eyes *is actually a response to our prayers*. We pray and pray for the second coming, and it seems as if nothing very concrete is happening. But it is. The Islamist jihadists were raised up and given control of the Euphrates and are being propelled on their mission to fulfil end time prophecies, so that the culmination may come in the return of the Lord Jesus to earth. In this context we can note that the language of loosing the bound was used by the Lord in His teaching that we can bind and loose things in Heaven (Mt. 16:19; 18:18)- in this case, the Angels. This is the huge significance of human prayer and action for God.

9:14- see on Ps. 78:49; Lk. 1:10,11. For the significance of the Euphrates, see on 16:12,13.

One saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet: Release the four angels that are chained at the great river Euphrates-

If we identify Elam with modern day Persia / Iran, located east of the Euphrates, we note that in Jer. 49:36 Elam is punished by "the four winds from the four quarters of the sky". These four Angels would be the "four winds / spirits" of Jer. 49:36.

The voice of prayer is effectively a voice of command to Angels resulting in dramatic action upon the earth / land, and in this case, the loosing of restraining Angels. The voice of human prayer as it were commands: “Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates” (R.V.). They then eagerly go forward to prepare the way for the second coming. The implication is surely that those Angels were geographically bound / limited in the scope of their work by the Euphrates River- and yet in their eagerness to progress the timetable of events leading to the last day, they yearned to go beyond that limitation. The reference to “the Angel of the waters” likewise suggests that an Angel was operative in one geographical area. It could be that as the future elohim we likewise will have areas of geographical influence in the age to come- the “cities” over which we are given dominion.

There seems no reason to doubt that these, along with most other mentions of 'Angels' in Revelation, can be taken as literal Angels John saw in the court of Heaven, representing individuals and groups on earth. The fact that they were "loosed" implies a restraint from action- as if the action they desired to take was held back by another ("the sixth") Angel "preparing" or 'adjusting' (Greek) them for a certain period. This recalls the Angel of death being restrained or held back by the Angel who hovered over the homes of the Israelites on Passover night in Egypt. It's not that there are good and sinful Angels; but there are Angels who have different tasks, and make exceptions in executing those tasks because of the intervention of other Angels.

God Himself has a close interest in and control of the work of His Angels; thus in Rev. 9:13,14 we read of the sixth Angel sounding, wanting to bring about certain things on the earth. The response to this was "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth Angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four Angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates". This voice was probably either from Christ (the altar), as the head of the Angels, or God Himself; or maybe a mighty Angel representing God or Christ. It instructed the Angel how to bring about His intention by bringing other Angels into operation which this sixth Angel presumably had in its control- hence they were to be "loosed" by Him.

The drying up of the Euphrates spoken of in Rev. 16:12 is what enables the seventh trumpet and seventh seal to come to pass- and they refer to the coming of Christ. It cannot be insignificant that the Islamic State took control of the dams on the Euphrates. The latter day Islamic entity which overruns Israel will likely do the same. The control of rivers, dams, and water installations would be a major weapon in their tactical armoury. This was indeed how it was in the time of Saddam Hussein. For more information on this, see Vidal, John (*The Guardian* 2 July 2014). "Water supply key to outcome of conflicts in Iraq and Syria, experts warn".

The waters of a river are symbolic of nations (Is. 23:10), specifically the Assyrians in Is. 8:7, Zech. 10:11 and Jer. 2:18- it could be that the reference is to the drying up or destruction [as the metaphor of ‘drying up’ means] of the nations and tribes of the fertile crescent. And these are the very areas where the Islamic State is so active. The Assyrian armies were those “beyond the river [Euphrates]” which were

unleashed by God upon Judah (Is. 7:20). This is the basis for the language of Rev. 9:14, where four Angels are bound by the river Euphrates and unleashed in the sense that a huge army is let loose from beyond that river in order to judge an impenitent Israel. This is surely the latter day fulfilment of the enigmatic comment in 2 Thess. 2:7 that "he who now restrains it will do so, until he is out of the way". We recall that it was an Angel which stood upon the river in Dan. 12:6. We note that Greece likewise was likened to a ram held back by a river, which it jumped over (Dan. 8:3). The latter day power restrained by the Euphrates is therefore to be based upon the historical Assyria and Greece. Again we see how the image of Daniel 2 stands complete in the last days, because the final entity which dominates Israel will incorporate elements of the previous dominators, such as Assyria and Greece.

Euphrates was the boundary of the land promised to Abraham. Israel were thrown out of their land by being taken 'beyond the river [Euphrates]', just as Adam was cast out of Eden, which appears to have been bounded by the Euphrates. The 200,000 (or RV "twice ten thousand times ten thousand") horsemen were bound at [RV; Gk. *epi*] the Euphrates (Rev. 9:14), which is the northern border of the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Dt. 1:7; Josh. 1:4; 2 Sam. 8:3). When Judah were taken to Babylon to be punished, this is described as their being punished in the border of Israel (Ez. 11:10,11). Babylon was located on the border of the land promised to Abraham. The idea is clearly that these hordes will come from that northern border, the Euphrates, and invade Israel. The Islamic jihadists are already using pictures of horsemen as symbolic of their mission. The Greek text speaks of" twice ten thousand times ten thousand", recalling the way that the image of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7 will be destroyed when "ten thousand times ten thousand" stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Dan. 7:10). Once the Euphrates is no longer allowed to restrain these hordes, they will race towards Israel- and judgment by the returned Lord Jesus. Note too the language of Mic. 5:6- the latter day Assyrian will "tread within our borders", which include the Euphrates, and then be destroyed by Christ's return. Revelation is putting this another way, in saying that the hordes of invaders will come from beyond the Euphrates, the border of Israel.

The trumpets, seals and vials do not have to be chronologically consecutive events; they are all part of the kaleidoscope of images which we have in Revelation. They are different takes and angles on related events. The sixth Angel loosing the hordes bound at the Euphrates is matched by the fifth Angel coming down to the land and unlocking the bottomless pit with a key (Rev. 9:1,2; this surely refers to a Divine Angel, as it would make no sense for 'satan' to be given the key to his own prison). This released the aggressive locusts to swarm over the earth / land [of Israel] and kill and persecute those in the land promised to Abraham who haven't taken the Father's Name into their foreheads- for all their hypocritical wearing of phylacteries. Again we have the metaphor of restraint being lifted, and swarms of enemies pouring into the earth / land of Israel. The seventh trumpet begins with the news that there will be no more delay (Rev. 10:6)- the idea is again of an imposed delay / restraint being now lifted. Locusts are symbolic of Israel's neighbouring enemies (Dt. 28:38; Jud. 6:5; 7:12; Jer. 46:23; Joel 1:4; 2:25). Especially significant is the reference in Am. 7:1 LXX: "Thus has the Lord God shewed me; and, behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog". The locusts from the east, headed by Gog, released by the fifth Angel, compares with the kings from the east who are released by the sixth Angel. The locusts arise out of the bottomless pit, just as the beast arises out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). The beast is therefore another image for the locusts; they all speak of the enemies of Israel coming from the

east and swarming the land. The locusts are described as having long hair, and striking as scorpions (Rev. 9:5,8)- all very reminiscent of jihadist fighters.

The similarities between Revelation 9 and Joel are striking, and without question Joel is speaking of the neighbour nations pouring into the land of Israel: “The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array… They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march everyone on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks… They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” (Joel 2:4-10).

The four Angels holding winds in Rev. 9:16 surely alludes to the Angels gathering the elect from the four winds (Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27). The process of gathering the elect at the last day is part of the same process as gathering the nations to judgment. It could be that the final gathering of the nations against Israel therefore occurs at the same time as the gathering of the believers to judgment. It would seem that now all is in place for such a gathering of the nations from beyond the Euphrates- and therefore the Lord's coming could be really very near. The whole scene surely consciously recalls that of Daniel 12, where Daniel sees Angels standing on the banks of "the river", announcing that there must be a time of terrible trouble for Israel lasting "time, times and a half" (three and a half years?) and then the whole suffering of Israel would be "finished" by the return of Messiah and establishment of the Kingdom of God (Dan. 12:5-10). "The river" is not defined, but the term is usually used in the prophets for the Euphrates; at the very least it must refer to one of the rivers in the Tigris-Euphrates basin. Note the significance of the river Ulai, a tributary of the Euphrates, in Daniel 8. Revelation expands upon this by saying that the Angels cease restraining the jihadist hordes and then release them in the last days, when the Euphrates dries up. Biblically, the drying up of water is so that armies can pass over (we think of the Red Sea and Jordan being dried up for this intent). The final time of trouble is brought about by Angels standing upon "the river"- and the fact the Euphrates is now in the hands of Islamists is therefore highly significant.

It is also surely no coincidence that there are four nations [represented by the four Angels?] located to the East of the Euphrates, bound by her- Turkey, Syria, Iraq and what is now effectively the nation of Kurdistan. Kurdish independence and the development of a *de facto* state of Kurdistan is something we can expect to develop. It could just about be argued that Iran is also effectively held back from the promised land by the Euphrates, but Iran doesn't in fact border the river. It could be argued that the part of Turkey which is bound by the Euphrates is Kurdish territory, and may form part of a future state of Kurdistan if it is declared. In this case, the four nations could be Kurdistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran- or perhaps some future Islamic entity. These four nations would be under the control of the four Angels bound at the Euphrates, who then release them when the restraint is lifted.

9:15 *And the four angels were released, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year*- Vine correctly observes: "This rendering is wrong, since it conveys the idea that the four periods mentioned are to be combined as representing the length of the preparation or of the continuance of the plague. But it is to be noted that neither the article nor the preposition are repeated before day and month and year.

The meaning is that the angels are prepared unto the hour appointed by God, and that this hour shall fall in its appointed day and month and year". The parallel is with how the locust-horses are "prepared" [s.w.] unto the final battle. It is this specific battle which is the final date in view here in :15. The way of the kings from the East is likewise "prepared" (16:12 s.w.).

That they should kill a third of all mankind- This 'slaying' could be understood as a ritual slaughter [*apokteino*]. The fact it is done at a particular hour on a particular date and year may mean that there is some kind of religious relevance of the exact time of their slaughter; and that the men are slain at the same "hour", suggesting a specific ritual, organized slaughter rather than the gradual killing of people in the process of war or domination of the land. This kind of thing is imaginable in an Islamic state.

"The river" was Biblically the language of Euphrates; the Assyrian invasion is described as the River [i.e. Euphrates] bursting upon Israel (Is. 8:5-8). This invasion is described as the loosing of four Angels (Rev. 9:15,16). It could be that four Angels are involved in the work of arranging this geopolitical situation; or it could be that each Angel represents a particular subdivision of the latter day Islamic entity. Note how "the Angel of the bottomless pit" refers both to a Heavenly Angel and to a human leader on earth, in that the princes of the earth have their Angelic representative in the court of Heaven. These are surely the same four Angels of Rev. 7:1,2 who had been holding the winds from blowing on the land of Israel; restraining the nations around Israel from destroying it from 1948 onwards. But they will no longer hold back the winds; they will loose the horsemen previously restrained by the Euphrates. This may happen in practice by the restraining power of America and the West being no longer permitted to operate by the four Angels. At the time of writing, it's highly significant that most of the cities, towns and areas on the East bank of the Euphrates are now in the hands of jihadists, of various factions; the river was as it were holding them back from advancing Westwards into the land promised to Israel. But that restraint is now being lifted. This idea of a restraint in place is to be found in 2 Thess. 2:7,8. It could be argued that the Roman Empire was the restraining force written about by Paul there, and there will be another restraining power likewise in the last days. In practice, not only has the West been the power broker restraining Israel's enemies, but Israel's nuclear and technological edge have been. This may be removed, in whatever way, so that this is no longer a restraining item.

9:16 *And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard the number of them*- The very words used about the 144,000 in 7:4. The contrast is made between the sealed 144,000 and this far larger group of their opponents, 200,000,000. The figures are surely not to be taken literally, rather is the idea that the opponents of the faithful are far more, and are as it were a fake imitation of the faithful, just as the anti-Christ is a fake imitation of the true Christ. This concept fits admirably with Islamist theology, as they consider themselves as the descendants of Ishmael to be the true seed of Abraham, and Isaac to be as the Bible presents Ishmael [the roles of Isaac and Ishmael are switched around in the Koran; Moslems believe that it was Jewish scribes who switched the roles to how they are in the Hebrew Bible].

The significance of "*twice* ten thousand times ten thousand" may be in that the latter day dominators of Israel are split into two broad camps, represented by the two feet of the image of Daniel. It may be a reference to the Sunni - Shia division within Islam, or to the two centres of domination of Israel which will appear based in Gaza

and the West Bank. Dan. 7:10 contrasts these "ten thousand times ten thousand" who are to be judged with the thousands who minister unto the judge, the Lord Jesus; the thousands of the Lord Jesus will stand in opposition to the thousands of the latter day invaders, just as the true Christ will face off against the anti-Christ.

"By these three was the third part of men killed" suggests that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the "great company" of horsemen of Ez. 38:4, which is rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem was claimed as being 200,000 men. See on Rev. 16:16. But this huge invasion is portrayed here in chapter 9 as being the cause of punishment of the abusers themselves. So as has happened so many times in Israel's Biblical history, their invaders will turn upon themselves. Perhaps that is one reason why the Ezekiel 38 invasion is not recorded as being successful.

9:17 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of sulphur, and heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke and sulphur*- These are to be connected with the three methods by which the third part of men are killed in :18, fire, smoke and brimstone. The third of men are perhaps divided into thirds, and each killed by a different method. Or it may be that the third part of men are killed by a combination of these three factors. I suggested on :15 that this may be a ritual slaughter, performed at a specific "hour" on a carefully chosen specific date of religious significance. "Jacinth" means 'deep blue'; there may be some specific means by which fire, deep blue and sulphur [brimstone] are used in the destruction process. We are therefore to expect some form of technology which uses these three elements or appearances in order to effect the mass destruction of a large number of people in one hour. The way Babylon's destruction likewise comes in "one hour" would therefore match this; Babylon must drink the cup she gave others to drink.

Another approach is to recall that the fire and jacinth come out of the *breastplates* of these fighters; and yet jacinth [hyacinth] is also one of the stones on the priestly breastplate. In this case we are invited to see these fighters acting as fake High Priests, which would connect with the undoubted theme of 'anti-Christ'- the Islamic fighters acting as if they are the true Israel of God. We note that in the last day, God will put on the breastplate of judgment against His enemies (Is. 59:17). Sulphur and fire have associations with Divine judgment; these people will therefore believe that they are executing God's judgments for Him. This is precisely the spirit of radical Islam.

9:18 *By these three illnesses was one third of all mankind killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulphur, which proceeded out of their mouths*- The idea could be that one third of the third are killed by fire, another third by smoke, another third by the sulphur. The "all mankind" refers not to the whole planet but to the earth / land promised to Abraham. There have been attempts within the continuous historical approach to locate the fulfilment of this verse at some previous point in history. But the difficulty faced is how to define the earth / land, and "all mankind" within it. Such definitions are arbitrary and *ad hoc*, whereas the Bible envisages only two definitions of the earth / land- either the whole planet, or the land promised to Abraham.

The latter day invasion from the Euphrates (i.e. geographical Babylon) will result in men being killed by fire, smoke and brimstone (Rev. 9:14,18)- nuclear language?

9:19 *For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails. For their tails are like those of serpents and have heads, and by means of them they wound*- There is some stress that their power is in their mouths (:18). Perhaps the reference is to the power or propaganda. We are now seeing Muslims from worldwide gathering

to fight against Israel because of the power of this propaganda, spreading through social media so that the word / mouth of the Islamic entity is truly worldwide. The analogy to serpents wounding men clearly makes this element the latter day seed of the serpent; and according to Gen. 3:15, they will be crushed directly by the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus. The final conflict between the Lord Jesus and the serpent will be its manifestation in this group; who as we have demonstrated above, refer to the Islamic opposition surrounding Israel.

The 'wounding' of men is only after there has been an opportunity for the faithful to be sealed. The same word is in 7:3: "Hurt [wound] not the earth... till we have sealed the servants of God". But now that window of opportunity is over. Those responsible for the wounding are now fast headed to destruction and the point is approached where they cannot repent. For the same word is found in 22:11: "Him that is unjust [s.w. 'wounding'], let him be unjust still".

9:20 *And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these illnesses, did not repent*- Again we note that even now at the time of the trumpet judgments, there is the desperate desire that some still repent; even though after the seal judgments, there was a sealing of those who had responded and a shielding of them from the judgments which were to come upon the impenitent.

Of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood- The allusion is clearly to Dan. 5:4,23, where the very same materials are mentioned as being the idols of Babylon. In the context, the final king of Babylon has been asked to repent in that he had been asked to learn the lesson of his father Nebuchadnezzar, who was smitten with madness and turned into an animal. But Nebuchadnezzar revived from that deadly wound, as it were. It could be that the final leader of the entity known as Babylon is intended to repent because the previous leader was struck down by God, as Nebuchadnezzar had been. But because he didn't repent, he was judged. The appeal of Daniel to him in the very last minutes of his life is therefore to be seen as the equivalent of this final appeal to the leader of Babylon through the trumpet judgments. The 'division' of his kingdom in judgment (Dan. 5:28) perhaps recalls the divided state of the toes of the image just before Christ comes to destroy them. The fifth trumpet began with mention of the opening of a bottomless pit, which I suggested is parallel to the deadly wound of the beast. The reason for this is so that the deadly wounding will be an opportunity for repentance- this deep Divine desire for human repentance, even amongst His worst enemies, is so clearly portrayed in the structure of this apocalyptic. Nebuchadnezzar's 'wound' was intended to elicit repentance in the final king of Babylon. Hence the allusion to that scenario here in the sixth trumpet.

Which can neither see, hear nor walk- This again is a quotation from Dan. 5:28. The similarity with the fall of Babylon is clearly intended. And what was particularly obnoxious about the king of Babylon at that time was that he was using the temple vessels in a drunken idol ritual; this in outline terms is the same as placing an abomination on the temple mount, which will be the reason for his desolation. The reference to "sorceries" (:21) is likewise an allusion to the practices of the historical Babylon and Assyria (Is. 47:9,12; Nah. 3:4). Such things were the calling card of Jezebel, the prototype of the whore who rides the beast (2 Kings 9:22). Note she was from Tyre, in modern day Lebanon. We may well enquire how idol worship and sorcery could be part of a radical Islamic state, seeing they are passionately against such things. The point is that this latter day entity is being cast in terms of the

historical Babylon; and for all Islam's protest against idolatry and sorcery, from God's viewpoint, these are the very things they are guilty of.

9:21 *And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts*- This sounds very much the behaviour of jihadist fighters, murdering and thieving, and sexually abusing those whom they conquer (witness the Islamist treatment of Yezidi and Christian women whom they captured and declared as their 'spoils of war'). We observe that both the people being judged, as well as those judging them, can easily be interpreted as radical Islamist fighters. But this turning upon themselves is what we expect, both from Bible prophecy (e.g. regarding the divided state of the toes of the image in Daniel 2) and from Divine historical precedent. For His preferred method of destroying Israel's enemies has been through making them turn upon each other, rather than direct bolts from Heaven. "Sorceries" is a word we only meet again in Rev. 18:23, speaking of the sorceries of latter day Babylon. This trumpet therefore speaks of the judgment upon latter day Babylon. The LXX uses the word not only of Babylon (Is. 47:9,12) but also of Egypt at the time of the plagues (Ex. 7:22). And the trumpet judgments are full of reference to the plagues upon Egypt.

There are at least 10 references in :20,21 back to the sins of Israel in Old Testament times. The suggestion therefore is that the latter day Islamic entity will fail as Israel failed to heed God's pleading with them in the past, both through prophets and judgments. The idea is that the sins of this Islamic entity are effectively those of the Jews, whom they consider themselves so far spiritually superior to. Islamists love to quote the Old Testament condemnations of Israel as justification for their vendetta against the Jews; but these allusions show that they are in essence just as guilty.

REVELATION CHAPTER 10

10:1 *And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, his face was as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire*- It is quite possible that the Angel of Rev. 10:1 who descends from Heaven in a cloud with a face like the sun, holding the books of judgement is referring to Christ's second coming in person. He is called "The messenger (Heb. 'malak', the Angel) of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1). It could be argued that this chapter is a continuation of the sixth trumpet- Alf Norris makes a reasonable case for this.

We find Revelation continually deconstructing the images associated with the might of the Roman empire. David Aune sees this mighty angel of Revelation 10 as allusive to the Colossos of Rhodes, a well known statue and icon of the empire (*Revelation*, 2:556). The bronze material of the Colossos were believed to reflect the sun "like fiery pillars", just as here the Angel has legs which “were like fiery pillars” (Rev. 10:1). The statue was a representation of Helios, the sun god, just as the angel’s face “was like the sun” (10:1). More specifically, the Colossos of Rhodes state had its right hand raised, just as the mighty Angel (Rev. 10:5). The Colossos statue stood at the harbor of Rhodes and allowed “ships to pass through its legs”, as the Angel stands "on the sea and on the land” (:5). The simple visual message is that the mighty icons of this world are not the true reality. The Angels are at work constructing the ultimate reality, and we are even now to live within that. Early Christians in the Roman empire were living in fear and with a sense of powerlessness. Just as we do in various ways. So these deconstructions of the icons of Roman power and apparent permanence had special meaning.

The same words "mighty Angel" are used in Rev. 5:2, where "a strong Angel" (AV) offers the book, and Jesus the Lamb opens it. Now John, representative of the latter day believers, is asked to follow the role of the Lord Jesus and take the book. The connection with chapter 5 is intentional- hence we read of "*another* mighty Angel". Therefore the little book which is opened is in fact the book of Rev. 5, which is the book of life. Perhaps this is the same "mighty Angel" who judges Babylon (18:21 s.w.), crying "mightily" (18:2 s.w.); that Angel also "comes down" from Heaven in judgment (18:1 s.w. 10:1 "come down from Heaven").

The Angel arrayed with a cloud represents the Lord Jesus, who comes with clouds (1:7; Lk. 21:27; 1 Thess. 4:17), sitting upon a cloud (14:14). The rainbow around his head implies that the face is the sun, producing a rainbow in the clouds around his head. The Lord was transfigured as having face like the sun. He is "the sun of righteousness" which is to arise. His voice like a lion (:3) is the fulilfment of various latter day prophecies: "the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem" (Joel 3:16; Hos. 11:10; Am. 3:8). The second coming is clearly in view. An Angel coming down clothed with a cloud is very much alluding to what happened after Israel left Egypt; although Moses alone saw this. John, despised and imprisoned on Patmos, is therefore being encouraged that he is in no less an awesome position than was Moses- who was seen in Judaism as the epitome of human spirituality, and whose experience on Sinai was presented as the highest a man has ever gone to God. The idea is that now the tribulation of Israel is completed, and instead of the coming down of the Angel clothed with cloud on Sinai, there will be the literal return of Christ to earth.

The rainbow about His head is another connection with the opening vision of a rainbow around the throne of the Lord Jesus (4:3). Cloud, rainbow and sun are all part of the same process which results in rainbows becoming visible. From the point of observation, the rain has ceased but the cloud suggests there is still water around. We can maybe infer that this is a picture of some judgments [the rain] having ended, but others still ongoing. And this is in chronological terms about where we are up to in the book- the remaining judgments described in the book are upon the beast systems, judging them as they had previously judged Israel / God's people.

His face as the sun is the very description of Jesus in 1:16. And "feet as pillars of fire" is just like the Lord Jesus in 1:17; 2:18. After all the allusions to Joel in Revelation 9, it's not surprising that this too alludes to Joel, this time to Joel 2:30- pillars of fire, smoke and blood are to be seen in the land in the last days. The context there would require that this is judgment coming upon the land. And yet this image of judgment is presented along with that of the rainbow, the cessation of judgment- in the kaleidoscope of images which forms the apocalyptic genre. That kaleidoscope of images means we should not be unduly concerned about whether the Angel here is an Angel or the Lord Jesus personally.

Harry Whittaker makes a good case for this Angel being that of Daniel 10. And yet, as he also points out, the connections with the Lord Jesus personally are undeniable:

> The detailed parallel between Revelation 10, 11 and Daniel 10, 12 set out below requires that John understood the being he saw to be the angel who revealed so much to Daniel.

Revelation		*Daniel*	
10:1	A mighty angel.	10:5, 12:7	A man clothed in linen.
10:2	Right foot on the sea, left foot on the land.	12:7	Standing on the waters of the river.
10:1	Face like the sun.	10:6	Face like lightning.
10:1	Feet as pillars of fire.	10:6	Feet like polished brass.
10:2	Open book in his hand.	10:21	"I will shew thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth (the heavenly prototype)."
10:3	Voice as a lion.	10:6	Voice like a multitude.
10:5	Lifts right hand to heaven. (The left hand holds the book.)	12:7	Lifts both hands to heaven.

10:6	Swears by Him that liveth for ever.	12:7	Swears by Him that liveth for ever.
10:7	Mystery of God to be finished as declared to the prophet.	12:7	"All these things shall be finished."
11:2	Temple court "cast out," given to Gentiles.	12:11	Daily sacrifice taken away, abomination set up.
11:2	Holy city trodden under foot.	12:7	Power of the holy people scattered.
11:2	42 months.	12:7	Time, times and an half.
11:18	The time of the dead that they should be judged.	12:2	Many that sleep awake, to everlasting life or to contempt.

And yet the similarities between this Angel and the Lord Jesus cannot be denied:

	The Angel of Revelation 10	*Christ*
(a)	Clothed with a cloud.	"A cloud received him out of their sight ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10,11). "Behold he cometh with clouds" (Revelation 1:7 and 14:14).
(b)	His face as the sun	"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (1:16).
(c)	His feet as pillars of fire (contrast the kingdoms of men - feet of iron and clay).	"His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" (1:15)
(d)	"Cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth."	"The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the seals" (5:5).

(e)	"A rainbow was upon his head."	"There was a rainbow round about the throne (4:3) ... a Lamb in the midst of the throne" (5:6)

10:2 *And he had in his hand a little scroll that was opened, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth*- The question of course is whether this open scroll is the same scroll, the book of life, which the Lord opened earlier in Revelation, and which He likewise holds in His hand in 5:1; and which is only opened by the releasing of the seals binding it in the very last days. The Apocalypse is a kaleidoscope of images, and we should not be too concerned with trying to define each usage of a symbol in a distinctly separate way. The Lord, represented by His Angel, is standing in judgment upon the land promised to Abraham, judging according to what is written in a scroll. The scroll of "life" was written on both sides, and we saw on 5:1 that this curious feature may mean that it contained both the blessings for the faithful and judgments upon the wicked; hence it tasted both bitter and sweet in :10. In :5 we will read that the Angel representative of Jesus raises His right hand to Heaven; perhaps we are meant to deduce that the small scroll was in His left hand. The book of 5:1 is in the Lord's right hand. That may mean that there we are seeing the blessing aspect, as it has been introduced as the book of life. Here in chapter 10 we have the judgment aspect, hence it is held in the left hand.

The scroll is a little scroll, perhaps not meaning it is a different scroll, but to place the visual emphasis upon the colossal size of the Lord, standing in control of earth and sea; and to fit the decorum of the symbol, in that John will be asked to eat it as if it can be swallowed in one gulp (:10).

The simple take away point is that we, and all the 'earth', are judged not *ad hoc*, according to the emotion of the judge, but according to a predetermined written record based upon actions in this life. The sea is where one beast arises from (13:1), whilst another arises from the earth (13:11). Yet even before they are portrayed as arising, we are assured that the Lord stands firmly in judgment upon both sea and earth; for to have territory under the feet means to judge or be lord over it. If the earth means the territory of the land promised to Abraham, perhaps the sea refers to the territories immediately surrounding it. Although the earth and sea beasts appear to arise *before* this point, we are reminded at this point in the vision that the Angel stands firmly upon both earth and sea. And that Angel then morphs into the returned Lord Jesus. Nothing is outside of His control. All the oppression of history, which makes the saints feel hopelessly outnumbered and overpowered, is in fact firmly under His feet already.

Perhaps the little book is the rest of the vision of Revelation being given to John? Or perhaps this receipt of the book is because now the theme of the visions will move specifically towards the witness made by the faithful under persecution. We need not stress about trying to make chapter 10 follow on from the events of chapter 9 and precede the events of chapter 11. That would be to miss the point of the genre of apocalyptic, seeking to impose a European, linear approach to Semitic thought which is not constrained by the linear, chronological model. We also have to appreciate that this vision of the Lord in glory is one of several which punctuate and form the structure of the book; which to quote another could be summarized as:

A Opening vision (Revelation 1)

B Seven letters with seven visions of the saints in glory (Rev. 2,3)
C Christ in glory (Rev. 4,5)
D 7 seals of judgment upon Israel and sealing of the repentant (Rev. 6,7); the language of 'sealing' in both chapters thereby connects them
E 7 trumpets (Rev. 8,9)
10 Christ stands in glory; commissions John to preach
11 Preaching by the saints under persecution
12 The church against the beast- the essence of the Apocalypse
13 Preaching by the saints under persecution
14 Christ stands in glory; the Gospel preached
Ea 7 vials (Ch, 15 & 16)
Da 7 judgments on Babylon, presented as Israel (thus connecting with 'D'); the faithful presented in 19:1-10 in the language of Rev. 7 (Rev. 17:1-19:10)
Ca Christ in glory (Rev. 19:11-21)
Ba 7 visions of the saints in glory
A Closing vision.

10:3 *And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices*- The Lord is likened to a lion when earlier He has held the scroll in 5:5, confirming my hunch that it is the same scroll in view. The roaring of the Messianic lion of Judah is in final victory over those who are abusing Israel and the sons of Jacob (Gen. 49:9). Thunders have indeed been associated with judgments so far in Revelation, but voices as thunders could simply mean that His singular voice is Divine, as mighty as seven [completeness] thunders; for this is the idea of a voice as of thunder in 19:6 and Jn. 12:29.

10:4 *And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying: Keep secret the things which the seven thunders uttered and do not write them down*- The voices of thunders pronounced something which John heard but was forbidden from writing. We have series of seven judgments recorded in the seals, trumpets and bowls. It seems there is another possible and potentially planned series of seven judgments, all planned in Heaven, which are not written because they will not happen. There will be the repentance of the remnant so sought for, and so these judgments will not be required. As early as 2:10 [see note there] we have been introduced to the idea of potential fulfilments of prophecy; there are various possible outcomes, but not all shall happen, because humans have freewill to repent or resist, and the detailed shape of the latter day events is responsive to that. This is why no detailed chronology of events is presented, but rather the kaleidoscope of images we have in the apocalyptic genre which the Spirit chose for Revelation.

10:5 *And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven*- Presumably holding the scroll of judgments in His left hand; see on :2. This would mean the scroll refers to judgments upon the wicked; it is written on both sides, and I suggested on 5:1 that blessing for the faithful is on one side, and judgments for the wicked on the other.

10:6 *And swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be no more delay*- The seventh trumpet begins with the news that there will be no more delay- the idea is again of an imposed delay / restraint being now lifted. This restraint is that noted on 9:14,15, and which is specifically mentioned in 2 Thess. 2:3. Then, "the coming one will come, and shall not tarry", i.e. will not any longer tarry / delay (Heb. 10:37). This is the delay implied

in the parable of the ten virgins, who slumber whilst the bridegroom tarries. This delay will reveal whether the last generation really love their Lord, whether they stay eager for Him despite things not going according to plan, and their interpretations of Bible prophecy not producing the Lord's return when they think it should come. "My Lord delays His coming" indeed states what is true; but the question is, how we respond to that delay. This is the answer to the cry "How long?" earlier. The answer had been that there had to be further persecution. Now, there is no more delay. The whole scene recalls that of the Angel in Daniel who likewise lifted up his hand to Heaven and swore- but that there should be a "time, times and a half" until the resolution of all things. But now, the Angel says there shall be that "time" no longer. There has been an earlier delay in order to allow the faithful to be sealed (see on 7:3). But there are no more restraints; now the final end shall come. As noted on :2, the structure of Revelation is such that we are not to think that now chapter 10 shall therefore close the whole of human history. Chapter 11 will revert to how this situation is achieved. The earth and sea where the Angel representative of Jesus is standing have all been created by God. There is no entity that can arise in the experience of God's people that has not been ultimately created by God; indeed the entire heavenly throne room which John is viewing has been created by Him.

10:7 *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good news which He declared to His servants the prophets*- The message of the prophets was specifically concerning Israel, which is therefore the focus of the "mystery" here. RSV "the mystery of God would be fulfilled" or revealed suggests that what is now a mystery, the inability to ultimately attach meaning to event in human history, will then be made plain. And likewise our own life path will become ultimately plain. No longer will we struggle to understand significance, but for God's people, the dots will be finally joined and the ultimate picture and intention made plain- a picture of love, of salvation, of joy without end. Then, the problem of suffering and Divine justice will be finally resolved. And for now, we have the comfort that the evil in this world is not insuperable; the time and tide of human history is not aimless, a circle that keeps repeating [cp. Solzhenitsyn's history of Russia, *The Red Wheel / Circle*], with everything repeating, what goes around comes around, with our own lives likewise ever circling in some pointless movement... but rather history (and our own life) is progressing in a linear sense towards an end point, in the inevitable triumph of God and His Son and their Kingdom.

"About to sound" could suggest that the seventh Angel doesn't actually sound; therefore the seven thunders were not written down. I suggested on :4 that this is because that potential sequence of judgments don't happen. Perhaps in His grace and in response to the prayers of the faithful in the last days, the judgments are cut short and these ones therefore don't happen. See too the notes on 6:1 regarding the seventh seal.

10:8 *And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying: Go, take the book which is opened in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth*- There is a parallel between the commissioning of John in 1:9,19 and his recommission in chapter 10. The open scroll given to him in chapter 10 is the same scroll which has been opened by the seals being removed in chapter 6. The *aggelon ischyron* of 5:2 is the same Angel described with the same words in 10:8; both times the Angel introduces a scroll. I suggest it is the same scroll. As the Lamb took the scroll from the hand of the Angel in 5:7,8, now John does the

same (10:9,10). Perhaps in this context there is significance in the scroll having writing on both sides, of blessing [sweet] and judgment [bitter].

It could be that this is the fulfilment of the opening statement in Rev. 1:1. The revelation was given by God to Jesus, who gave it to His Angel, who gave it to John. And it is at this point that the revelation is given to John. That 'revelation' is the book of life. It is quite simply the message of salvation.

10:9- see on Rev. 11:3.

And I went to the angel, saying to him that he should give me the little book. And he said to me: Take it and eat it up; it shall make your belly bitter but in your mouth it shall be as sweet as honey- As explained on :10, this was to recall Ezekiel's experience of eating the bitter judgments upon Israel, and also the sweetness of blessing for the faithful within Israel. And in practice it was to enable John to enter into something of the Lord's feelings in dispensing judgments and blessings at the last day; see on :10.

We note that although John asked to be given the book, he is still asked to "take it". All those who speak forth God's word are required to consciously make an effort to receive it. And the way he had to eat it reflects how we are to personalize and absorb the message we preach, rather than impersonally transmit truth.

10:10 *And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey. But when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter*- Taking the book of life from the hand of the Angel is exactly what the Lord Jesus did. John is being asked to identify with how the Lord Jesus will actually feel at the last day. As noted on 5:1 and 10:1, I suggest that the scroll is the book of life, with blessings for the faithful written on one side and judgments for the wicked on the other. But in the actual realization of all these things, the Lord literally feels bitter-sweet, just as John did. He is not the impassive judge.

The "little book" is a *bibliaridion*, a term used in :8,9,10, and Ez. 2:9 LXX in a closely similar episode. The book in Ezekiel is "written within and without" (like that in 5.1) and carries a message of "lamentations, mourning and woe", very much the theme of this part of Revelation. Ezekiel was required to eat the roll, as John is here (10.9); but though Ezekiel was to speak its message to Israel, John must prophesy "again over many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10.11). For each the book was "sweet as honey", and while in John's case his "belly was made bitter", in Ezekiel's the prophet went about "in bitterness".

10:11 *And they said to me: You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings*- The idea is that John was assumed to be recording his message for the Jews, but it also had reference to the Gentiles. The traumas to happen in the land promised to Abraham will affect both Jew and non-Jew in that land; and this is why both the Hebrew and Greek terms for 'the destroyer' are given in chapter 9. But about can also be "to". The idea is then of a last moment intense witness to all the peoples, perhaps of the world, or within the land promised to Abraham. And this is the theme of the next visions; of witness under terrible persecution during the last days. John was typical of those persecuted preachers, seeing he himself was under tribulation for the sake of his witness of God's word in Christ, as chapter 1 has reminded us.

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

11:1 *And there was given to me a reed like a measuring rod, and I was told: Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those that worship therein*- The Apocalypse, within the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images. We are therefore not intended to interpret the various visions in a strictly chronological way. Nor are we to see them all referring to the same groups at the same times. In viewing a kaleidoscope, some images are more impressing or relevant for us than others. And thus the book of Revelation has been for those who have read it over the centuries. But in our last days, all the visions have their final application, culminating in the literal return of the Lord to establish the Kingdom on earth.

The idea of measuring the temple can be read as measuring to protect. Revelation speaks of the *new* Jerusalem as the ultimate reality, and therefore the *old* Jerusalem is delegitimized, or at best obscured in significance. This was also of great comfort to those who lived through the destruction of the temple in AD70. This was the end of the world for many Jews. But Jewish Christians who had grasped identity with "the *new* Jerusalem" would not be fazed by it. Likewise the preservation of the temple spoken of in Rev. 11:1,2 was to be understood as spiritual preservation of the spiritual temple, the people of God. The destruction of the literal temple would've highlighted this interpretation. Those who had grasped the spirit of Christ would not have had their faith shattered at all by the events of AD70. Whereas those who had become caught up in the spirit of Jewish nationalism would've been driven to despair as all their hopes for an immediate Kingdom of God came crashing down.

Rev. 11:1 speaks of a command to measure the temple- and immediately our minds are sent back to the temple being measured in such detail in Ez. 40:10, 21,22 etc. Is this to be read as a sign that we are about to receive another such conditional prophecy? Assuming that Revelation was given just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, we could read the ensuing prophecy in Rev. 11 as saying that although Jerusalem and the outer court would fall to the Romans, the zealots in the inner sanctuary would be preserved, and a command to repentance would be issued by two prophets. Now of course, this didn't happen; but perhaps it could've done, potentially? Consider the possibility- both here and in so many other Bible passages.

A case can even be made that the compilation of Luke's Gospel record of the Olivet prophecy, as well as sections of Revelation, were released throughout the period of Titus' encirclement of Jerusalem in the lead up to AD70. The encouragement to flee Jerusalem whilst it was still possible (Lk. 21:20,21) would have been urgent commands to be fulfilled immediately upon receipt. And then Rev. 11:1 could imply that by the time of the prophecy's release, the Roman attack on the outer court of the temple had already begun. A lot of work remains to be done in working out how this mass of Scripture could have been received by the faithful within Jerusalem in AD67-70, and read as directly relevant to them, requiring immediate response.

But whatever the first century fulfilment, we are to look for a latter day application as the main one. The measuring of the temple in judgment may imply that there will be a literal temple built in Jerusalem by the Jews in the last days. They certainly have plans for one.

11:2 *But the court which is outside the temple, do not measure it. For it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months*- The holy city [Jerusalem] to be trampled for 42 months is clearly the equivalent of Lk.

21:24 concerning the events leading up to AD70: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". The "times of the Gentiles" are therefore the 42 months. "From Spring of 67 to August of 70, the time of formal imperial engagement against Jerusalem is a period of 42 months". John "measures" the inner temple, altar and worshippers - for protection (Ez. 22:26; Zech. 2:1-5). Thus the external temple perishes but the spiritual reality- the true worshippers, the new Israel- are preserved. This is what happened in AD70.

"The holy city" is one of a series of allusions in this section to the crucifixion, for this same phrase is used about Jerusalem in the context of the crucifixion (Mt. 27:53). The prophecies of persecution in Revelation are shot through with references to the crucifixion; to encourage the people of God that in those persecutions they are in fact sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and will surely likewise share in His resurrection and eternal life. This theme will have especial reference to those who endure the final tribulation- for they are the generation who perhaps will never taste death and will move directly from sharing His crucifixion sufferings to sharing His resurrection glory and eternal life. Rev. 4:4,10; 5:6,8,14 associate the 24 elders falling down in worship with what happened when Christ died and / or ascended to Heaven; but here, that is said to happen during the time of tribulation (:16). The dead bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem (:8) recalls Mt. 27:52. The description of Jerusalem as Sodom And Egypt [both OT descriptions of Jerusalem in apostasy] seems almost angry; exactly because the reference is to Jerusalem being the city which killed Jesus (Mt. 23:37). The dead bodies being on display (:9) is apparently what happened in Mt. 27:52- the graves in Jerusalem opened in the earthquake at the death of Christ with the corpses as it were on display, and the bodies arose out of them at His resurrection. Not suffering bodies to be put in graves (:9) is language associated with crucifixion victims, whose bodies were usually cast out from Golgotha into Gehenna. The suffering believers are thereby likened to crucifixion victims. Death for three days (:9) is the same period Jesus lay dead. A case can even be made that He was dead three and a half days rather than 72 hours. "Great fear fell upon" (:11) the persecutors of the saints just as it did upon those who witnessed the resurrection of the crucified Christ (Mt. 27:54; 28:4). Ascension to Heaven in a cloud (:12) evidently recalls that of the Lord Jesus; the earthquake of :13 recalls that of Mt. 27:54. The temple being opened in :19 clearly refers to the veil being rent at the crucifixion (Mt. 27:51). These connections aren't neatly chronological; the point is that the lives of the suffering believers were connected with the sufferings of Christ in various ways and times. Their suffering was riddled with connection and allusion to the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus, just as our lives are, as like Paul we seek to fill up what is lacking in us of the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus. The connection between the sufferings of the last days and the crucifixion sufferings of the Lord are made apparent especially in Mk. 13. "It is done" (16:17) sounds very much like "It is finished". The Olivet prophecy as recorded in Mark 13 has many allusions to the sufferings of our Lord, thereby suggesting that our sufferings during the coming tribulation will make us fellowship the cross as never before. The whole idea of darkness, earthquake, open graves, rocks shaking etc, which we read of in the Olivet and other last day prophecies is evidently the language of the crucifixion. The description of suffering before "the end" comes (Mk. 13:7,13; Mt. 24:14) invites connection with Christ's death also being described as "the end", coming as it did after a period of suffering (Mt. 26:58; Lk. 22:37; Jn. 13:1). This connection is strengthened by the way in which each record of the Olivet prophecy leads straight on into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Mt. 24:13 commends those who endure to the end- of the great tribulation. The same word occurs in Heb.

12:2,3 about Christ enduring the cross- we fellowship the cross during the last day tribulation. The word in Mt. 24:29 for “the tribulation” is used in Col. 1:24 about the afflictions of Christ. The tribulation will enable those who endure it to fellowship the Lord's crucifixion sufferings, that they might immediately share His resurrection life at His return. This will be especially relevant to Jews under persecution, who will have to come to repentance regarding His crucifixion:

" They shall deliver you up to the councils...	As Christ to the Sanhedrin
beaten...	Christ buffeted
rulers and kings for a testimony...	Chief priests, Herod, Pilate
brother shall betray the brother...	Judas; Peter's denial?
turn back to take up his garment...	John Mark's linen garment
false Christs...	Barabbas
the sun shall be darkened...	As at the crucifixion
watch and pray...	" Watch with me”; Gethsemane
at even...	Last Supper
at midnight...	Gethsemane
at the cock crowing...	Peter's denials
in the morning...	Trial and crucifixion
find you sleeping"	Disciples in Gethsemane

The trampling of the holy city doesn't necessarily have to speak of a domination of the literal city of Jerusalem. For in Revelation, "Jerusalem" is contrasted with Rome / Babylon, the 'unholy' city. It could equally refer simply to the 'holy' people of God, as it does elsewhere. Again we have the idea of the death and apparent defeat of God's people being, in fact, their glorious victory. Just as in the death of the Lord, a kind of "magnificent defeat".

11:3 *And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth*- Empowering witnesses is the language of the comforter in Jn. 14-16. The prophecy here has specific applications to various historical moments and a greater fulfilment in the last days, but the essence is true for all who are empowered in their witness by the gift of the Spirit. The only other NT references to two witnesses is to ordinary members of the Christian church (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). All believers are witnesses, in the power of the Spirit (cp. Acts 1:8).

The context of this vision is set by 10:9, where John eats the little book. I suggested there that this is part of a recommissioning of John, which introduces the theme of witness to the Gospel under persecution which fills the subsequent visions in Revelation.

John was to "Prophecy (preach) again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10:11). Such language recalls Jeremiah and the prophets (often initially unwilling also) spreading their message to nations and kings, and also the spirit of first century apostolic preaching. Both these groups did so amidst great persecution; and this is to happen in the last days. John's eating of the book also looks back to Ez. 2:8, where Ezekiel had to do this at the beginning of his preaching ministry to an apostate Israel in captivity. This may hint that this latter day preaching to all nations [within the earth / land promised to Abraham?] will especially focus upon the Jews among them, and those persecuted Jews within the land itself.

The vision of the two witnesses carries straight on, describing in more detail what 10:8-11 has summarized. The downtreading of the Holy City (literal Jerusalem) will be for 42 months. During that time, the witnesses prophecy for a parallel period of 1,260 days- both periods equivalent to three and a half years (Rev. 11:2,3). The two witnesses may either represent the Jews and the Christians, or two individual leaders of the saints who each concentrate respectively on preaching to Jews or Gentiles. The *false* prophet [for the witnesses are prophets, :6,10] is not necessarily an individual but a group of persons, perhaps headed up in one figurehead. Perhaps the two righteous witnesses speak of something similar. The language of :6 has clear reference back to Elijah and Moses- both of whom spoke the word of God [largely to an apostate Israel] during time of great persecution of God's true witnesses.

Other Scriptures describe a three-and-a-half-year period of persecution by the beast. This is matched in Rev. 11 by the three and a half year witnessing in sackcloth, with the power to bring plagues on their enemies. This would equate the witnesses with Moses and the faithful Israelites in Egypt undergoing persecution, at a time when Egypt (cp. the latter day world) was very prosperous (treasure cities etc.). The sackcloth suggests fasting and prayer- for their deliverance through the Lord's return. I have suggested elsewhere that the second coming is dependent on the intensity of our prayers. To allow the Lord's return to happen, it seems we need this tribulation to vitalize our community's prayer life. In the last days, God’s faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a ‘mouth’ (Ex. 4:15). Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days, in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

Sackcloth is also a symbol of repentance and recognition of sin (Gen. 37:34; Jer. 4:8; Jonah 3:5; Mk. 2:20). Their own personal repentance and acceptance of God’s gracious forgiveness was the basis of their appeal to others. And is it going too far to understand that if these “two witnesses” do indeed represent the latter day witness of true Christianity to the 'earth' / land promised to Abraham, it will be made on the basis of a genuine repentance, brought about by the experiences of the tribulation.

11:4 *These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth*- The allusion is clearly to the visions of Zechariah. They are filled with the Spirit for their witness; see on :3.

Zech. 4 contained a vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel, likened to two olive trees which emptied their oil into the seven branched candlestick, representing the ecclesia of Judah. They represented the kingly and priestly offices. The whole 'lightstand' depended upon these two anointed ones, these providers of oil, and the fact they both in various ways failed to deliver true faith and spirituality meant that the victory over the world which the vision also prophesied could not come about; the final fulfilment had to come through the Lord Jesus, who was the ultimate Priest (cp. Joshua-Jesus) and Prince of Judah (cp. Zerubbabel). This prophecy could have been fulfilled at the restoration; but when we read in Rev. 11:4 that "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks", is the Lord not saying that now He has redefined and rescheduled the fulfilment of that vision in a latter day context?

The Lord of the earth / land in the Zechariah context was a reference to Israel's Angel (Michael?) who was in control of the land despite all happening within it. But the latter day lord of the land will be the anti-Christ, the fake Christ, the fake, imitation lord of the land. And before him they make their witness. The later allusions to them as it were bringing the plagues upon Egypt suggest they are as it were standing before Pharaoh as Moses did, strangely unhurt by him as Moses and Aaron were strangely preserved from being killed by him, bringing the plagues upon the persecutors of God's apostate people Israel.

11:5 *And if anyone desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies, and if anyone shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed*- These two individuals or entities are miraculously preserved as Moses was before Pharaoh, the lord of the earth in his day (see on :4).

They have power to shut heaven and bring fire upon their enemies - clearly alluding to Elijah. His bringing down fire was against people of his own Jewish race who were persecuting him (2 Kings 1:9-12), suggesting that the Elijah ministry will be bitterly opposed by many Jews, after the pattern of Jeremiah's persecution during the Babylonian invasion. The witnesses are therefore the latter day Elijah ministry, who shall come to prepare Israel before the final day of the Lord comes, witnessing against powers as well as against Israel; just as John the Baptist did in the spirit and power of Elijah, against Herod who killed him.

11:6 *These have the power to shut the heaven so that it does not rain during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire*- See on:3 and on :6 for the significance of the Elijah allusions. This latter day Elijah ministry will withhold rain, as Elijah did, for three and a half years, in the hope that it will lead to repentance in Israel. The plaguing of the persecutors as Moses and Aaron plagued Egypt further strengthens the impression that Israel's experience in Egypt is the prototype for the coming tribulation. The plagues brought upon Egypt were likewise in the hope that Egypt and even Pharaoh would 'know the Lord' and repent.

11:7- see on Rev. 6:10.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them and overcome them and kill them- The same word for "witnesses" is used of how the Babylon system slays the Lord's witnesses in the last days (17:6). This parallels "the beast" here with latter day Babylon. This speaks of a final, furious bout of persecution which brings about the destruction of the beast. It is because of this latter day orgy of killing the saints that the woman riding the beast

was "drunken with the blood of the saints (the latter day true Christian community?), and (also) with the blood of the martyrs (s.w. "witnesses"- the two particular ones of Rev. 11?) of Jesus" (17:6). The witnesses 'testifying' suggests association with their prototype John, who was persecuted for his obedience to and preaching of "the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2,9) in the last days before the Lord's 'coming' in AD70. I have suggested earlier on this chapter that John's recommissioning as a witness to all peoples in chapter 10 makes him personally representative of these latter day witnesses. John was encouraged in his tribulation by being given such a deep understanding of prophecy; and his latter day counterparts may be blessed likewise. The "souls under the altar" which we have previously considered were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9), which cements the link between them and the apostle John's descriptions of his sufferings.

The dragon/ beast also "made war" with the seed of the woman "which keep the commandments (word) of God, and have the testimony (i.e. preaching) of Jesus" (12:17); it was because of "the word of their testimony (i.e. preaching) (that) they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11), indicating that Rev. 12 also has reference to this last day persecution and is providing more detail about the events of chapter 11, during which the witnesses are persecuted and slain. Interestingly, the Angel says that he is a fellowservant and brother of them "that have the testimony (preaching) of Jesus" (19:10), i.e. the witnesses- as if the Angels who are with the witnesses in the tribulation are so near those they represent that they almost feel our sufferings.

We note that the beast is mentioned without introduction. The abyss from which it emerges has been mentioned, as the source of the locust invasion of Israel; which previously we have identified as the Muslim onslaught against Israel by her Islamic neighbours. The beast perhaps has no introduction because of the idea of Revelation being a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the beast theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

11:8 *And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified*- It would seem that the murder of these two witnesses takes place in Jerusalem, which is spiritual Sodom (Is. 1:10; 3:1,9; Jer. 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Ez. 16:46-56; Am. 4:11) and Egypt (Ez. 23:19-22). This point is clinched by its description as "where also our Lord was crucified" (see on Mk. 13:13). "They of the people (of Israel?) and kindreds and tongues and nations (those preached to in 10:11) shall see their dead bodies three days (literal ones?) and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves" (11:9). This seems a designed contrast to Stephen, the first martyr for preaching the Christian Gospel, whose body was also stared upon, but who was allowed to be buried. There are a number of similarities in Rev. 11 with the events in Sodom. "The God of the earth" of :4 clearly connects with "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" in Gen.18:25. The two Angels (cp. the two Angel-supported witnesses) were warned not to abide in the street (cp. bodies in the street) for fear of violence being done to them; the city is spiritually called Sodom. These references to Sodom and Egypt, both types of the last days, confirm that Rev. 11 also has a latter day application.

11:9 *And from among the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies for three and a half days, and they will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb*- Converts are to be made from "among the peoples, tribes..." etc. as noted on chapter 5. Perhaps the death of the witnesses makes some converts. But it may be that people from among the peoples, tribes etc. of the earth / land promised to

Abraham come up to Jerusalem to gloat over the display of the dead bodies. There seem a number of points of contact in Rev. 11 with our Lord's sufferings, and this may be another one. Had it not been for Nicodemus' bold request, the Lord's body would have been thrown into Gehenna. Compare this with the bodies being unburied here, as if to imply they had been crucified. Thus in their sufferings the remnant under tribulation will really feel crucified with Christ, and therefore have great peace from knowing that if they suffer with Him, they will also reign with Him. It could be that the witnesses are literally crucified; for that is a typical punishment inflicted by jihadists, who make a big deal about display of the bodies of those they have slain.

11:10 *And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and they shall send gifts to each other, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth*- The earth dwellers are those within the earth / land promised to Abraham. Their brief rejoicing at the apparent death of the witnesses corresponds to Egypt's glee that Israel had left and were trapped at the Red Sea. This rejoicing over the slaughtered saints by the nations of the beast is echoed later by the holy apostles and prophets rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon (18:20)- as if the sufferings of the saints are later brought upon their persecutors. See on 8:7.

11:11 *And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those that saw them*- The persecution period in which the dead bodies lie in the street lasts three and a half days, connecting with the Lord's death for three days; this may indicate a final persecution at the end of the three and a half years. This is followed by the resurrection of the witnesses, after a brief period of rejoicing by the world that these people whose Spirit gifts had plagued them were now no more (by all means compare this with the rejoicing of the world in the three days in which Christ lay dead). The great fear that fell upon them who saw the resurrected witnesses recalls the fear of those who saw the risen Lord (Mt. 28:4,5,8).

Whilst the primary reference of all this is to the situation within the earth / land promised to Abraham, there is reason to think that the believing community worldwide will suffer at this time too. There is a general, outline theme throughout Revelation that the righteous are gathered *after* they go through the judgments, implying we will experience them, although it would be possible, were we more spiritual, that we could be spared them (Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11,12; 14:13-16; 19:1-10). Thus although the types of Israel in Egypt, the faithful in Hezekiah's Jerusalem, Noah shut in the ark etc. suggest that the faithful will be spared the judgments, the fact is they will *need* the experience of the judgments to make them more spiritual, and therefore ultimately these types may not come true: they will only speak of what was possible. Evidently the latter day ecclesia will not be as strong as God would wish it to be.

11:12- see on 1 Thess. 4:17.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them- This surely connects with the transporting of the saints through the clouds to meet the Lord, as detailed in 1 Thess. 4:15-17. There are also links with Rev. 1:7- a shout (cp. 1 Thess. 4:16), a cloud, being seen by enemies. We know that 1:7 is concerning the second coming (see note there). There we have the picture of the Lord's persecutors seeing Him personally; some will say "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord", but too late (see on Mt. 23:39). They will be resurrected to judgment, and see Him in glory; and the last generation of Israel's persecutors will see not only Him, but the

resurrected two witnesses with Him. The exact chronology need not worry us; for here in the Apocalypse we have a kaleidoscope of images and not a strictly chronological outline of events.

11:13 *And in that hour there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven*- It is tempting to interpret the great earthquake and repentance of a remnant in 11:13 as referring also to the Lord's coming, accompanied as it will be by a literal earthquake which affects Jerusalem when the Lord returns to the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-4; Acts 1:11), heralding the repentance of the Jewish remnant as described in Rom. 11. The seventh Angel then sounds, declaring that the Kingdom has come (note "are become- now- the Kingdoms of our Lord").

11:14 *The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly*- Yet this third woe is not recorded. I suggested on 6:1; 10:4,7 that there are some judgments potentially planned which never actually happen. Perhaps because the required number of the remnant repent, or because of the power of prayer, and God's desire to hasten towards the end of His judgments so that He might save His people.

11:15 *And the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said*- As suggested on :14 and also 6:1; 10:4,7, it seems that there are some judgments potentially planned in association with the seventh trumpet which never actually happen, as things hasten towards their close.

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever- The kingdom initially in view is that of the Islamic entity which has taken control of the land promised to Abraham. That is now handed over to the Lord Jesus, who as Abraham's seed is the rightful heir to it. Satan's Kingdom has members, those he is king over [see on Lk. 11:18]. His Kingdom is the people of this world, those dominated by the fleshly mind. When the Kingdoms of this world become those of God at the second coming, this is more than a physical handover of political authority. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). The political power in the world is ultimately God's even now (Rom. 13:1-4). The idea of a handover of the Kingdoms of this world to God must therefore refer to the end of Satan's power; no longer will the world be structured around the desires of the flesh, but around the principles of God. Satan's Kingdom is not a political Kingdom, but an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. The Kingdom of God is the antithesis of Satan's Kingdom. The fact Satan's Kingdom exists now and is the antithesis of the true Kingdom is proof enough that in some sense the Kingdom of God exists in some non-political sense now, although of course this will be politically manifested at the Lord's return. God's Kingdom exists in the same sense as Satan's; as an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. This is why the Lord's parables describing the Kingdom of God refer not to the political Kingdom, but to His ways and principles as they should operate in our lives today. The Kingdom of God in this non-political sense was taken from the Jews and given to us, so that we might bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom (Mt. 21:43). The political Kingdom had already been taken from Israel (Ez. 21:27).

11:16 *And the twenty four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshiped God, saying*- As noted on 4:4,10; 5:8, these Angels were representative of the faithful. The whole awful program of latter day events is

ultimately to elicit the deepest praise and glory to God. And the traumas of our own lives likewise.

11:17 *We give You thanks O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken Your great power and have reigned*- God can do anything, He is omnipotent. But He chooses to limit His omnipotence in order to allow man total freewill. Therefore effectively, how far God will fulfil His purpose depends upon how far we are obedient to Him. Thus Israel limited the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 78:41). Only at the return of the Lord Jesus will God 'take to Himself His great power'- which language of itself suggests that God has chosen to limit His omnipotence for the moment. Of course, God can act quite independently of us; He has the sovereign right and ability to act as He likes, and achieve His objectives how He likes. But it seems that God chooses to limit His ability to do this. We have complete freewill, and God works with us individually in proportion as we work with Him. We have genuine choice, not only as to whether to serve God, but *how* and on what level and to what extent we serve Him, within the salvation we experience in Christ.

The faithful (see on :16) now perceive that God always was in control and in power; all their tribulations were only with His permission.

11:18 *And the nations were angry, and Your anger came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward to Your servants the prophets and to the saints, and to those that fear Your Name, the small and the great*- The nations will be angry, and the wrath / anger of God also will rise. When their iniquity has reached a certain level, then judgment will fall (cp. Sodom and the Amorites, Gen. 15:16). The Amorites speak of Israel's aggressive neighbours who are the beast persecuting her in the last days; and Sodom has earlier in this chapter been presented as a type of the last days.

And to destroy those that destroy the earth- The reference is to the "nations" within the land promised to Abraham who had destroyed that land. They will be judged as they judged Israel- a major theme of Revelation. The same word is used of how the whore of Babylon corrupted the land / earth (19:2); and these "nations" are those under her control.

11:19 *And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant, and there followed lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail*- John was already viewing a Heavenly temple scene. The opening therefore refers to the opening of the most holy; and there is seen the ark. First century Jews were fascinated with the location of the physical ark. Here it is revealed- in heaven. There was an association of the covenant with Israel, and the ark of the covenant. The loss of the ark and its disappearance was a sign that the covenant with Israel had been suspended. But the ark was never known to have been destroyed, just as the covenant has as it were disappeared, been suspended, but not ended. And so the vision of the ark in Heaven is the sign that the covenant with Israel shall be remembered and revealed; and following from that are more judgments upon those who had once destroyed her. The lightnings, thunders, hail etc. are all the language of judgment; this is the promised destruction of those who had destroyed Israel (:18), in recognition of God's resumed covenant with Israel.

The ark over which the *shekinah* glory dwelt was as it were the throne of God; the idea is that Yahweh shall again be enthroned upon Israel. That the throne of God is represented by the ark of the covenant is shown by comparing Rev. 11:19 and 4:1-5:

Rev. 11:19	Rev. 4:1-5
"The temple of God was opened in Heaven"	"A door was opened in Heaven"
"There was seen in the temple the ark of His testament"	"A throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne. . . there was a rainbow round about the throne".
"There were lightnings, and voices and thunderings"	"Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices"

The throne in Rev. 4 was surrounded by cherubim, as was the "throne" of the ark of the covenant.

REVELATION CHAPTER 12

12:1 *And a great sign was seen in heaven*- We are dealing with symbols (1:1), of things to happen after John's time. There is no description here of any historical event in the garden of Eden or some rebellion in Heaven before that. The woman here is caught up to God (:5), so we are not talking about a woman in literal heaven, and the moon and stars which are her clothing show these things are symbols and not literal.

A woman arrayed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars- She was who the people of Israel were intended to be, and thus she becomes our representative. The sun is a symbol for the Lord Jesus, and she is clothed with Christ, with His righteousness. This idea is used at the end of Revelation about the believers. Peter Watkins in his excellent book *Exploring The Apocalypse* sees the woman of Revelation 12 as a symbol of the church expressed in terms of Mary- for it was her who gave birth to "the man child" Jesus, who is to subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5 = 2:27; 19:15). The stars around her head would, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture, refer to Israel (Gen. 37). There are many links between Revelation and John's Gospel, and thus it may be significant that in Jn. 19:25-27 Jesus calls Mary "Woman" and then in Revelation, He uses the same title for the "woman" who bears the man child. Yet the point of Revelation 12 is surely to show us from Heaven's point of view the huge disruption in the universe caused by the birth of Jesus that night in Bethlehem. A baby's birth, brought about by the quiet faith and indefatigable ambition of a teenage girl, shattered the whole cosmos. This is really what happens when we perform acts of faith based on slowly developed spiritual understanding. We do things which have cosmic consequences. See on Lk. 1:28.

The significance of chapter 12 is that almost every student of Revelation's structure finds this chapter to be the very core of the book. Nils Lund's suggestion has been followed with minor amendments by most students (*Chiasmus in the New Testament: a Study in Gormgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,1942)):

A Prologue (1:1-20)
B Seven Epistles (2:1-3:22)
C Seven Seals (4:1-8:1)
D 144,000 saints & Seven Trumpets (7:1-11:19)
E The Two Witnesses (11:1-13)
F Woman clothed with the sun (12:1)
G Dragon in heaven (12:4)
H Woman flees to wilderness (12:6)
J Satan cast out (12:12)
H' Woman flees to wilderness (12:14)
G' Dragon persecutes woman (12:15)
F' Woman's seed keeps the commandments of God (12:17)
E' The Two Beasts (13:1-18)
D' 144,000 saints & Seven Angels (14-1-15:4)
C' Seven Bowls (15:1,5-16:21)

B' Seven Angels: whore of Babylon vs. New Jerusalem (17:1-22:5)
A' Epilogue (22:6-21).

But Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. In viewing a kaleidoscope, some images are more impressing or relevant for us than others. And thus the book of Revelation has been for those who have read it over the centuries. But in our last days, all the visions have their final application, culminating in the literal return of the Lord to establish the Kingdom on earth. The events spoken of here therefore have various historical applications, and one main application in the last day.

12:2 *She was with child, and was crying out with labour pains and the agony of giving birth*- This is another connection with the gospel of John, where the Lord speaks of His followers under tribulation as a woman in labour, whose release comes when they 'see' Him again (Jn. 16:21). This will ultimately be at His return, and so this language speaks of the tribulation of the church in the last days.

12:3 *And there was seen another sign in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems*- The seven heads and ten horns of the apparently invincible dragon are in obvious contrast to the Lamb [the Lord Jesus], who has no horns but seven heads and seven spirits (Rev. 5:6). Those seven spirits are the totality of God's power. The conflict appears to be all in favour of the beast. But closer thought and reflection shows that through the cross [for "the Lamb" has obvious sacrificial associations], the Lord Jesus has all power. All the scary heads and horns of the dragon and beasts will have no power against Him. The battle has already been won. The dragon and beasts may persecute God's people, but they begin the entire conflict as born losers. Because of the cross, through which all power / Spirit in Heaven and earth has been given to the Lamb.

Alfred Norris in *The Apocalypse for Everyman* sums up the picture of the beasts presented in Revelation: “Once there was a woman in heaven about to give birth, and an evil dragon stood in front of her, intending to devour the newborn child (12.1-3). It had already done great damage in throwing down a third part of the stars (12.4), but when the baby boy was born he was snatched away from the dragon to the safety of God's throne (12.5), while the woman, too, ran away to a safe hiding place in the wilderness (12.6). The wicked dragon was beaten in a war with Michael and his angels and, with its own angels, was thrown out of heaven to the earth (12.7-9). The heavens rejoiced that the dragon had been expelled (12.10-12a), but things looked bad for the earth, for the dragon meant to continue doing evil during the short time left to it (12.12b). First it pursued the woman, but she fled out of its way to her refuge (12.13-14), and even the flood it sent after her failed to overwhelm her, because the earth itself came to her aid by swallowing up the flood (12.15-16). There were still some of her children left, though, remaining faithful to their God and Lord, so the dragon decided to make life hard for them (12.17). What it did was to stand by the seashore and conjure up out of the sea a dreadful beast to which it gave worldwide authority (13.1-2) and also healed it when it looked as though it was wounded to death (13.3); so that the earth fell down and worshipped before the dragon, and before the beast which took over its power (13.4). From the wings of the stage the dragon still caused its voice to be heard through another beast, from the earth (13.11), and helped both beasts to gather the nations together to war against God Almighty (16.13). But its designs failed, for when the beast and the false prophet (the second beast) were beaten by the Lamb it was placed under restraint in the abyss (20.2) and not allowed out for 1000 years, at the end of which it was released, and gathered the nations together against the saints (20.7). The nations were overcome, however, by fire from heaven,

and the dragon was finally removed from the scene by being destroyed in the lake of fire where its helpers, the beast and the false prophet, had been cast (20.10)".

It is obviously the same dragon throughout the Book from chapter 12 to chapter 20. The differences between the form it takes are because different aspects of its actions are being presented; again we say, that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. I noted on 11:7 that "the beast" is first mentioned there but without introduction. The beast perhaps has no introduction because of the idea of Revelation being a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the beast theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

The persecuting entity changes forms and has various aspects. It is presented in chapter 12 as a dragon; the dragon continues to exist, having given power to the beast of chapter 13. Then another beast arises, a "little horn" who also acts as the beast (Dan. 7:11). The beast is destroyed and then finally the dragon himself at the very end of Revelation. Politics and alliances within the land promised to Abraham change quickly. This is the kind of sequence we can expect; one persecuting alliance [the dragon] empowers another [the beast of Rev. 13), then another beast arises, then there is separate persecution orchestrated by the charismatic individuals presented as the little horn, the whore and the false prophet. All these entities have points of similarity with each other [e.g. the dragon and beast both have seven heads and ten horns]. But they are none the less distinct and unique. As noted many times, we are not to look for a chronological fulfilment in terms of a sequence of events. These are all kaleidoscope images of the persecution to be unleashed upon the earth / land. They merge and morph with each other, and yet re-emerge as separate entities. The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with each head crowned; the beast from the sea has likewise seven heads and ten horns, but now it is the horns which are crowned; on the heads of the beast there are "names of blasphemy" (13:1). Their prototype in Daniel 7:20 has ten horns upon only one head.

These nuances may be significant, but they will only be recognizable when they have their fulfilment in the very last days (perhaps literally) before the Lord returns. It could be that the seven crowned heads refer to political leadership; but then they become the bearers of the names of blasphemy, as if they take on a more spiritual-religious aspect; and it is then the horns who are crowned at the time of the beast in chapter 13. The outline picture is however clear; a succession of groups of leaders and entities controlled by them (for the horns are "kings" and "kingdoms"), all summarized within one coalition of hatred against Israel; and a group of seven various "heads" of this coalition, seven mountains or nations (17:9), who exist either simultaneously or follow one another in quick succession.

It's noteworthy that the vision of Daniel 7 is presented as seven separate visions, each introduced by the rubric "I saw" (7:2,4,6,7,9,11,13). Revelation is an expansion upon Daniel's visions, and there we find seven visions which are in turn subdivided into seven visions and even some of those subdivisions are subdivided into seven visions. Admittedly, these can be defined in various ways, but some of the more obvious ones are:

7 visions:

1) Revelation 4 - 8:1
2) Revelation 8:2 - 11

3) Revelation 12 - 14
4) Revelation 15, 16
5) Revelation 17, 18
6) Revelation 19
7) Revelation 20

The seven visions of conflict explaining the Establishment of God's Kingdom between Rev. 11:15-13:8:
1. The woman with child: the birth of Jesus, 12:1-2
2. The great red dragon: the enemy of Peace, 12:3-6
3. The war in heaven: the Cross, 12:7-12
4. The dragon, the woman, and her children: the struggle of God's people, 12:13-17
5. The seven-headed beast from the sea, 13:1-4
6. The war against the saints: persecutions, 13:5-10
7. The beast and his mark: corruption of the emperor and the dragon's agents, 13:11-18

Then there are the Seven Visions of Zion, Rev. 14:1-20; the Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God, Rev. 15:1-16:21; the Seven Visions of the Fall of Babylon, Rev. 17:1-19:10; the Seven Visions of Recompense, Rev. 19:11-21:5.

The point is that the outline scenario of Daniel 7 is repeated in more detail in Revelation. But the primary reference remains the same- a prediction of a final time of trouble within the land promised to Abraham, which will come to term in the return of Christ to earth to establish His Kingdom upon the ruins of Israel's enemies. For this is the metanarrative of Daniel's prophecies, beginning from the empires dominating the land outlined in Daniel 2.

"Seven heads and ten horns" refers to how groups of seven and ten nations and kings surrounding Israel are associated with previous dominations of Israel (7= Dt. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; Acts 13:19; 10 = Gen. 15:18; Ps. 83; the ten surrounding nations starting with Egypt and ending with Babylon of Jer. 46-50; the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2, the ten horns of the beast of Daniel 7; the ten invading nations of Ez. 38 headed by Gog).

The similarity with the fourth beast of Daniel 7 have led many to see a fulfilment in Rome; with the seven heads referring to seven forms of government or the seven mountains, or hills, on which it is claimed Rome is built; or to seven capital cities in the Roman empire (Rome, Carthage, Aege, Antiochia, Augustodunum, Alexandria, and Constantinople). The ten horns are seen as ten European peoples who came out of the Roman empire. This may be true to a limited extent, but the events described here lead to the establishment of God's Kingdom. This didn't happen, and certainly not at the hands of Constantine as claimed. Further, the attempts to enumerate seven forms of Roman government, or ten kingdoms coming out of the broken up Roman empire, are arbitrary and seriously flawed. Far more than ten kingdoms came out of Rome; and Rome broke up over a period of time. Likewise the various forms of Government can be defined variously. It is all rather forced, and involves coming to history looking for a fulfilment of Revelation, rather than letting the symbols speak for themselves and find obvious fulfilment when the right time comes. J.B. Norris has written a helpful critique of the continuous historical approach to Roman history, which remains unanswered. He demonstrates the highly selective use of historical fact

and the cherry picking of incidents to fit into a picture required by a pre-existing commitment to the continuous historical approach. The argument that the Roman empire broke up in a very short time into ten kingdoms is particularly suspect. There were far more kingdoms than Huns, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alans, Burgundians, Heruli, Saxons and Lombards. And these are the kings of the "earth"; and there is absolutely no Biblical reason for interpreting the earth / land as Western Europe. That bears all the signs of 'Western' centric bias.

The Bible is Israel centred, focused upon the earth / land promised to Abraham. Daniel 2 predicts a sequence of body parts which shall dominate that area, and then Daniel 7 gives more detail about these parts, expressing them in form of beasts, which shall come together in the last days to dominate the land and crush God's people. Revelation develops these beasts further- but the essential message is the same: it concerns the latter day domination of Israel by her enemies. There will be a final time of tribulation, resolved by the return of the Lord Jesus to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. The seven diadems will then be seen as a poor imitation of the “many diadems" on Christ’s head (19:12).

So in summary my suggestion is that the seven heads and ten horns on the dragon and beast refer to a quick succession or co-existence of various peoples, leaders or entities originating from or around the land promised to Abraham, which will persecute God's people in the last days. They will all form part of the coalition of evil known as the beast or dragon, and radical Islam will be their religion. The dragon / beast is clearly an extension of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. To understand that beast would require major exposition, which you can see at http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan7com.html , and yet that in turn requires an understanding of the image of Daniel 2 which is the basis for the beasts; see on http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan2com.html , and the development of the beasts in Daniel 8, see http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan8com.html

Dan. 7:21,22 speak of how the "saints" will be persecuted by the beast, and then "the saints" will 'possess the Kingdom'. The "saints" are Israel, the same Hebrew word is used in Ex. 19:5 to describe them as a holy or saintly nation, a nation of saints, sanctified ones. If we understand the Kingdom as primarily the land promised to Abraham's seed for them to 'possess', then this makes sense. That land will be dominated and trodden down by the beast, and then the remnant of Abraham's seed will triumphantly possess it eternally; and that mountain, or Kingdom, will then grow to fill the whole planet.

The little horn devours, treads down and breaks in pieces "the earth" (Dan. 7:23); that has little meaning if applied to the whole planet. The context speaks of destruction and persecution of "the saints", God's people in His land. The reference is surely to the specific land of Israel.

The beast will "devour" the land (Dan. 7:7), just as the historical Babylon 'devoured' Jerusalem with fire (Jer. 30:16; Lam. 4:11; Ez. 15:5; 19:12; 23:25; Hos. 8:14; Am. 1:4; 2:5) and the Assyrians devoured the land (Jer. 50:17; Hos. 11:6; 13:8; Joel 1:4,19,20; 2:3,5,25). All these verses use the same word translated 'devour' in Dan. 7:7. Clearly enough, the 'devouring' of the fourth beast is a summation of all previous 'devourings' of God's land and people. Even in Old Testament times, this idea of a singular beast embodying all Israel's enemies was not unknown. For Ez. 34:28 looked forward to the day when "Neither shall the beast of the land devour them [any more]". Mal. 3:11 likewise speaks of how "the devourer" will be rebuked by God when finally Israel respond to the Elijah prophet (Mal. 3:1). This again suggests that the final devouring of Israel will be whilst the Elijah prophet is making

an ongoing appeal for their repentance and acceptance of Jesus. Once they do so, the devourer is rebuked and Jesus returns to His desperately repentant people.

12:4 *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and he did throw them to the earth; and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to give birth, so that when she gives birth he may devour her child-* A dragon waves its tail before it pounces. The decorum of the symbol may mean that this is but the prelude to a greater, final destruction which the dragon wants to achieve. The earlier visions have described how 'thirds' of the people in the land are destroyed. Here we have this described in dramatic terms; a third of the stars (referring to the sons of Jacob, Gen. 37; or possibly to their leaders) are thrown to the earth, in order to be trampled; we have just read of Jerusalem being trampled for three and a half years in 11:2. But the dragon at the same time intends to destroy the seed of the woman, the Christian believers, her newborn male child.

The attempt to destroy the newborn boy child is of course framed in terms of Pharaoh's attempt to destroy the baby boys of Israel in Egypt, and Herod's attempt to do the same to the Lord Jesus at His birth. But neither Pharaoh nor Herod achieved their aim; the baby boys of Israel, especially Moses, were somehow preserved; as was the Lord Jesus from Herod's intentions.

The coalition dominating the land promised to Abraham therefore seeks also to persecute the Christians there and not simply orthodox Jews. Is. 37:3 uses a significant figure in this context to describe how when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrians, with much of the land and people desolated, something was conceived, but there appeared no strength to deliver the child. That person conceived was a repentant remnant of Judah, who were perhaps prefigured by Isaiah's children of sign, and the unusual conception of his wife in Isaiah 7 which became typical of the Lord's conception and birth of a virgin.

The intention of all the latter day trauma which Revelation describes is to bring about the repentance of a remnant. This group of genuine Christians within the land, perhaps largely Jews, will elicit the especial wrath and attention of the dragon coalition. But just as the two witnesses of chapter 11 were miraculously preserved for three and a half years, so the woman and her child are likewise.

The little horn of Daniel 8 is connected with the dragon:

". . . it cast down some ... of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (Daniel 8:10)	"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth" (Revelation 12:4)

The dragon drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth with his tail. If this is read literally – and Revelation 12 has to be read literally to support the Popular Interpretation – the sheer size of the dragon is immense – a third of the whole universe (or solar system at least) could be contained just on his tail. There is no way the planet earth would be big enough to contain such huge creature sprawling over it. Most of the stars of the solar system are bigger than our earth – how then could a third

of them land on earth? And remember that all this happened, or will happen, after the first century A.D., when this prophecy was given.

12:5 *And she gave birth to a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne*- The "man child" is clearly referring to the Lord Jesus, who is to subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5 = 2:27; 19:15). But this is a prophecy of events to happen after His birth. The entity the woman gives birth to is part of "the seed of the woman", they are "in Christ" as Paul would put it; but not the Lord Jesus personally. All that is true of Him becomes true of those in Him. We have learnt already that those who overcome shall reign with Christ on His throne, and they too "shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces" (2:27). Perhaps that repentant Jewish remnant at this time will be literally snatched away from persecution and be preserved. It would seem that this man child is connected with the two witnesses, who die and are resurrected, and then likewise snatched away to Heaven: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them" (11:12). The woman who gave birth to this remnant would then refer to the true Christian believers who were already in existence before the tribulation started. They escape, as explained in :6.

12:6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred and sixty days*- This three-and-a-half-year period is surely the same "42 months" during which Jerusalem is trampled (11:2) and the same period during which the two witnesses testify before their death (11:3). It may be objected that the man child is snatched away before this three-and-a-half-year period begins (:5). It could be that the snatching away to God occurs not immediately, and that we are reading in :5 of a situation which finally occurs (after three and a half years) and now :6 backtracks to explain how this happens. For it was Mary who fled through the wilderness to Egypt with the man child in her arms. And it would seem that she was there in Egypt with the Lord for around three and a half years. This is the same period of the Elijah ministry (Lk. 4:25). The 'problem' with the witnesses being killed after this period and the man child being snatched away before it need not unduly concern us; I have many times made the point that we have in Revelation a kaleidoscope of images, and we are not being given any neat, linear chronological outline of events. As the images rotate and merge, there are going to be points of apparent overlap and morphing of images.

The woman who gave birth to the repentant Jewish remnant, the man child, finds safety in the wilderness as did Mary and as did Israel when they fled Egyptian persecution. There they too were provide for. This may connect with the picture presented in Is. 26:20 of the faithful entering into a quiet room, until the tribulations pass over. Likewise the letters to the churches with which Revelation open feature the idea of the faithful being somehow preserved from tribulation (see on 2:10). The only other time the Greek phrase "a place prepared" occurs is also in John's writings (Jn. 14:2,3); due to the Lord's death, salvation is assured for all in tribulation. The prepared place is in God's Kingdom (Mt. 25:34). Perhaps the woman will somehow be saved or given miraculous protection during this tribulation period.

The 1,260 days is the same 42 months as we have just encountered in Rev. 11:2,3. There, the "holy city" is trampled for 42 months, and in those 1,260 days, the faithful make a prophetic witness. The idea may be that although indeed many of the component members die, they are spiritually preserved. This would be typical of how Revelation shows us how things are in secular terms [where the dominant world systems appear invincible and slay God's people]; and how they actually are in

spiritual terms, viewed from Heaven [where the death of God's people is their spiritual victory, and the victory depends upon holding on to the faith, rather than militarily, visibly defeating their enemies].

12:7 *And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels retaliated*- John is as it were "in heaven", viewing things going on in the heavenly throne room. Each situation and entity on earth has representative Angels, who are God's Angels, and not themselves sinful nor rebellious; although they can represent sinful situations and actions on earth. Michael, the Angel who stands for Israel (Dan. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9), fights with the dragon entity and his supporters. We note that Gabriel is the Angel associated with the Lord Jesus. But we read here of Michael, not Gabriel. This is not a struggle between Jesus and the devil. It speaks of a struggle between Israel and Israel's persecutors. But ultimately, those persecuting the Israelites are fighting God Himself and His Angels. The same word for "fought / retaliated" is used of how the beast which the dragon empowers appears invincible- "Who is able to make war [s.w.] against him?" (13:4). Yet he is effectively making war against God, who is at war against him (19:11); the beast in another of its manifestations makes war / fights with the Lamb (17:14). This is another manifestation of the jihadists locusts rushing to "make war" (9:7,9 s.w.). The war is not only against Israel, but against the believers; for the same word is used of the beast making war against the two witnesses (11:7). This is all part of the final battle when the kings of the land gather to fight (16:14; 19:19 s.w.).

What it doesn't mean

Angels cannot sin and that there can be no rebellion in heaven. Thus this passage – which is the only one of its kind – must be interpreted in a way that does not involve angels sinning or there being sinful angels making people sin on earth, seeing that sin comes from within us, not from outside of us (Mk. 7:20–23). Note carefully that there is no reference here to angels sinning or rebelling against God, only to a war in heaven.

That the Devil–dragon represents some kind of political power is indicated by it having “crowns upon his heads” (v. 3). Revelation 17:9,10 also comments on this dragon: “Here is the mind that hath wisdom” – i.e. don’t try and understand this animal as a literal being – “The seven heads are seven mountains... these are seven kings”. One of the kings continuing “a short space” perhaps connects with the Devil–dragon having “but a short time” in Revelation 12:12.

After the drama of :7–9, verse 10 says that there was “a loud voice saying in heaven, *now* is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night”. If :7–9 occurred at the beginning of the world, before the time of Adam and Eve, how could it be said that after Satan’s fall there came salvation and the kingdom of God? After Adam’s sin, mankind began his sad history of slavery to sin and failure – a state hardly to be described as “salvation” and the kingdom of God. There is rejoicing that the Devil – the accuser – has been cast down to earth. Why should there be rejoicing if his coming to earth was the start of sin and disaster for man? If a fall from heaven to earth is understood figuratively rather than literally, as representing a fall from authority (as Is. 14:12; Jer. 51:53; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 11:23), much more sense can be made of all this. If all this happened before the time of Adam, or at least before the fall of man, how could the Devil have been accusing “our brethren”, seeing they did not then exist? There is nothing indicating that all this happened in the Garden of Eden. A vital point is made in Revelation 1:1 and 4:1 –

that the Revelation is a prophecy of "things which must shortly come to pass". It is not therefore a description of what happened in Eden, but a prophecy of things to happen at some time after the first century, when the Revelation was given by Jesus. Any who are truly humble to the Word will see that this argument alone precludes all attempts to refer Revelation 12 to the Garden of Eden. The question has also to be answered as to why the identity of the Devil and information about what happened in Eden should be reserved until the end of the Bible before being revealed.

In view of this and many other things in Revelation 12 (and the whole prophecy) which are just incapable of any literal fulfilment, it is not surprising that we are told first of all (Rev. 1:1) that this is a message that has been "signified" – i.e. put into sign language, or symbol. As if to emphasize this in the context of Revelation 12, Revelation 12:1 describes the subsequent action as "a great sign" (A.V. margin). In reading of what the Devil does when he is on the earth, there is no description of him causing people to sin; indeed, vs. 12–16 show that the Devil was unsuccessful in his attempts to cause trouble on earth once he arrived there. This contradicts the popular interpretation. In their eagerness to show that Rev. 12:7–9 refers to fallen angels at the beginning of the world, apologists for a personal Satan have rather overlooked the context of the passage. A woman in Heaven, in the agony of childbirth and resting her feet on the moon, is faced by a dragon, whose tail throws down a third of the stars of Heaven to earth (Rev. 12:4). She gives birth, and the child "was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (Rev. 12:5). Clearly enough the "heaven" where all this occurs isn't the "heaven" where God lives and where His throne is. Next we read of a power struggle "in heaven", and the dragon and his angels are "cast out" (Rev. 12:9). The dragon throws one third of the stars of Heaven to earth – are these Angels? If so, how come the dragon and not God casts them to earth? That's quite the opposite of the scenario painted in *Paradise Lost*. How can a literalistic reading of this passage cope with the *two* episodes of Angels being cast down to earth? At the very least, care in thought and exposition is clearly lacking in the orthodox reading of this passage. The woman, who is never recorded as leaving "Heaven", then flees "into the wilderness" (Rev. 12:6). Once the dragon is cast to the earth, then he starts persecuting the woman by hissing huge volumes of water at her (Rev. 12:13). The earth opens and swallows this water (Rev. 12:16) – even though the woman is never recorded as losing her "in heaven" status. All this is reason enough to not interpret "heaven" and "earth" in this passage in any literal manner. The appearance of the woman and dragon "in heaven" is described as a *semeion*, a "sign", something that needs to be interpreted, rather than a literal fact (Rev. 12:1,3).

The language of 'war' is surely metaphor rather than literal description. What begins as a literal battle ends as a legal one, as the metaphor changes to the law court, with accusers, judge and Satan's case rejected. If the legal language isn't to be taken literally, why should the 'war' language be so literal?

The Chronological Problem

The woman of :1 is "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars". These heavenly bodies, as well as the woman, apparently suspended in heaven, cannot be literal. She could not literally be clothed with the sun, or have stars as big as the earth on her literal head.

Another sign appears in heaven in :3 – a red dragon. This is commonly taken as a literal heaven, but why should it be, seeing that the same heaven is referred to in v. 1 and that is clearly figurative? Verse 4 shows the dragon casting a third of the stars of heaven to earth. We have seen that because of the size of the stars and earth, this cannot therefore refer to literal stars or heaven. The Kingdom of God is to be

established on earth (Dan. 2:44; Mt. 5:5), which will not be possible if the earth is destroyed (which it would be) by huge stars falling onto it.

The woman in "heaven" then delivered her child, who was "caught up unto God and to his throne" (v. 5). God's throne is in heaven. If the woman was already in heaven, why would her child have to be "caught up" to heaven? She must have been a symbol of something on earth, although in a figurative "heaven". She then flees "into the wilderness" (v. 6). If she was in literal heaven, this means there is a wilderness in heaven. It is far more fitting for her to be in a figurative heavenly place, and then flee to a literal or figurative wilderness on the earth.

We then come to v. 7 – "there was war in heaven". All other references to "heaven" in Revelation 12 having been figurative, it seems only consistent that this was war in a figurative heaven. This must be the case, as there can be no rebellion or sin in literal heaven (Mt. 6:10; Ps. 5:4–5; Hab. 1:13). The common view claims that wicked angels are locked up in hell; but here they are in heaven. They are not therefore literal angels.

I sometimes ask those who believe in the orthodox idea of the Devil the following question: 'Can you give me a brief Biblical history of the Devil, according to your interpretation of Bible passages? The response is highly contradictory. According to 'orthodox' reasoning, the answer has to be something like this:
a) The Devil was an angel in heaven who was thrown out into the garden of Eden. He was thrown to earth in Gen. 1.

b) He is supposed to have come to earth and married in Gen 6.

c) At the time of Job he is said to have had access to both heaven and earth.

d) By the time of Is. 14 he is thrown out of heaven onto earth.

e) In Zech. 3 he is in heaven again.

f) He is on earth in Mt. 4.

g) He is "cast out" at the time of Jesus' death, according to the popular view of "the prince of this world" being "cast out" at that time.

h) There is a prophecy of the Devil being 'cast out' in Rev. 12.

i) The Devil is "chained" in Rev. 20, but he and his angels were chained in Genesis, according to the common view of Jude 6. If he was bound with 'eternal chains' then, how is he chained up again in Rev. 20?

From this it should be obvious that the popular view that the Devil was cast out of heaven for sinning cannot be true, seeing that he is described as still being in heaven after each occurrence of being 'cast out'. It is vital to understand both heaven and the Devil in a figurative sense.

Revelation 12: Deconstructing Pagan Myths

Various scholars have shown that this passage is full of allusion to contemporary pagan myths (e.g. Neil Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) chapter 13). For example, the Greeks believed that the dragon Python attempts to kill the new born son of Zeus but is stopped the escape of the child's mother, Leto, to the island of Delos; Apollo then comes and slays the dragon. For the Egyptians, Set the red dragon hunts Isis but is then killed by her son Horus. In other myths, the dragon of darkness tries to kill the sun god but is killed by him. There are other examples of the sun god myth being alluded to in Revelation. Take the description of Jesus as having eyes as a flaming fire and feet of pure bronze (Rev. 2:18). This is said to the Thyatira ecclesia – and the god of Thyatira was Apollo, the sun god, known locally as Tyrimnos, who appeared in this very form on the city's

coins. The point of the allusion was that actually, there is no sun god – for the Christians in Thyatira, that means Jesus.

This is in keeping with what we have seen elsewhere in the Scriptures – pagan myths are alluded to in order to deconstruct them. Surely the point of all the allusions here in Revelation 12 is to say: 'Take your attention away from all these myths of what supposedly is going on out in the cosmos. Get real. Here on earth, you are going to be persecuted by Rome [or some other adversary]. Prepare for it in your hearts. The real enemy isn't a dragon in the sky. It's Rome'. Other scholars have demonstrated that Revelation 12 and 13 contain many allusions to contemporary Jewish writings – e.g. Rev. 12:9; 13:14 speak of the beast / Satan "leading astray those that dwell on the earth", quoting from the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Enoch* 54.6 about the armies of Azazel / Satan who "lead astray those that dwell on the earth". The point is that pagan Rome and the Jewish 'Satan' were those who were leading astray, and who would be punished in the cataclysm of AD70; and in a last days context, it is the latter day Satan / beast who will lead astray many and be destroyed by the second coming of Christ.

For 15 years Dr. David Pitt-Francis applied an exceptional mind to trying to get to grips with the book of Revelation (David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester, UK: Mark Saunders Books, 1983)). His conclusion, written up in chapter 9 of his book, was that not only does Revelation 12 not teach the existence of a personal Satan, but it actually is a parody of the whole belief in a sinful Satan figure existing in Heaven. He follows the approach that Revelation 12 alludes heavily to pagan myths of a Satan figure existing in Heaven, and that the whole idea of the chapter is to show that, given the victory of the Lord Jesus over all evil, those pagan ideas are just no longer tenable in any form. The idea of a Satan figure in Heaven has been 'cast down' for the serious believer in Christ: "Satan was imagined to have dominated at least a third of heaven in pre-Christian times. Babylonian, Zend and Teutonic thought assumed 'Satan' or his equivalent to be in possession of about a third of heaven. Jewish apostate thought (as in Enoch) also imagined a third of heaven to be in the possession of rebellious angels. The vision of a dragon occupying a third of heaven, and specifically defined as the 'Devil and Satan' is provided at this stage, not to indicate some literal fact, but to summarise the preconceptions about the Devil which had existed in pagan thought before the coming of Christ, and that had even crept into Judaism... It was primarily the task of Christianity to show the world that evil could have no place in heaven, that it did not occupy a place in heaven except in the imagination of mankind, and that it could be vanquished by the grace of Christ, and the Word of His testimony... The casting forth of Satan from heaven is a powerful symbol of what would happen to the human concept of evil as a result of the teaching of Christ. The woman and the dragon cannot coexist in heaven... Could there have been such a literal 'Devil' or even a 'literal' dragon, who perverted a third of the angels in heaven and cast them to the ground, as Jewish apocalyptic writers had actually believed? If we adopt this literalistic stance, we not only fall into the error of those books against which the Revelation was written but miss the main message of the chapter, that since the advent of Christianity to disprove the concept of imagined evil in heaven, no 'Devil' has ever had any place there". He goes on to suggest that 'Satan' in post–Christian religions [e.g. Islam] has always been envisaged as a being living under the earth, in a supposed "hell", rather than in Heaven. Whether or not we feel happy with this kind of 'spiritualized' interpretation of Revelation, the allusions of Revelation 12 to material in the book of Enoch about Heavenly rebellions, Enoch

being caught up to God etc., cannot be gainsaid. And I suggest that such allusions are indeed, as David Pitt-Francis suggests, in order to deconstruct these wrong ideas.

First century applications

Revelation is a description of events on earth from the perspective of what happens in Heaven – encouraging the early Christians that God and His Son and His Angels are in fact intensely aware of the crises going on, and actually the whole scenario is playing itself out in the court of Heaven. All powers and individuals and organizations on earth have in Heaven their Angelic representatives, and the situations are tried by God before His throne – with the result that it is those on the side of Christ who are vindicated. The language with which John's Apocalypse achieves this is shot through with allusion to earthly realities, often deconstructing the claims of pagans. Rome was the great reality of the first century world; it was appropriate for the Jewish mind of the time to understand the "serpent" / adversary figure as referring to Rome. According to the Jewish Encyclopaedia, "the Serpent is spoken of as *Harasha'*, "the Wicked One," in Gen. R. xx., Bek. 8*a* (compare Targ. Yer. Gen. iii. 13); and Rome as the wicked kingdom, *Malkut ha–resha'ah* (Gen. R. lxxvi.)" (5).

Roman coins depicted the goddess Roma, THEAN ROMEN, as queen of the gods and mother of the world's saviour. John speaks of she who claims to be the queen of the earth (Rev. 18:7) – and portrays her instead as nothing but a prostitute, who is soon to be destroyed. The fact Revelation alludes to the goddess Roma in this way doesn't mean that 'she' actually existed in Heaven in reality. And the way John in Rev. 12 likewise alludes to myths about dragons and beasts doesn't mean they exist either. The material in Rev. 12 has some twists in it which debunk the legends – thus it is not emperor of Rome who slays the dragon, it is the victory of Christ on the cross, through His blood, which is the real means of victory against all opposition on earth. The telling paradox is that the escape for the persecuted child is through *death*, through blood, rather than through some dashing heroic victory in battle. When Jeremiah compared Babylon to a dragon gulping down Jerusalem whole, we don't for a moment think that Babylon was a literal dragon (Jer. 51:34); likewise when Ezekiel calls Pharaoh a dragon lying in a stream (Ez. 29:3). The message was that the real dragon / chaos monster was earthly powers – and God would break them. And so it is with Revelation's message, although more attention is given to the idea of those earthly powers having Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven.

The language of judgment is really common throughout the Bible. In fact we could say that legal language is disproportionately common in the Bible. The idea of a Divine, heavenly court is common. God is the judge who upholds the weak, those who are condemned by human judgment (1 Sam. 24:15; Ps. 9:4; 43:1; 140:12; Lam. 3:58; Mic. 7:9); He is even portrayed as the one appealing for justice (Ps. 74:22). If God is the only and ultimate judge, then *His* judgment is all that ultimately matters, and in this sense human 'sentences' or judgment from the court of human opinion are reversed by Him (Prov. 22:22,23). Yet the pain of being judged by those around us is highly significant to us mortals; and time and again, Scripture is reminding us that we should not pay deep attention to this, because God's judgment is what ultimately matters; and the Divine court is sitting in session right now, at the very same time as those around us are judging us with their meaningless human judgments. This, then, is the ultimate answer to the pain of being slandered and defamed, being misunderstood and misrepresented, or feeling that persecution by worldly powers is not noticed by God.

The traditional reading of Revelation 12 makes out that there was a rebellion in Heaven, the Devil came down to earth, and then trouble started down here. But the whole idea of Revelation's visions of 'heaven' is that we are being given snapshots of the 'throne room' of Heaven, the Divine court... which is a reflection of what is actually going on here on earth, and what will subsequently follow from this in the future. I wish to stress this point, because I think it's fundamental to understanding Revelation. Those visions aren't historical descriptions of what happened before creation, before human history. They are insights into how God right then in the first century viewed what was going on there in the Middle East on planet earth, showing us how He judged the situations and Governments and individuals involved, and what would follow from this. Thus when we read that no place was found for the opposing forces in Heaven (Rev. 12:8), we are to imagine the representative of those forces, the barrister as it were, being thrown out of court. They would simply disappear from the Heavenly court room, thrown out of court as it were, perhaps reflected by the Angel representing them leaving the court. What makes interpreting Revelation so confusing is that there are so many layers of allusion going on in the text at one and the same time. Thus Rev. 12 alludes to the surrounding myths, and yet also on multiple further layers to Old Testament themes. The vision of Rev. 12 clearly has in mind Pharaoh pursuing the escaping Israelites as a dragon pursues (Ex. 14:8), Israel like the early church carried on eagles' wings to some safety (Ex. 19:4), Pharaoh trying to destroy Israel by drowning them in the water of the Nile, God providing for His people in the desert. Again, these allusions are to a real historical situation that happened here on earth – and not to some Biblically unrecorded drama somewhere out in the cosmos.

12:8 *But he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven*- God's side are assured of victory. Literally, the dragon was 'of no power'; for all such power is vested in the Lord Jesus (s.w. 5:12; 7:12). And yet viewed from earthly perspectives, the dragon appears invincible in power (13:4). John is viewing heaven opened, and the geopolitical situation in the land in the very last days being played out before him, with Angelic actors, as it were, representing the various entities on earth. But now the dragon has no more place there; this can also be understood as meaning he had no more power, reading 'heaven' as symbolic of power. We will still read of the dragon; giving power to the beast, and then being chained in chapter 20. Again we see that the visions are not intended to be interpreted in such a way that there emerges a linear chronological progression of events. Rather are we seeing different perspectives and angles on the same ultimate realities. The dragon finally loses power- that is the point.

12:9 *And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him*- The conflict between God and the persecuting coalition of the last days will be the final manifestation of God's battle with sin and evil. He will finally be revealed as triumphant. Perhaps the symbology of a woman is chosen in :1 exactly so as to point up this allusion to the battle between the women and the serpent which began in Gen. 3:15. Eden is now about to be restored. This latter day entity will have deceived the world- perhaps a reference to an influence larger than over the earth / land promised to Abraham. For the coalition of evil will have deceived people worldwide to support their mania against Israel and Christians. It is hard not to see reference here to radical Islam. The same word for 'deceit' is often used in the Olivet prophecy. There would be 'deceit' associated with false prophets (and "the false prophet" is associated with the beast in Revelation- a likely reference

to some incarnation of Mohammed, some jihadist imams claiming to be God's prophets on earth). This will "deceive many", here called "the whole world" (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24), "the nations" (20:3), especially those in the corners of the land promised to Abraham (20:8). The deceit will involve claims that the Christ has come (Mt. 24:5)- perhaps a reference to some jihadist claim about the Mahdi. This deception will be given surface level credibility by false miracles performed by "the false prophet" (13:14; 19:20), which are in fact performed by magic (18:23). The deceitful coalition is cast from heaven to earth; this is figurative for a loss of power, but this entity is now pictures as angry and desperate on the earth / land promised to Abraham.

The Greek word *ballo* translated "cast out" doesn't necessarily mean to throw *down* – Greek has words for this specific idea and it's significant that they're not used here. Here are a few examples of the usage of *ballo*, showing that it really means to expel or re-place:

– A wind "arose" (Acts 27:14); a crowd "threw" dust *up* into the air (Acts 22:23); a sword is "put *up*" into a sheath (Jn. 18:11) imply the word can mean to throw *up* as well as to throw *down*.

– Men "cast" stones (Jn. 8:7,59), "strike" another man on the face (Mk. 14:65), "put" fingers in the ear (Mk. 7:33), people "lay" upon a bed (Mt. 8:6,14; 9:2; Mk. 7:30) – horizontal movement.

– We "put" bits into the mouths of horses (James 3:3) – no vertical movement there. Thomas "thrust" his hand into the Lord's side (Jn. 20:27).

– Believers were "cast" into prison (Acts 16:24,37; Rev. 2:10) – the idea of vertical movement isn't there. Likewise love "casts out" fear (1 Jn. 4:18).

– The dragon casts water out of his mouth (Rev. 12:15,16), horizontally along the ground. Here the word clearly doesn't mean to throw *down* from a height – and the same word is used in that context for the Devil being "cast out", i.e. ejected, from Heaven.

– Men "cast" dust on their own heads (Rev. 18:19).

The serpent is cast out of heaven, implying it was originally there. But the literal serpent in Eden was created by God out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 1:24–25). There is no implication that the Devil came down from heaven and got inside the serpent. The language of "cast down" and "cast out" does not require literal downwards movement – Babylon is "thrown down" in Rev. 18:21. The O.T. basis of "cast out" is in the nations / beasts being cast out from God's presence in the land of Israel. In Rev. 12 we have another woman in the wilderness, who enters the Kingdom [cp. the land] once the beast is cast out. In Dan. 7:9 the thrones of the beast / kingdoms are "cast down" before God's Kingdom is established on earth, just as the beast is cast down before the establishment of the Kingdom in Rev. 12. The idea of being cast out of Heaven was and is common in Semitic languages and even wider culture for a loss of power – thus Cicero comments about Mark Anthony: "You have hurled your colleagues down from heaven".

"That old serpent" (Rev. 12:9) is often misread to mean that the original serpent in the Garden of Eden is now a dragon in the sky. But care in thought and Biblical exposition is lacking in such a view. The orthodox understanding is that Satan sinned in Heaven, and was thrown down to earth, where he tempted Eve in the form of a serpent. But Rev. 12:9 is a prophecy of the *future*, just prior to the return of Christ to earth, saying that *then* there will be a conflict "in heaven" – which we understand to be figurative language. The orthodox interpretation does violence to the obvious chronology, and is evidently an opportunistic grabbing hold of Biblical phrases with

no attention at all to their context, and stringing them together to justify popular Christianity's adoption of Jewish and pagan myths about the Devil. In passing, note how Gen. 3:15 prophesies that God *will* put hostility between the serpent and the woman. This is not what we would expect to hear if this were indeed speaking of a pre-existent Christ and Satan. According to the orthodox understanding, the enmity between them occurred in Heaven *before* Satan supposedly came down to earth. Notice, too, that according to the Biblical record in Gen. 3:15 it is God who created this hostility, whereas the common view implies it was Satan's hatred of God which was the original enmity. We read that the dragon / serpent's "place" was not "found" in Heaven as a result of the final struggle (Rev. 12:8). The same term is to be found in Rev. 20:11, where we read that the 'Heaven and earth' had no place found for them in Heaven as a result of Christ's final sitting in judgment. Clearly, 'Heaven and earth' are figurative – used here, as so often in the Bible, to refer to a system of things. Notice how the Devil / dragon / serpent are thus paralleled with the 'Heaven and earth'. This worldly system of things in the last days, the dragon / serpent power, will be no more after the final judgment seat of Christ. We see all this prefigured in how the rejected Esau came before his father Isaac, typical of the rejection of the wicked at the final judgment, and "found no place", despite his tears and gnashing of teeth (Heb. 12:17). The rejected *people* at the final judgment will "not be able" to enter God's Kingdom then (Lk. 13:24) – and the same Greek word is used in Rev. 12:8 to describe how the serpent / Devil system of people will not "prevail". Clearly the reference of Rev. 12 is to the very last day, when Christ returns to earth in judgment. The serpent 'not prevailing' and 'finding no place' with God in 'Heaven' refers [in the light of the same terms used in other Bible passages] to what happens at the final judgment, at Christ's second coming, and it is therefore *not* descriptive of some past events in Eden. It's also noteworthy that the serpent / Devil is 'cast down' from Heaven to make "woe" for "the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea" (Rev. 12:12). This hardly sounds like the orthodox Satan of *Paradise Lost* being thrown down to earth to make trouble for just Adam and Eve. The people who inhabit "the sea" rather than the earth surely indicates that we are to understand all this literally. And it is "the serpent" who is thrown down from Heaven to the earth / sea. Orthodox thinking holds that Satan was cast down and became a serpent here on earth rather than being a serpent "in Heaven" as Rev. 12 requires. In any case, the woman in Rev. 12 is persecuted by the serpent rather than being charmed and tempted by him; and she escapes from him by fleeing into "the wilderness", which makes the serpent mad with her (Rev. 12:13–17). None of this Biblical testimony fits the orthodox interpretation of the passage – it directly contradicts it.

When we read that the Devil–dragon "deceives" people, this is defined more specifically in Rev. 19:20 as referring to deceiving people in the very last days by false miracles worked in conjunction with the "false prophet". Thus the deceit is not to be understood as a general inciting of humanity to sin in their hearts – the deceit is specified as occurring only in the last days, immediately prior to the Kingdom of God being established.

The "old serpent" may be a reference to the characteristics of the serpent whom we meet in Genesis. The serpent–Eve incident played itself out in history, and still does, in that the children of the woman [God's people] are tempted and now threatened by the powers of sin and sinful organizations. Thus Paul could say that in the same way as the serpent tempted Eve, so Jewish false teachers in the early church were tempting the true bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). So it was again in the persecution of true

Christians by the Roman empire, which Rev. 12 initially refers to; so it was throughout history; and so it will be in the time of the final tribulation before the second coming of Christ. My specific suggestions as to the fulfilment of Rev. 12 in the latter day tribulation can be found in *The Last Days* Chapter 12–7.

The dragon power is associated with "the false prophet" and the doing of fake miracles (Rev. 13:14; 19:20) – this is the basis upon which the dragon / Satan / adversary of God's people "deceives" the world (Rev. 12:9). There are multiple connections between the Lord's Olivet prophecy and the prophecy of the book of Revelation. Almost every commentary on Revelation brings these out, and I have listed many of them in *The Last Days* Chapter 12. The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned His followers not to be "deceived" – using the same Greek word as in Rev. 12:9 about the dragon / Devil 'deceiving' unbelievers. But He warns time and again that the source of this deception will be from "*men*... false prophets... false Christs... false prophets" doing false miracles (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24). Jesus says nothing about some fallen–Angel 'Satan' being behind these men. He simply warns His followers to beware of *human* deceivers – and Rev. 12 fills out the picture by specifically painting these *men* as part of a massive *human* system called Satan, the adversary, who would have all the characteristics of the serpent in Eden, just as the adversaries of God's people always have had. This system of opposition, in the first century context, was both Jewish and Roman – hence the dragon is called both "the Devil and Satan" in Rev. 12:9 – *diabolos* being the Greek term for the Hebrew *Satan*. They are practically interchangeable – but both terms occur here, I suggest, in order to show that the opposition to Christianity was coming from both Jewish and Gentile sources. Time and again the New Testament writers warn the Christians of both Jews and Gentiles, *men* [not demons, spirits, fallen Angels, Satan etc. – but *men*] who "seek to deceive you" (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7; James 1:16). "Be not deceived" is a watchword of Paul (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7). It is the *world* which is deceived by wicked men (1 Tim. 3:13; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:25) – just as Rev. 12:9 says that the dragon / Satan system will deceived "the whole world". That system was thus composed of wicked *men*. In all these passages, the very same Greek word occurs which is translated "deceive" in Rev. 12:9. Again we have to ask – why did Jesus, Paul, Peter, James and John not spell out to their converts that it was really *Satan* who was tempting them and likely to deceive them? Why do they repeatedly stress that it is *men* and the human heart (Heb. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:8) who are the deceivers? Why do we have to wait until the very last book of the Bible to be told that actually, it's Satan who's doing this? How can belief in a personal Satan be so crucial to many churches, when the earliest Christian converts [made before Revelation was given] had been taught nothing about any Angel falling from Heaven and being responsible for temptation? Was there one Gospel for them, but another for the 21st century church?

"The great dragon was... that old serpent" (Rev. 12:9). The dragon had "seven heads and ten horns" (v. 3), therefore it was not literally the serpent. It being called "that old serpent" shows that it had the characteristics of that serpent in Eden, in the sense of being a deceiver, as the serpent was. Thus the Devil is not literally the serpent. If it is, then the dragon is the snake. But the dragon is a political power, manifesting sin 9satan). Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon (Ez. 32:2) but we can't reason that therefore he was a literal dragon. Similarly, "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:56), but that does not mean that death is a literal snake. It has the characteristics of the snake, through its association with sin. How could the Devil have deceived "the whole world" (v. 9) before he was thrown out of heaven seeing that there was no one in the world before Adam?

The Greek *archaios*, translated "old" in Rev. 12:9 and Rev. 20:2, can easily be misread as meaning simply 'the archaic / very old' serpent. But *archaios* is a form of the Greek root *arche* – the dragon power of Rev. 12 is the arch–serpent, the archetypical serpent. It doesn't necessarily mean that the serpent is very old. For the serpent who tempted Eve suffered from the curse which came upon all other "beasts of the field" (Gen. 3:1), and died. We see serpents today eating dust and crawling on their bellies, living and dying like any other creature. The *arche* serpent doesn't therefore mean 'the extremely old serpent, the animal who tempted Eve, is still actually alive'. We meet the word *arche* elsewhere in the context of meaning 'archetype' rather than 'having been in existence from the beginning of Biblical history': "The *principles* (Gk. *arche*) of Christ" (Heb. 6:1); "the first (Gk. *arche*) principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12); and quite commonly *arche* is simply translated as "magistrates", "rulers", "principalities" – the ordering, *arch*–principles and foundations of society (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Tit. 3:1). In line with this understanding, I think we could fairly paraphrase Rev. 12:9 as: "The great dragon, the classic, typical serpent, the thinking and behaviour of Eden's snake played out all over again in classic role, the Gentile / Roman Devil and the Jewish Satan, an evil system adversarial to God's true people".

Austin Farrar coined the term "a rebirth of images" (Austin Farrar, *A Rebirth of Images* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963)) to describe what's going on in Revelation. Old Testament images are taken up and given a new focus; and this is what's happened with the image of the serpent. It's not a reference to *the same* serpent as was in Eden – but a rebirth of that image. G.B. Caird has commented on the very common error of interpretation made with Rev. 12: "Later Christian tradition, by the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, treated this as a precosmic event... quite failing to recognize that John's imagery had an earthly referent" (G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1988) p. 55). What Caird is saying, in dense theological language, is that Christian folk have over literally interpreted the reference to the serpent, assuming that Rev. 12 is talking about something happening before creation, when in fact it is referring to things happening on earth in John's own generation.

12:10 *And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying: Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night*- The great voice is presumably from the Angels representing the faithful. Not that the faithful personally are in Heaven, for there is no conscious survival of death. But their representative Angels are there, who look upon those persecuted by the dragon as their "brothers". The dragon is a veritable *diabolos*, a false accuser. In Jewish thought, one can be accused before God, in the heavenly throne room, without personally being there. Within John's writings we have a classic example in Jn. 5:45, where the same word is again used of how Moses [who was dead] accused the Jews before God. Our own thoughts accuse us to God (Rom. 2:15). The dragon entity had representation before the throne of God, falsely accusing "our brothers". The reference would presumably be to the Jewish Christian remnant, rather than to Jewish people generally. The accusation was in the sense that the Islamists consider Jews and Christians to be especially worthy of Divine condemnation; they justify their extreme judgment against Jews and Christians on the basis that they say God has spoken

harshly against them. The Koran is full of this kind of thing. God is not unmindful of it.

There are copious links between Rev. 12 and Mt. 24. This chapter therefore has reference to the last days as well as AD70, bearing in mind the reference of the Olivet prophecy to these two periods. What proves this beyond doubt is that as soon as the dragon is cast out we are told "*Now* is come salvation... the Kingdom of our God... for the accuser of our brethren is cast down" (12:10). Neither salvation nor the Kingdom of God can fully come without the second coming. If Scripture interprets Scripture, then the dragon being cast out must refer to the events of the second coming. There is rejoicing because the believers were no longer being accused (Greek 'seized upon' or accused in a law court), implying that this will be going on until the dragon/beast is cast out by Michael, the Angel who acts for God's people in the last days (Dan. 12:1). The dragon accusing them before God sounds like Job's satan- as if the supreme intensity of suffering brought upon a materialistic, self-justifying Job to make him fit for God's full fellowship points forward to our tribulation to come. As Job was brought to say that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear (theoretically), but now, through his sufferings, "my eye sees You" (Job 42:5), so the latter day tribulation will develop God's people.

The ‘accusation’ of God’s people “before God” by the serpent / Devil doesn’t mean he has to be literally in Heaven (Rev. 12:10). The same term is found in Jn. 5:45 where the Lord Jesus states that the long–dead Moses ‘accuses’ the Jews to God. Our own thoughts accuse us to God (Rom. 2:15). What all this surely means is that things done on earth, good and bad, even thoughts and feelings, are somehow represented before the throne of God, perhaps by representative Angels there, and God [to continue the figure] ‘judges’ those reported accusations. But this doesn’t require our literal presence in Heaven to do this. The first century mind, especially those from a Jewish background, would likely have picked all this up with no problem; it is the European insistence on literalism in semantics which has led to so many of the problems in interpretation which these verses have given rise to. We have to somehow shed our slowness and hesitancy to accept that figures [e.g. of a judgment court replete with literal books, throne, accusers, witnesses] are just that– figures.

The 'coming' of salvation and the public assumption on earth of the power, authority etc. which the Lord already has in Heaven can only fully speak of the second coming. Any application to any other events are mere shadows and unworthy of much attention compared to the obvious application to the second coming.

12:11 *And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony*- This may imply that their testimony to others is related to their victory against the dragon. The language of overcoming is applied to us all in the letters which opened Revelation. The faithful overcome by the blood of the lamb- by what is done for them- and also by the word of their preaching, as if the act of preaching and witnessing against a hostile persecuting system was what helped maintain their faith. Preaching is a spiritual exercise for the benefit of the preacher. Through their work of witnessing, the persecuted believers overcome their tribulation. Witness is therefore not because God is in need of it, but for the personal spiritual benefit of the witnesses. The testimony made by the "brothers" is that of the two witnesses in 11:7. It is the final witness amidst tribulation that is resolved by the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom. See on Mt. 24:14. It is this fearless Christian witness which provokes the beast of chapter 11 to ascend out of the pit to make war with them; and the dragon likewise goes to make war with the woman

and the remnant at this time in chapter 12. As the two witnesses are killed at the end of their witness, so here it is during their work of witness that "they loved not their lives unto the death".

Militant Judaism appealed to the image of 'martyrdom' at the time of the Maccabees. But the word for 'martyr' is used here of how the Lord Jesus was the faithful witness unto death; to turn a conversation around to Jesus and face social death or ostracism, that is the true witness or 'martyrdom'. Not being a suicide bomber against the Romans. Our witness is our witness (Rev. 6:9; 12:11). It is us personally witnessing in our way and context. But it is the witness of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10), who was the first and ultimate witness / martyr unto death (Rev. 1:5). We are His witnesses, continuing His witness unto death (Rev. 12:17; 17:6; 19:10). Our standing up for Him, our preaching, our witness to Him, is in the Spirit of His witness-unto-death.

Judaism likewise sought to inspire followers with looking for future victory in some great Messianic battle against Rome. This was attractive to the early Jewish Christians who were the initial audience of Revelation, tempted as they were to either assimilate with the world around them, or to turn in upon themselves in internal strife (just as all believers have been tempted to over the centuries). But here we read that the people of God attain victory because of the Lord's victory on the cross, represented by His blood. This victory, therefore, is not something we are fighting for against this world. It has been attained. And we are to believe it and bask it, and seek to share the victory and to likewise not love our lives unto death. We are to "overcome" as the letters to the churches emphasize, to also be victors, in the spirit of His victory. We love, we die, we sacrifice, because He did. He is the model martyr / witness for us. But it's always more attractive, and easier to mentally handle, to be in search for something- rather than rejoicing that we have found it. To believe there is a battle to be fought and a victory to be won by us personally- when in fact it has already beeen fought and won, by the One far better than us. This is a feature of human nature we must beware of. To be ever learning and seeking, but unable to come to acknowledge the Truth when we find it.

The focus is taken off immediate military conflict with Rome, onto man's spiritual need. And the Lord Jesus has won that ultimate victory, which ensures that ultimately, the Gentile world shall be subsumed beneath the Kingdom of God. But that is a future outcome. All human political device to bring it about now is at best misplaced. That is the lesson of Revelation 12. God's peope will indeed "overcome"; and this clearly alludes to the promises to 'him who overcomes' which concludes each of the opening letters to the churches in Rev. 2 and 3. But the battles in those churches were not literal military conflicts. The battles were against the flesh, against loss of love and faith, distraction by secular life, slipping away to pagan or Jewish religion and thus away from Jesus. The real essential conflict is within. And those who are now paraded as 'overcomers' or 'victors' in Rev. 12:15 only overcome because of the Lord's blood- not their military prowess. Our conviction of these things means that we too shall not seek to bring about our own version of God's Kingdom in our own strength- nor by secular politics. His blood makes us overcomers, not our strength. The dragon is red, associated later with the whore who is drunk with the red blood of the saints. The Lord's blood is also red. It is red against red; remember how visual is the entire apocalyptic genre. And the Lord's 'red' wins. But only for those who are willing to see that the red dragon is not at all invincible as it seems, but is in fact a born loser in its death throes. This is a radically 'other' perception of the world, which of itself makes us mentally separate from the world itself. Most people are dominated

by the culture in which they live; the images and values of the system dominate them. Materialism, or whatever philosophy and worldview is prevalent, appears invincible. Whether or not it is billed as such, our current world system has a dominant, totalitarian ideology, based around the flesh, pride, lust, sex, power, wealth and hedonism. We are asked to adopt Heaven's persepctive, to see another world, and live within it so far as we can. The Christian preacher may consider that this worldview of unbelievers is impenetrable. But the message of Revelation is that there are some who will see through it, adopting the images, culture and values of God's invisible empire and chosen King, the Lord Jesus. And those new, ultimately true images are given to us in these Revelation visions.

The whole message is that Christian involvement in secular politics is not going to bring about the Kingdom of God. The struggle has already been fought and won by the Lord on the cross. It is for us to focus upon that, win the battles within our own minds against our own flesh- and patiently wait for the visible articulation of that victory in His return to earth.

The cult of Emperor presented Caesar as the one who brought peace to the empire ['the Kingdom'] by slaying the wild dragons of non-Roman empires. But everything is reveresed. It is the Lord Jesus and His people who win victory over the beasts / dragon- who in fact represent Rome.

And they did not love their life even to death- This is very much the language of martyrdom, which the Jewish Christians of the first century were hearing from their Jewish relatives and families. But martyrs are usually just a few distinguished, spotlighted individuals on the side of the revolutionaries. But this language of martyrdom and radical resistance-unto-death is applied to the entire community of those on the Lamb's side. It could be that one possible fulfilment of Revelation could have been in the total matyrdom of the entire Christian community at the hands of Rome; and perhaps one future possibility is likewise the genocide of the entire body of Christ until He comes to save the last surviving remnant of them. Or it could be that all Christians are to be characterized by the spirit of radical martyrdom. The final difference is simply between those who overcome / conquer / are victors- and those who are rejected. All the Lord's people are heroic martyrs and victors: "He that overcomes shall inherit all things... But the fearful, and unbelieving..." (Rev. 21:7,8). The call to be the Lord's man or woman is without doubt a call to a brave life. Not the religion of mum and dad, nor to blend in with a mere culture of Sunday churchianity. All the "great multitude" of believers "are they which came out of great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14), they all fought for freedom, and now share the sweet joy of eternal victory and glory. We are all to be witnesses / martyrs unto death. Our witness, our preaching, our standing up and living for the principles of the Lord "the faithful and true witness", this is our resistance. This is our death. Be it social death, actual death or the giving up of life slowly, bit by bit- this is our martyrdom. It is part of being a Christian to have sworn loyalty unto death, to die with Jesus as we did in baptism- and to give our lives for Him. Whether in actual violent death, or [as is more common] in a life no longer lived unto ourselves but for Him and the cause of His Kingdom. This is the radical nature of our call. Man is at best a rebel without a cause, or at least, a very good cause which stands the test of time. We are rebels for the ultimate cause, with a leader who will never disappoint nor be revealed as having feet of clay. The call of non-conformity is attractive to men, especially in youth, but the power of human conservatism and the power of conformity within society is too great and the call to non conform is soon overcome. And man slides quickly back into the mire of mediocrity. This is where the radical Christian message ought to be

particularly attractive to youth. Idealism, the image of being David against Goliath, of the outsider winning, the no-hoper, written off as a loser, coming to ultimate vicory, the call to rebel... these things are very much the stuff of the Christian call, and they are repeatdly talked up here in Revelation. It is a far higher call than merely dying your hair an outlandish colour or cussing authority figures behind their backs. And chatting for a few minutes over coffee about idealism and a new world order- and then changing the topic.

12:12 *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea! Because the Devil has gone down to you, having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time*- Those John was observing in "Heaven" could refer to the Angels. But we have just read of some of the latter day faithful being observed being snatched up to "heaven" (11:12; 12:5). Perhaps it is specifically they who are referred to. But this defeat by Divine force, just as Pharaoh experienced, provoked a final burst of wrath by the dragon entity. The earth would refer to the land promised to Abraham; and the sea perhaps to the neighbouring territories.

"Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44) is a commentary on Sennacherib's rage (2 Kings 19:27,28). Rabshakeh boasted immediately after the receipt of the "rumour" that Assyria would 'utterly destroy' Israel still (2 Kings 19:11). This is matched by "to *destroy*, and *utterly* to make away" in Dan. 11:44. The fury of Assyria against Jerusalem because of their recognition that they only had limited time to destroy it before having to turn their attention against the Arab rebels is the basis of the Jihadist beast of the last days going forth against God's people with "having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time" (:12,17). In the same way as "the king of Babylon heard the report" of the Medes' invasion and was troubled (Jer. 50:43), so the latter-day "king of the north", while personally present conducting the campaign against Jerusalem, will be troubled by "tidings" of this massive Muslim mutiny against him, and will therefore go ahead in a furious rage to try to exterminate every Jew left in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44,45). Jer. 51:31,32 stresses how the report of the attack on Babylon will spread like wildfire. This relates to the beast launching a final burst of persecution against God's people, "having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time".

If the Devil was cast down in Eden, he has had the opportunity to torment man throughout his long history – which is hardly having only “a short time” in which to wreak havoc.

The idea is that in 'heaven', from God's perspective, the Lord's death has overcome the dragon. But on earth, he is fighting, and apparently winning against God's people. But he has been beaten, slain on the cross. He is a loser from the start, and his persecution of God's people is the mad flailing of the dragon in his death throes. That of course isn't how it seems. But from God's perspective, he is beaten- and this is the whole point of these visions flipping between heaven and earth, showing us the perspective of heaven on things happening on earth. We suffer and we die, the forces of this world appear far stronger. But the perspective given by the cross is that evil and sin in all its forms has been overcome and vanquished. The believers are the armies who follow the lamb (Rev. 14:1-5) and overcome the apparently far superior dragon and his followers. The believers are faithful unto death, as their Lord was; the apparent victory of the beast against them is in fact their victory over the beast. Just as they overcome the beast by the blood / death of the lamb. The paradox is that the apparent victory of the beast over them- turns out to be their victory over the

beast. As with the Lord, death becomes the symbol of victory rather than defeat, just as losing all things now is in fact eternal gain. It is only to those who dwell on earth that the beast appears omnipotent (Rev. 13:8). But Revelation gives us the perspective from Heaven. This radical re-interpretation of death and apparent loss is one of the most powerful outcomes of the cross. It has obvious comfort to believers as they face and negotiate the reality of their own death and the decline of faculty which usually precedes it. And this is the truth, the ultimately true perspective. Whereas the beast systems are repeatedly described as deceiving others (Rev. 12:9; 13:14; 18:23), compared to the followers of the Lamb who are [like their Lord] "without deceit" (Rev. 3:14; 14:5). The Jewish Christians were being called to martyrdom in the struggle against Rome. But the message is that the real martyrdom is death at the hands of the likes of Rome, death after the pattern of the Lord's death at the hands of the Romans and Jews.

Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10). But this is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon".

12:13 *And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that had brought forth the man child*- The allusion is to how Pharaoh recognized he had been beaten by Divine power; and hastily sought to hunt the Israelites to death. That motif is continued by the way in which the destruction of Israel's latter day invaders is celebrated with the "Song of Moses" sung after the Red Sea deliverance (15:3). There are references to Israel and Egypt; the woman flees away from the dragon (cp. Egypt) into a wilderness, but is pursued by the dragon (12:13), who tries to use water as a means of destroying her (12:15; cp. the Red Sea), but by a miracle Israel are preserved from it. The woman is carried on eagle's wings, as Israel were out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4). The woman is "nourished" during the three and a half years, as Israel were fed with manna in the wilderness. Jesus reasons in John 6 that the manna represents the word of God. It may follow that the nourishing of the seed of the woman in the wilderness of her latter day tribulation will be through some special spiritual feeding programme designed by God. It may well be through an increased level of understanding of the Apocalypse and other prophecies of the tribulations which we will then be experiencing.

The wrath of the dragon is because the woman "had brought forth the man child". I suggested above that this refers to the successful preaching of the Gospel to the extent that some Jews repent, forming the repentant remnant which is miraculously preserved from the dragon. It is quite imaginable that exactly because of this, the dragon will so hate the woman, the true Christian church. "Persecute" is the same word used in the Olivet prophecy, of how the true disciples will be persecuted in Israel both in AD70 and especially in the last days (Lk. 21:12).

12:14 *And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times*

and half a time from the presence of the serpent- "The great eagle" is a symbol for both Babylon / Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 7:4; Ez. 17:3,12) and Pharaoh king of Egypt (Ez. 17:7,17). It could be that in some way, some element of the persecuting coalition assists her; this would then be parallel with the earth / land helping the woman by swallowing up the flood spewed by the dragon. This repeating of the same idea through two different images is typical of what I mean by saying that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images, ever rotating, reinforcing general impressions and themes, and yet with each image still unique. In the same way we read in :6 that the woman flees; here in :14 that idea is repeated, but with the detail that she flees by flying. Or it could be that we should read without the article, "two wings of an eagle", as if part of the cherubim vision of 7:4 [the "eagle" aspect of it] assists the woman to safety. Note the connection of Angel and eagle at 8:13. And the allusion would then be to how God brought His people to safety from Egypt "on eagle's wings" (Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11).

The woman is in the wilderness, in the presence of the serpent / dragon; for the dragon spits water at her (:15), and in 17:3,8 the beast arises from the wilderness with the blood of the saints. So whilst the woman as a whole is preserved, miraculously, some believers will die as a result of the dragon's mania against them there. The description of a conflict between a serpent and a woman and her seed in 12:14-16 must refer back to Gen. 3:15- from which we can conclude that there will be a short term victory for the devil/ dragon over the seed of the woman in the last days.

The nourishing or feeding for three and a half years recalls Elijah being miraculously fed for his three-and-a-half-year ministry, with ravens bringing him meat at one stage. The woman is part of the three and a half year Elijah ministry of the last days, witnessing to Israel under persecution.

12:15 *The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood*- Pharaoh has been alluded to in previous verses; here perhaps is in view his plan to trap Israel and hurl them into the waters of the Red Sea. It was God who provided a stream of water in the desert; yet here the serpent does the same. Likewise it was God who destroyed the earth by a flood; and here the serpent attempts to do just the same. This is the principle of anti-Christ, appearing as the Father or Son when in fact they were bitterly opposed to them and imitating them.

The other allusion is to the Assyrian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem being likened to a river gushing toward God's people (Is. 8:7). This is typical of the latter day Assyrian dominating the earth / land. But just as the Assyrian was unsuccessful in taking Jerusalem, so the latter day river will be swallowed up [the Greek for river and "flood" here is the same].

12:16 *And the earth helped the woman; the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth*- "The earth helped the woman" might refer to some of the Islamists indirectly 'helping' the woman by turning against Babylon. See on Rev. 17:16. I suggested on :14 that the woman escapes through the wings of an eagle, and this may parallel this thought- if we understand the eagle as the symbol of the abusers. Somehow something within their own system enabled her to survive. The earth opening has been encountered in 9:2, where the bottomless pit is opened. Perhaps it is this very source of the locusts which absorbs the flood of judgment the dragon spits out against the woman. The language suggests that the dragon plays God in bringing a flood upon the woman. The Islamists justify their judgment of Jews and Christians by arguing they have Divine, even Biblical, warrant for doing so. But they are stopped in this, in that the flood is swallowed by the opening earth- itself a sign of condemnation. This is language very

similar to how the Koran describes the abating of the flood in Noah's time: "And it was said: O earth! Swallow thy water and, O sky! be cleared of clouds! And the water was made to subside" (Sura 11.44). They themselves will realize that their pogrom of destruction against "the woman" is being stopped by God.

12:17 *And the dragon grew angry with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus*- Revelation 12 begins with the dragon trying to kill the man child born of the woman, and now at the end of the vision he seeks to kill the rest of her children. I earlier interpreted the man child as the Jewish Christian converts who repent and who are miraculously taken away from persecution. "The rest of her seed" would refer to another group of her spiritual children. They hold the testimony of Jesus in that they too witness to their new faith, in the face of the most awful opposition and persecution. He persecutes "the remnant" of the seed of the woman, just as the fourth beast of Dan. 7:7,19 downtreads "the remnant".

We need to note the parallels between Revelation 12 and 20. There we meet again "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and satan" (12:9 = 20:2). The repetition of this exact phrase indicates we are being given another angle on events here in chapter 12. At the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom, the figurative "thousand years" (see notes on chapter 20), this entity persecutes the faithful; and then once the Kingdom has been established [not at the end of some 1000 year Millennial reign], he is released from his prison and makes a futile attack upon the "camp of the saints" before being finally destroyed by fire (20:9). This event is therefore spoken of here in chapter 12 as 'making war' with 'the rest of the woman's seed'. This is the final stage of the ancient conflict envisaged in Gen. 3:15 between the seed of the woman and the serpent.

Rev. 12 indicates that the dragon is unsuccessful in totally destroying the woman, and therefore turns in a brief period of fury "to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (12:17). Here we have the same idea as in 11:7; three and a half years of witnessing amidst persecution, followed by a brief, intense period of horror, as Christ's three and a half year ministry was terminated by three and a half days of especial suffering. Notice that the dragon goes into the wilderness to persecute the woman's seed; 17:3,8 describes a beast from the wilderness, full of the blood of the saints. Thus the beast of Rev. 17 is also to be read in a latter day context.

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

13:1 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea*- A position associated with the seed of Abraham in their land. This is the perspective from which we must view the beasts. The sea shore is on the earth / land promised to Abraham. John is viewing things from the very edge of that territory.

Another approach is to consider that this sea beast refers to an entity of nations from immediately outside the land promised to Abraham, who are distinct from the nations within the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham. The nations of Ez. 38 who invade Israel after the Lord Jesus has returned are not those within the *eretz* / land / earth. They are those in the "sea" of nations immediately surrounding the "land" promised to Abraham. The geographical areas include therefore Iran, Egypt and Turkey. Thus when we read that Togarmah comes from "the north border [AV

“quarters”]” (Ez. 38:6), this refers to the northern limit of the land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. Perhaps this is the equivalent of the "beast of the sea" of Rev. 13 which is presented as related to but separate from the "beast of the earth / land". We can look to these areas joining together under one charismatic leader, "Gog", to seek to repeat the invasion of the land and people of Israel by the latter day Assyria / Babylon. This is why although Assyria isn't mentioned, the invasion of Ez. 38 is full of allusion to the prophetic language concerning the Assyrian invasion [hooks in the jaws, etc.]. It will be a foolhardy repeat of the behaviour of the entity within the "land" / *eretz* which was destroyed by the Lord's coming. The invasion of Ez. 38 is clearly that of the "Gog' of Revelation, which occurs after the Lord's return and establishment in Jerusalem, when the people dwell securely in unwalled villages- the language of the Kingdom. There is repeated emphasis that Elam [Persia] uses a bow and quiver (Is. 22:6; Jer. 49:35); perhaps a reference to Iranian usage of missiles against Israel. protected by a defensive shield and helmet (Ez. 38:5). Iran has developed missile technology to the point that they are a major exporter of military missiles; Iran has invested and developed missile technology [both offensive and offensive missiles] rather than an air force. This may be the latter day equivalent of the bows and quivers which feature in the prophecies about Persia. The chronological issues of the earth beast apparently coming after the sea beast need not unduly concern us. For Revelation is apocalyptic, a kaleidoscope of images, rather than a chronological prediction of events.

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea- If the earth is the land promised to Abraham, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt, then this beast arises from the sea of nations and peoples immediately surrounding it. Iran comes to mind, as does Egypt and Libya, all home to jihadist Islamists with a sworn hatred of Israel. Turkey is also in view, and we can expect her to become more deeply anti-Israel.

There is a clear parallel between the four winds which strove with each other upon the sea, and the four beasts who came up out of the sea. The impression is that these beasts all exist at the same time, and their conflict with each other leads to the final appearance of a beast which represents all of them; and this entity dominates the earth / land promised to Abraham, and God’s people upon it. The appearance of this entity will therefore be brought about by massive conflict within the land promised to Abraham- and this is what we are seeing before our eyes. The only uniting issue between the powers in that area is a common hatred of Israel and desire to take Jerusalem. This will be the basis of the final beast arising. We can perhaps look to the development of four distinct power groups within the land promised to Abraham, giving rise to ten ‘kings’ or leaders, the horns of the beast, the ten toes of the image. The period of conflict between those groups could be very brief. We need not, therefore, think that the Lord’s coming isn’t near because we can’t currently identify those four entities or ten leaders. What we are seeing before our eyes is the winds blowing on the sea, striving between the peoples of the land / earth promised to Abraham, leaving millions dead and the entire region in bitter division. And this, according to Daniel 7, will give rise to the emergence of the final entity of abuse, perhaps on the pattern of the entity known as the Islamic State.

We should therefore be looking for a group of four kings / kingdoms, out of which arise ten kings / kingdoms; and out of them arises one “little horn” in particular. Revelation’s take on the beasts adds more detail- there are also seven heads, a false prophet acting as publicity agent for the beast, a whore riding the beast, sitting on seven hills / kings. The four beasts / kings are initially in conflict, striving with each other upon the sea, and arising from that comes the fourth beast entity, the

composite beast including elements of all the previous ones. And from that there arises the ten horns and one little horn. We should not, however, think of these situations as having to be chronological developments, i.e. first the four, then the fourth beast, then the ten horns, then the little horn. It may work out like that, but not necessarily. The precise details need not concern us ahead of time; the picture is of a series of leaders and powers involved in the domination of the land promised to Abraham. The fact is, the beasts will all exist together in the last days, just as the metals of the image will. These various entities will "arise" from the land. And this is what we see happening already- in the last few years there has been what is called the Arabic, and particularly Sunni, *sahwa*, 'awakening'. Powers and kings have risen up out of the scrubland and desert of the *eretz*, united in their hatred of Israel, but bitterly divided against each other.

We are for sure in the stage of the winds / *ruach* / Angel controlled nations 'striving' with each other- the *eretz* is full of conflict as never before, not just between Israel and her neighbours, but between those neighbours. There are currently four non-Jewish nations within the *eretz*- Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. But they exist just on paper as lines on the map; there are other significant entities within the area, e.g. Kurdistan, the Islamic State, Gaza, parts of Egypt and Turkey [depending how one defines the northern border of Israel], parts of Saudi Arabia [depending how the eastern border is defined]. In total they make ten kingdoms, but the number ten may not be literal. We would then be awaiting for the "little horn" to arise- a charismatic, antiChrist leader, or perhaps another very small entity. For the horn is called the *little* horn, and yet it is the most powerful in the very last days. However, the Hebrew and Aramaic words translated "little" can mean 'short' in terms of time as well as size. The idea may be that it lasts a very short time indeed, maybe literally days or hours in the very last day, and is the human representative of the beast / horns who personally challenges the Lord Jesus and is destroyed by the brightness of His coming.

The empires of Daniel 2 dominate the earth. The Hebrew *eretz* can refer either to the entire planet, or to the land- the land promised to Abraham, the land of Israel, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The dominion of the four beasts is therefore over the same area. Daniel saw the beasts arising out of the great sea. This could be a reference to the laver, which is also called a 'sea' (1 Kings 7:23-26,39). This was a huge circular bowl for washing which was set upon 12 bronze oxen, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. They were arranged in four groups of three, facing north, south, east and west, in imitation of the camp of Israel in the wilderness. The beasts therefore arise out of the territory promised to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Rev. 17:15 interprets waters or seas as "peoples". The beasts therefore arise out of the peoples who are to be found in the land of the 12 tribes of Israel. The interpretation is confirmed by the words of the Angel in Dan. 7:17, who says that the four beasts who arise out of the sea are four king[dom]s which "shall arise out of the earth / land".

Another possibility regarding the "great sea" is that it refers to the area of Babylon's dominion. The vision of Daniel 7 clearly parallels that of Daniel 2, which was intended to explain what would happen after the Babylonians. The arena of the "great sea" was to be dominated by other kingdoms apart from Babylon. In confirmation of this, we find the word *rab* ["great"] used about the greatness of Babylon ("great Babylon", Dan. 4:30; Joel 2:2,11). But *rab* is also translated "master" (Dan. 1:3), "lord", "captain", "chief" (Dan. 2:10,14,48), "master" (Dan. 4:19; 5:11). We could understand the "great sea" as the sea of nations ruled over by the master, the lord of the sea, the king of Babylon- and Daniel is seeing this vision in the first year

of Belshazzar king of Babylon (Dan. 7:1). As in the Daniel 2 vision, Daniel is explaining that the leadership of Babylon will not last, other kingdoms will arise to also dominate the sea of nations which was then under Babylon's sole control. This again pushes us towards understanding the entire vision as specifically concerning the area over which Babylon had dominion, and not the whole planet.

Having ten horns and seven heads; and on his horns ten diadems- The beasts of Revelation are built upon the beasts of Daniel. In the latter day application, the various beasts are perhaps pictures of various aspects of the final beast. The beast of Rev. 13:2 was "like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion". Here we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated into this latter day beast. It is the equivalent of the image standing complete in the last days. It has "seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion. The [singular] beast of Rev. 13:1 arose out of the sea, but the beasts of Daniel 7 all also arise out of the sea; it's as if all those beasts are epitomized in the one beast, just as the image of Daniel 2 stands complete at the time of Christ's return, incorporating all the metals / empires of history. All this is explained further in commentary on Daniel 2, Daniel 8 and Daniel 9.

The metals of the image of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7 all have dominion over "the earth", and this has reference is to the earth / land of Israel. This, I suggest, continues to be the focus in the visions of Revelation. When we read of various judgments being poured out upon the "earth", we are reading about the situation in the land promised to Abraham. The references to 'thirds' of the earth / land being judged is clearly alluding to the Old Testament prophetic descriptions of 'thirds' of Israel or the population of Jerusalem being judged, especially in Ezekiel and Zechariah. Indeed Rev. 1:7 opens the prophecy by making the connection between Israel and the "earth": "Those who pierced [crucified] Him and all the tribes of the earth [land] shall wail because of Him". This is quoting from Zechariah's prophecy of how all the tribes *of Israel* will weep in repentance because of their crucifixion of their Messiah.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 are replaced in Revelation by one composite beast, although it is presented from different aspects. This, I suggest, is because the beast of Revelation specifically is the latter day beast, which incorporates all the previous beasts.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the first self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State, said that Muslims should unite to capture Rome in order to "own the world". The significance of this is that the ten horn entity, the latter day radical Islamist entity, is seeking to incorporate an element of the previous metals / beast systems, i.e. Rome. This is what we would expect if the image is to stand erect in the last days. Source: McElory, Damien. "Rome will be conquered next, says leader of 'Islamic State'". *The Telegraph*. Retrieved 3 July 2014.

The beasts of Daniel represented empires, but this beastly empire in Revelation is a composite Leopard-Bear-Lion (13:2). It isn't just one of Daniel's three empires. It's all three empires rolled into one. In other words, this new empire is composed of the descendants of those earlier empires, in the same geographic location. Looking back at the history of the Middle East, we can now identify this new empire as the various powers that have controlled the Holy Land whilst the Jews were established within it.

It's surely significant that Daniel 7 is comprised of seven visions- each introduced by the statement that Daniel 'beheld'. This matches with the series of seven visions we find in Revelation. I would say that Revelation is therefore a development and expansion of the ideas presented in Daniel; the basic picture presented in Daniel will come true, but the outworking of it is developed somewhat in Revelation.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 clearly are to be connected with the four separate beasts which we encounter in the book of Revelation- the dragon of chapters 12 and 20, the sea beast of 13:1, the earth beast of 13:11 and the beast ridden by the whore in chapter 17. Note how the four 'evil' beasts of Revelation are a conscious contrast with "the four living creatures" of God's heavenly throne room (Rev. 19:4 cp. Ez. 1:5,15). Perhaps the contrast is also to demonstrate how as in Daniel, the nations on earth have their representative, controlling Angels in the court of Heaven.

Each of the beasts has some similarities with the other beasts. Three of them 'arise'; they all have horns; three of them have the same number of horns and heads; they all persecute God's people, etc. They all exist at the same time- they do not arise in chronological sequence. They are a different take on the four beasts of Daniel 7, but they have only outline similarities. The sequence of beasts / empires in Daniel 7 was a potential prophetic program, which never came to complete fulfilment. But the essence of the prophecy is repeated in Revelation, and will come true in the last days. It could be that we should not unduly sweat to understand the precise details of the beasts in Daniel 7, because this was part of a prophetic program which did not come about- I have written elsewhere about Conditional prophecy in Daniel. But the essence of the prophecy will come true in the last days, and we find it fleshed out in Revelation.

We read of "the beast" without any specification as to which beast is in view (Rev. 19:19,20; 20:4,10). This is surely because the various beasts are only manifestations of the one beast, just as the four beasts of Daniel 7 are comprehended in the fourth beast. The beasts are in a sense separate- thus the beast is put into the lake of fire before the dragon is (Rev. 20:10). But in another sense, these entities are all expressing the same reality and principles. Different aspects of the dominating entity may be destroyed at different times in different ways- hence the usage of the imagery of more than one beast.

As noted on 12:3, "seven heads and ten horns" refers to how groups of seven and ten nations and kings surrounding Israel are associated with previous dominations of Israel (7= Dt. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; Acts 13:19; 10 = Gen. 15:18; Ps. 83; the ten surrounding nations starting with Egypt and ending with Babylon of Jer. 46-50; the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2, the ten horns of the beast of Daniel 7; the ten invading nations of Ez. 38 headed by Gog). suggestion is that the seven heads and ten horns on the dragon and beast refer to a quick succession or co-existence of various peoples, leaders or entities originating from or around the land promised to Abraham, which will persecute God's people in the last days. They will all form part of the coalition of evil known as the beast or dragon, and radical Islam will be their religion.

The ten horns represent ten kings- the reference may be to individual leaders rather than to nations (Dan. 7:24). They arise out of the head of the beast, maybe implying they share the same overall ideology or thinking. That ideology would be that of hatred of Israel and a common desire to destroy her- which rather suggests Islam. That is the only appropriate ideology within the earth / land promised to Abraham which could be the candidate for the fulfilment of this prophetic requirement.

The One Beast

	Daniel 7	2 Thess. 2	Rev. 13	Rev. 17	Rev. 19
Called:	The beast		The beast	The beast	The beast
Also called:	The little horn*	The man of sin		The eighth head	
			Comes out of the sea	Comes out of the deep (i.e. the sea)	
	Associated with 10 horns		10 horns	10 horns	10 horns
	Emerges at end of Gentile times	End of Gentile times	End of Gentile times	End of Gentile times	End of Gentile times
			Amazing recovery	Amazing emergence	
	A mouth speaking great things against the Most High	God-defying	Opens mouth in blasphemy against God	Full of names of blasphemy	
		Deceitful signs and lying wonders	Deceitful signs and lying wonders t		Deceives them that had received the mark of the beast t

.			Given publicity by the beast out the earth		Given publicity by the false prophet (i.e. the beast of the earth)
.		All deceived who do not believe the truth	All that dwell upon the earth worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life	They that dwell on the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life, wonder at the revival of the beast	
0	Persecutes and overcomes saints	Intolerant of all religions	Persecutes and overcomes the saints	Persecutes the saints Destroys the whore	
1	Duration of 3.5 years		Duration of 3.5 years		
2		The son of perdition		Goes to perdition	
3	Destroyed by Christ	Destroyed by Christ		Destroyed by Christ	Destroyed by Christ

Note that the little horn is treated as the beast (Dan. 7:11).

And upon his heads were names of blasphemy- The beast of 17:4 was "full of blasphemous names". Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors' arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world,

inscribed on public buildings and monuments. The blasphemy of the last days will be in that the jihadists consider that they have Divine, even Biblical warrant to execute His judgments upon Israel and the true Christian church.

As noted many times, we are not to look for a chronological fulfilment in terms of a sequence of events. These are all kaleidoscope images of the persecution to be unleashed upon the earth / land. They merge and morph with each other, and yet re-emerge as separate entities. The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with each head crowned; the beast from the sea has likewise seven heads and ten horns, but now it is the horns which are crowned; on the heads of the beast there are "names of blasphemy" (13:1). Their prototype in Daniel 7:20 has ten horns upon only one head.

The names of the Roman emperors were to be greatly revered. The cult of emperor worship grew very strongly in the 1st century. Yet Rev. 13:2 describes the names of the leaders of the beast, which on one level represented the Roman empire in the 1st century, as "*blasphemous names".* To assign divine titles to the emperor was, to the Jewish and Christian mind, a blasphemy (Dt. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4). This would have made the Apocalypse an outlawed document in the first century. Consider too the clear references to the evil of the emperor worship cult later in Rev. 13: *one of its heads. . .*is set up as the very opposite of the true Christ.

13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority*- As noted on :1, the beast is the composite of all the beasts of Daniel 7. The dragon of chapter 12 is also the same ideology which speaks from the mouth of the earth beast in :11. The dragon may be damaged or apparently destroyed in political terms by the Lord's direct judgment, perhaps at the hands of Israeli or Western militia. But the jihadist philosophy re-emerges in another incarnation, just as has been witnessed so often in the war against various Islamic terrorist organizations.

The beast of Revelation 13 has elements of all the other beasts. And so does the fourth beast of Daniel 7. It had iron teeth and brass nails (Dan. 7:19), alluding to the brass of the third kingdom and the iron of the fourth kingdom. It had "eyes of a man" and a human eye on its horn, (Dan. 7:8,20), just as the first beast, the lion, had a human heart and stood up like a man (Dan. 7:4). The bear, the second beast, had three ribs in its mouth, representing its conquest of three other powers; the fourth beast features a little horn which conquers three other horns (Dan. 7:8). The bear also 'devoured much flesh' (Dan. 7:5); the fourth beast 'devours' the land (Dan. 7:7). The third beast, the leopard, had four heads (Dan. 7:6), rather like the fourth beast also has ten horns; and Revelation 13 explains that these are later located on seven heads. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 is therefore a composite beast; the other beasts merge into an entity which includes all of them, even though they still exist separately- for in the final Divine judgment, the fourth beast entity is destroyed, but the beasts have their dominion taken away although their lives are "prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7:12). This may mean that the final entity is destroyed, but the individual components of it continue to exist "for a season and time". The only other reference in Daniel to a period being "prolonged" is when the same word is used in Dan. 4:27 regarding the possibility of the king of the kingdom prolonging his life by repentance; it could be that the delay or prolonging is in order they repent. This may also explain why the first beast, representing Babylon, is pictured as having a man's heart being given to it after its wings [power] are cropped. The historical king of Babylon had a beast's heart

(Dan. 4:16), but his understanding [a human heart] returned to him on his repentance (Dan. 4:34). So this feature of the first beast may be a hit at a repentance after the pattern of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4.

It's apparent that the four beasts of Daniel and of Revelation (dragon, sea beast, earth beast, scarlet beast) are full of allusion to the cherubim vision seen by Ezekiel- also whilst in captivity in Babylon, just as Daniel was. The cherubim were likewise four separate living creatures [beasts] which somehow were also one. The four beasts of Daniel 7 become comprehended in the fourth beast and in the one composite beast of Revelation 13, which includes all elements of the previous beasts within it. Note that the Hebrew / Aramaic for "beast" means literally a living one- the living creature of the cherubim vision. The cherubim featured the faces of lion, ox, man and eagle (Ez. 1:10), and lion, ox and eagle feature in the descriptions of the four beasts; the 'man' element is found in that the lion has the heart of a man, and the little horn of the fourth beast has the eyes of a man. The first living creature has wings which are lifted up from the earth (Dan. 7:4)- which is precisely the language of the cherubim wings being lifted up from the earth in Ez. 1:19,21; 10:16,19. As the first beast is made to stand on its feet (Dan. 7:4), so the cherubim caused Ezekiel to stand on his feet (Ez. 2:2; 3:24). The second creature had a "side" which was "lifted up" (Dan. 7:5), as the cherubim likewise had 'sides' which were 'lifted up' (Ez. 1:8,20). The third beast had four wings as each of the living creatures / cherubim did (Dan. 7:6; Ez. 1:23). The first and fourth beasts / living creatures have feet (Dan. 7:4,7) as the cherubim do (Ez. 1:7). The description of how these living creatures / beasts will be judged by the Lord Jesus includes language also used in Ezekiel's cherubim visions- One seated upon a throne, wheels of burning fire (Dan. 7:9).

Ezekiel's vision was surely well known to Daniel and John. The connection is surely that throughout the course of human history, especially the course of Gentile domination of the land of Israel, the glory of God shone through it all, it was all going according to His purpose; and the various beasts were in fact manipulated by the living creatures of the Angel cherubim. Daniel 7 says this in different terms by opening with the statement that the four spirits / Angels of Heaven were responsible for the uprising of the four beasts (Dan. 7:2,3). Events were not just taking their course, with everything spinning out of control; but rather, God through the Angels was powerfully in control. And His glory shone through the apparent cruelty, shame and randomness of the events that appeared to be happening to His land and people.

13:3 *And I saw one of his heads as though it had a mortal wound; but its mortal wound was healed*- This significant head is to be associated with the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8. See further commentary here and here.

The little horn represents the beast; the persecution of the saints by the horn is therefore also by the beast:

The Little Horn	The Beast
"Diverse" (Dan.7:24) from others	"Diverse" (Dan.7:23) from others
"A mouth speaking great things" (Rev.3:5)	"A mouth speaking great things" (Dan.7:8)

"He shall speak great words against the Most High" (Dan.7:25)	"He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God" (Rev.13:6)
"The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them (Dan.7:21).	"Make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev.13:7)

Thus Dan. 7:11 speaks as if the beast and the little horn are interchangeable: " I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain". Rev.13:5 says that the beast makes war with the saints (AVmg.) for 3.5 years- as does the little horn in Dan. 7. The beast was "like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2). Again we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated in this beast. It has "seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion.

One of the heads receives a deadly wound, but this is described as the beast receiving a deadly wound, thus identifying the beast with one of its particular heads (Rev. 13:3,12). The overall picture presented by the descriptions of the horns is of conflict with each other, whilst at the same time dominating the earth / land of Israel. The little horn 'subdues' [to abase / humiliate / degrade] three of the horns, and according to Rev. 17:16, the ten horns hate the whore, the individual riding the beast entity, and bitterly destroy and burn her. And the fortunes of the entire entity ebb and flow- one of the wounds has a deadly wound but revives, the beast itself has a deadly wound from a sword but revives (Rev. 13:3,12,14), the beast was, is not and yet is (Rev. 17:8), and we are beginning to see this ebb and flow of the fortunes of the entity developing in the land / earth. This is precisely the picture that has more recently unfolded in the land promised to Abraham- a series of increasingly powerful and aggressive leaders and powers, morphing together *from the perspective of Israel and God's people* into a system of abuse such as has never been seen and never will be. And yet from another viewpoint, they are bitterly divided against themselves.

The tendency is to want to clearly identity each of the ten toes / ten horns of the fourth beasts, the wings of the lion, the three ribs in the mouth of the second beast, the four wings and four heads of the third beast, the three horns who are plucked up by the little horn of the fourth beast, and then in Revelation we have seven heads found on the beast, as well as the ten horns, who in Revelation "hate the whore" and burn her; and the whore who rides the beast sits on seven hills or kings. Each of these attributes [toes, horns, wings, heads] refer to kings / kingdoms. Looking at the scenarios through half closed eyes, as it were, not sweating the details, we have the impression of a latter day entity dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is comprised of a bewildering array of smaller powers and charismatic leaders who are often pitted against each other. This is exactly the position we see developing in that geographical area. We don't need to interpret the fine details ahead of time-

that is not how prophecy functions. When it all happens, then it will be clear. What we are seeing is the general picture developing- an array of aggressive powers, some strong and some weak, broadly grouped into four groups, matching the four beasts who will exist in the last days. They are all united around a desire to dominate Israel. It's not hard to imagine how they will destroy each other, which is God's preferred method of judging His people's enemies.

The changing of times and laws by the antichrist figure of Dan. 7:25 sounds like the radical Islamist desire to impose the Islamic calendar and *sharia* law in the land promised to Abraham, which they see as their caliphate; and for sure, if Israel becomes part of an Islamic state, then the keeping of the Jewish calendar will be outlawed. The implementation of *sharia* law and changing legal structures to reflect it, is a major theme in their program. It's clear that the three and a half year domination of Jerusalem and changing of the Jewish law and calendar had an initial fulfilment in the abuses of Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple. There was a three and a half year period from the edict of Antiochus in June 168 BC to the rededication of the temple in December 165 BC. The little horn of Daniel 8 comes out of the Greek kingdom, but the horn of Daniel 7 out of the fourth kingdom. I suggest that this is because the prophecy could have been fulfilled totally at the time of Antiochus- Messiah could have come and destroyed him. But the various required preconditions weren't met, and so there was another possibility of it coming true out of the Roman kingdom [another possibility is that the four beasts and metals refer to Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece rather than Babylon-Medo Persia-Greece-Rome]. Revelation uses the same imagery to describe the antiChrist of the last days, who will incorporate some elements of the previous historical fulfilments of the little horn in men like Antiochus Epiphanes.

The entire vision of the beasts of Daniel 7 is summed up in Dan. 7:1: "the *rosh* of the words" (AV "sum of the matter"). And the *rosh* surely refers to the individual of Ezekiel 38:2 who will lead the latter day armies against Israel. The whole system of beasts is summed up in an individual *rosh* or leader, just as the metals of the image in Daniel 2 are in the form of a man with the face of Nebuchadnezzar. The little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

And the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast- One feature of the presentation of the beasts is that both John and "the whole earth / land" wonder at it and at the whore riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7). This matches with the stress in Daniel 7 that the fourth beast is strikingly different from all the other beasts. The world will be in shock and awe at the entity which will suddenly develop- and we see the beginnings of that with the awe and fear inspired by the jihadists. This speaks not only of the fear inspired by the entity in its enemies on the ground, but implies a watching world onlooking in awe and fear, unable to do anything against it

Let's not get caught up with the idea that Israel shall survive and defeat the invaders in her own strength. The beast must dominate Israel. Jerusalem will be taken. Dan. 7:7,21 speaks of how the beast made war with the saints and prevailed against them- Israel- *until* the Ancient of days came; in Dan. 7:23 he devours the whole land [as a beast] and shall tread it down. The beast of Revelation is so powerful in the earth / land that "the world" wondered at it and at the whore riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7), feeling unable to make war with it. This of itself requires the demise and degrading of America, Europe and the West generally. Dan. 11:41,45 are likewise clear about the latter day King of the North: "He shall also come into the glorious land… He shall

plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him".

As the entire image was "terrible" (Dan. 2:31), so the fourth beast system is described with the same word (Dan. 7:7). As the image appeared "excellent" (Dan. 2:31), so the strength of the fourth beast was 'excellent' (s.w. Dan. 7:7). Dan. 7:7 emphasizes that this final beast is altogether more aggressive than any previous beast / dominator of the land: "Dreadful, terrible, strong exceedingly... it was different from all the beasts that were before it". The original word translated "dreadful" suggests whoever sees it slinks away in fear- its strength and advantage over others is "exceeding". This is the same awe we find in Rev. 13, where the world looks on at the beast, marvelling at this entity and feeling that nobody can even begin to make war with him. This speaks of an entity that is more aggressive and fear-inspiring than the aggressive Babylonians, Assyrians or abusive Nazis. It implies too the eclipse of the West as the dominant world power block and power broker. The current Islamic jihadist movement may develop into an entity which fits this bill- a reign of terror involving cutting off children's heads and parading their actions on videos, live crucifixion of any who don't agree with them, but with a stranglehold advantage over any critics... The same radical difference between this final beast and all previous ones is brought out by the way in which John, after all he had earlier seen, was in shock at the way the beast drunk the blood of the saints, i.e. the people of God, Israel in their land (Rev. 17:6). The whole world likewise is in shock horror at this beast (Rev. 13:3; 17:8). Dan. 12:1 puts it this way: "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, and they will be saved from it by the standing up of Jesus for His people, the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the "king of the north". The "time of Jacob's trouble" from which he shall be saved (Jer. 30:7) must be understood in the context of how the phrase "time of trouble" is used in the Bible to describe times of Israel's invasion and suffering at the hands of their neighbours (Is. 33:2; Jer. 2:27,28; 8:15; 11:12,14; 14:8,19; Ez. 7:7). "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" therefore suggests a time of abuse of Israel such as has never been seen. And this includes the Nazi holocaust, the death camps of Europe, the Babylonian and Assyrian atrocities... It's purely wishful thinking to hope that the IDF and Israel's military technology will stave this off. It will not. Jerusalem is to be taken and the women raped (Zech. 14:2). The beast is to dominate the earth / land of Israel.

13:4 *And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast*- The dragon may be politically off the scene, but the jihadist philosophy continues. Or it may be that we are simply seeing in these visions different aspects of the same entity, in a kaleidoscope of images wherein some of the images overlap; and the connection between dragon and beast would then simply be that overlap, as it were.

And they worshiped the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who is able to war with him?- This will be the world's reaction to the jihadist beast of the last days. They worship him because they feel he is invincible, and have not paid attention to the continued reminders in Revelation that all power, authority and strength is not with human empires but with the Lord Jesus. Seeing that the West has nuclear weapons, this could imply that the beast either deprives them of their weapons (a Muslim dominated and more politically powerful UN or EU could achieve this), or that a new paradigm of weapons, worse than nuclear, are possessed by the beast and used to hold the rest of the world to ransom.

The language is based upon the prototype of Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian, who likewise had a mouth speaking great things against Israel and Israel's God. That

similarity is continued by the description of the small, finally repentant remnant of Jews who overthrow the beast as being like David (Zech. 12:8). This is not to say that there will not initially be opposition to the beast- the horn recovers amazingly from a "deadly wound" which could likely refer to some form of Western operation against this entity (Rev. 13:3). Likewise the beast was, is not, and yet will be [Rev. 17:8- i.e. it will be revived after apparent destruction]. But the final picture is of the beast having free reign in the earth / land promised to Abraham. We must look, therefore, to Zion being forsaken of all her lovers, America particularly pulling out of supporting Israel. We already can see the beginnings of such a situation developing. The West will either collapse, perhaps financially, and become impotent; or will come to a policy position which refuses to support Israel nor get involved in on the ground operations within the land promised to Abraham. Their impotence is however described in terms of their 'worshipping' the beast and *therefore* fearing to make war with it (Rev. 13:4). The Greek for 'worship' can mean to cower or fawn before a person; the West may be forced to this position by Islamic elements within their own nations, by an oil and energy embargo, or something similar. Another option is that the 'world' spoken of in Rev. 13 is specifically the world around Israel; but in our days of a global village, that would still require that the West is left impotent to intervene. It has been their background support of Israel which has kept the current situation in balance so far. But Rev. 9:14 speaks of the hordes of enemies being bound at the Euphrates River, and then being released by Angelic action. This restraint which is released could well refer to an Angelically-orchestrated removal of the West's restraining power. With no such power broker in the region, the forces of Islamic jihad will without doubt burst forth over the Euphrates, the boundary of the land promised to Abraham, and surge towards Israel.

However we interpret the beast and its horns, the point has to be accepted that it is radically different to any entity or empire which has ever dominated the earth / land of Israel before. It was "terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong... it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it" (Dan. 7:7). It is this same beast which led John in Revelation to be staggered and amazed. For such an entity to dominate Israel in the last days, the current geopolitical situation must change. The West will be powerless to stop it. The historical support of Israel by the West, and their continual involvement on the ground in the Middle East to avert catastrophe and protect their interests there... will end. This could be because of their financial collapse, or an oil / energy stranglehold over them, or the uprise of domestic forces allied with Islam which leave them powerless to get involved; or maybe they genuinely turn against Israel.

Or perhaps the beast entity is in possession of military technology, just as Goliath was, which leads to the sense that nobody can make war with this beast: "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). And if 'all' that is required for peace is to let these guys have their way with Israel... well, that will be a price which will seem cheap compared to the unleashing of nuclear, germ, chemical or some other kind of technology against the West. "Who is like unto the beast?" suggests that it is felt that nobody is comparable with the beast in order to make war with it; there is a superiority of military ability which is perceived which results in recognizing that this entity cannot be challenged. The language is very much of David and Goliath. The current dependency of Israel upon military technology to maintain the upper edge over their enemies must therefore come to an end. All those scenarios are well on the way to development. Nuclear technology is already in the hands of Iran, and can spread easily to irresponsible hands. It would also be typical of Russian

foreign policy to spite the West by arming the West's enemies with such technology. Without the West as the power broker in the Middle East, such an entity will surely arise. The release of the restrained horsemen on the banks of the Euphrates may refer to this restraining influence being removed (Rev. 9,16). The growth of the IS shows the potential for it, if nothing else. So the very prediction of such an entity arising in the land promised to Abraham has some radical implications for the West.

Judah's invasion by the Babylonians is clearly a type of the latter day invasion by the Islamic jihadist entity or state. The Biblical record emphasizes Judah's sense of betrayal, in that her lovers and friends [i.e. other nations] had not come to her aid as they had promised and as she had hoped (Lamentations is full of such language). This has its counterpart today, in that Israel depends upon the West to be the power broker deflecting any major strike against them by the Islamic powers around them. But that factor will be removed, the promises and undertakings will not come true- because the Biblical picture is of a huge state in power over Israel without opposition.

If we are looking for a power or ideology within the land promised to Abraham which focuses upon the destruction of Israel, then we do not have far to look. Radical Islam explicitly encourages Muslims to attack Israel and force Jews to either convert to Israel or be killed: Consider these passages from the Hadith: "You will fight against the Jews and you will kill them until even a stone would say: Come here, Muslim, there is a Jew (hiding himself behind me); kill him" (Book 41.6981). Book 19.4366 likewise: "I will expel the Jews and Christians from Arabia and will not leave any but Muslim". The 'Arabia' here is often interpreted as the Arabian Peninsula, but that was probably not in Mohammed's perceptual geography. By 'Arabia' he meant 'the lands where the Arabs live', and that area includes Israel, inhabited as it is by several million Palestinian Arabs.

13:5 *And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies*- The suggested allusion is to David overcoming the Palestinian Goliath, who all else feared to make war with as he spoke his blasphemy against God and Israel- exactly the language of Rev. 13:4-8. Then shall come to pass the word of Zech. 12:8: "He that is feeble among them [s.w. Dan. 11:41 about how many in the land of Israel will be overthrown or made feeble] in that day shall be as David".

The idea of being given a mouth is taken from the Olivet prophecy; in the last days of AD70 and the final last days, the witnessing believers will likewise be given a mouth (Lk. 21:15). They will be empowered to speak against this evil system. All the mouth and authority of this system will be given it from above, just as was the case with the Lord's sufferings at the hands of the Roman and Jewish systems.

And there was given to him authority to continue for forty two months- The point of Revelation is that all authority and power in their utter totality is with the Father and Son. The persecution of God's people, both in the last days and historically, has been allowed and even empowered by them. The idea that the dragon empowered the sea beast is only true from an earthly perspective, and is not at all Heaven's view. And the purpose of Revelation is to help us perceive that. Historically, this might refer to periods like Nero's persecution (Nov. 64 - June 68). But the 42 months is the time, times and a half, the 1260 days, the three and a half years of the Elijah ministry, the period of witness by the two witnesses and the hiding of the infant Jesus in Egypt.

13:6 *And he opened his mouth to blaspheme against God, to blaspheme His Name and His tabernacle, even those that dwell in the heaven*- The 42 months of the Jihadist beast's prolonged persecution of Israel is also aimed specifically at God's "tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5,6), i.e. the temple (1 Kings 8:30 cp. 2 Sam.

15:25; Heb. 7:26; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2; 11:4). The figurative 'temple' is therefore the faithful of the last days (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). The earthly temple in Jerusalem has been judged and marked out for destruction in chapter 11. God's tabernacle is in the hearts of the believing Christians of the last days. John is seeing a vision of the heavenly throne room, where all on earth has Angelic representation. In this sense those who are in heaven can be blasphemed and persecuted on earth.

13:7 *And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation*- The concept of the court of Heaven is a major key to understanding the book of Revelation. Events on earth are described in terms of their connection with the Angelic system in Heaven which has arranged them. “The accuser of our brethren” being cast out of Heaven (Rev. 12:10) would therefore refer to how in the court of Heaven, an Angel represents the system who accused the brethren on earth. This isn’t to say that the Angel representing the accuser is sinful. “It was given unto” the beast to have power to persecute the saints, just as the Lord had perceived that His persecutors only had the power that was “given” unto them [thereby associating the saints’ final time of trial in the last days with the Lord’s sufferings]. But the power was “given” by the Angels in the court of Heaven, empowering people on earth to carry out what they permit.

The overcoming of the saints [a term appropriate to both natural Israel and the true Christians of the last days] is spoken of in the murder of the two witnesses in chapter 11. They did not love their lives unto death (12:11); these are the "saints" who are overcome by the beast in Dan. 7:25. Many will be slain, although some will be miraculously preserved by being snatched away, or even literally up into the sky (see on 11:12 and 12:5).

The tribes, peoples etc. who give him authority are primarily those in the area of his provenance over the earth / land promised to Abraham, upon whom Babylon sits (17:15). But it is out of these very tribes, peoples etc. that some will convert to Christ, and they are singled out for especial notice and praise because of this (5:9); for it is they to whom the Gospel is preached in the very last days (14:6).

13:8 *And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world*- All inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham worship this entity; with the sole exception of those who shall be saved eternally, the true Christians in that area. This means that on the territory of what is today Syria, Israel, Iraq etc. there will emerge true Christian converts. Jihadists insist upon conversion to their form of Islam on pain of death. Hence the totality of support for them in this area.

13:9 *If anyone has an ear, let him hear*- The inhabitants of the earth / land consider the beast invincible and permanent, and therefore they worship him (see on :4). They have not paid attention to the continued reminders in Revelation that all power, authority and strength is not with human empires but with the Lord Jesus. This is the reason for this appeal, to 'hear' the words of this prophecy and to not assume that the beast is ultimately powerful, permanent nor invincible.

13:10 *If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints*- This speaks of the final desolation of Israel by the beast in terms of 'leading into captivity', associated with the beast having power over "all kindreds, tongues and

nations" in the earth / land promised to Abraham. The remaining Jews will be taken into captivity in those areas; and the attitude of the Islamist jihadists, ever seeking as they are to incarnate Israel's historical enemies, is such that this scenario is now quite imaginable.

To resist his captivity and killing with the sword is "the patience and faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:7,10). The beast leading saints into captivity and death sounds like ghettos and concentration camps- our persecution may well be through our having to suffer along with natural Israel. Those who openly proclaim themselves to be spiritual Israel will be treated the same as the Jews. For this reason, the distinctively Jewish aspect of our hope should be appreciated by us now in this our time of spiritual preparation. The mad intensity of the beast's persecution of the saints in the last days has not yet been seen by us.

Goliath was the Arab "champion" (1 Sam. 17:51), using the Hebrew word 'Gibbor'. This connects with the description of Messiah as 'El-Gibbor' in Is. 9:6, and shows that the latter day Arab powers may well be headed up by one charismatic individual, who sets himself up as a pseudo-Messiah. The Hebrew word used for "champion" in 1 Sam. 17:4 literally means 'the man who goes between the two camps', again pointing forward to the mediatorial office of the true Messiah. The root meaning of 'Goliath' is 'to lead and to go into captivity', which fits in with his wager that the Philistines would go into Jewish captivity if they killed him, and vice versa. This may be the basis of Rev. 13:10 concerning the little horn and mouth of the beast: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity" (AV). This power having "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" (Rev. 13:5) certainly corresponds with Goliath's loud-mouthed blasphemy. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:6,7) is Goliath exactly (cp. his blasphemy of the Angels in 1 Sam. 17:26). "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:8) recalls Goliath's charisma, indicated by the Philistines fleeing once they saw that he was dead. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13:10) nicely concludes this set of allusions- Goliath was killed with his own sword. These parallels indicate that Goliath is a prototype of the latter day 'mouth' or personal figurehead of the 'beast'. Note in passing how Gen. 12:3 may have hinted at this figure right at the start of God's purpose with Israel: "Him that curseth thee will I curse" (RV). The method of persecution will be by leading into captivity and killing with the sword (13:10)- the house churches of the latter day "earth" herded into cattle trucks and hauled away to mini prison camps, sharing the sufferings of natural Israel? Once again, the account of the beast here is underpinned with hints of out Lord's sufferings (13:10 = Mt. 26:52; 'he that leads into captivity' recalls Jesus being led away by Judas and the soldiers; 13:7 cp. the disciples being 'overcome' in Gethsemane).

13:11 *And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon*- The beast of :1 arose from the sea, the area adjoining the earth / land promised to Abraham. This one specifically arises from within the land promised to Abraham. The beast of 13:1 was empowered by the dragon, and this next beast also speaks as the dragon. The same teaching or philosophy is being taught. But he has horns like a lamb. Lambs, newborn sheep, don't have horns. Goats do. So the idea is that this beast has two horns, perhaps two leaders or entities associated with it, which claim to be Christian, or perhaps claim to be as Jesus. Islam also believes in a return of Jesus, so perhaps these are false

prophets, false Christs within the radical Islamist system, who claim to be the returned Jesus.

It's worth mentioning that the Koran teaches that the final punishment of the Jews will involve faithful Muslims becoming as a beast of the earth to Israel: "And when the time for the fulfilment of our word against them will come, we shall bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them because people did not believe in our Sign" (Sura 27.82). Perhaps Mohammad was again getting his Bible references garbled (note how the Koran assumes Haman and Pharaoh lived at the same time, Sura 28:6); perhaps he actually had in mind "the beast arising from the earth" of Rev. 13:11 which has a mouth speaking great things against Israel. Radical Islamists seek to fulfil the Koran as literally as possible; but because it contains so many fragments of Bible prophecies, they are effectively striving to fulfil latter day Bible prophecy!

The beast of the earth must look back to the common phrase "beast of the earth" in Genesis (e.g. Gen. 1:25). The serpent is an epitome of the bestial desires found in the beasts, and is thus the prototype 'beast' of later prophecies. The serpent being the greatest of the beasts (Gen. 3:1,14) points to the latter-day beast being supreme over the other nations. The most basic principle behind the symbolism of the beast is found in Gen. 1:28, where man is told to "have dominion over" (Heb. 'to break to powder', cp. Dan. 2:35) the beasts. This was to teach him the need to dominate the bestial instincts of the flesh. Thus the beasts are set up as representative of the flesh. It is therefore understandable that the devil (sin), the beast and the serpent are linked in Rev. 12:9, and that Prov. 28:15 parallels "a wicked ruler" with a wild bear or lion; the beast epitomizes the sinful person who controls it.

As the serpent deceived Adam and Eve, so the beast will deceive the Jews and weak Christian believers of the last days. The serpent/beast in its first century Jewish manifestation is described as seducing the saints through the subtle reasoning of the Judaizers (2 Cor. 11:3). These people used many "fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18 cp. Jude 15), suggesting that their prototype, the serpent, persuaded Eve to eat the fruit after a lengthy series of discussions, albeit unrecorded. "Yea, hath God said..." (Gen. 3:1 AV) implies the continuation of an unrecorded conversation. The beast's agents of the last days will likewise use the tactic of extended public speeches using superficially deep arguments. Their political arm will be doing the same to destroy the morale of natural Israel, after the pattern of Rabshakeh's speeches to the Jews during the Assyrian invasion. Being an apostate Jew he may possibly have a latter-day equivalent in a Jewish leader, who deserts to the Arab cause, urging Israel to capitulate. Likewise there may be a specific "man of sin" who similarly tempts spiritual Israel. The description of him in 2 Thess. 2:3 is framed in terms of Judas - implying that he will be an apostate Christian?

The judgment of the serpent was by the voice of God (cp. Christ, the word) walking through the garden, summoning the sinful parties to judgment. This easily looks forward to Christ's second coming, and the judgment by Him in His role as the word made flesh (Rev. 19:13; Gen. 3:8). The beast has always been associated with a pseudo-spirituality, an aping of true God manifestation; the four beasts of Dan. 7 and Revelation (dragon, sea beast, earth beast and scarlet beast) are a pseudo-cherubim. There is a connection between the beasts of God manifestation and the cherubim in Rev. 4:7; indeed, the Hebrew word for 'beast' seems to be the equivalent of the phrase "living creature" used in Revelation concerning the cherubim. The beast and beasts therefore represent systems which falsely claim that they are the vehicle of God manifestation. This most clearly fits the claims of jihadist Islam. With all this in

mind, it must be significant that Is. 14:29 speaks of Assyria as a "cockatrice" born out of "the serpent's root", i.e. she was the seed of the serpent. "His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent" is the language of Isa. 6:2 concerning the seraphim. Thus the Assyrian seed of the serpent is associated with a pseudo-seraphim, and a false God manifestation. The Assyrian invasion is the prototype of the traumas of the last days in Israel.

Dt. 32:24 connects the 'beasts' of the surrounding nations with the Genesis serpent: "I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust" (cp. Gen. 3:14). There is also a connection between the serpent and beasts in Is. 30:6. "The teeth of beasts" coming down upon Israel will be finally fulfilled in the jihadist desolation prophesied in Joel 1:6,7, where the Assyrians of the future (Joel 1:15) are described as having Israel between their "cheek teeth" tearing the bark off the Israeli vine and fig (cp. Is. 9:12 concerning the Philistines / Palestinians).

Israel being the sheep of God's pasture is a common Bible figure. Whenever their shepherds were negligent over a prolonged period, the figure was extended to describe the 'wild beasts' of the surrounding nations invading the land and mauling the flock. Hos. 13:6-8 is typical of those passages which speak in these terms. Verses 7 and 8 liken these nations to the lion, leopard and bear, all of which are nations mentioned in Dan. 7, which are constituents of the huge system of Arab domination described in Dan. 2. These three beast nations are all part of one "wild beast", as the nations of the image in Dan. 2 are all part of the same latter-day confederacy headed by 'Babylon': "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard... as a bear... *the* wild beast". Likewise Is. 56:9,10; Jer. 30:16 and Ez. 34:5 feature the beasts of Babylon and the surrounding nations as preying on the flock of Israel due to their sleepy shepherds. After Israel's spiritual awakening *they* will become like a beast among the 'sheep' of the jihadist nations (Mic. 5:8), continuing the theme of the Jews doing to the Arabs as they did to them. It is possible that Dt. 28:26 also refers to the beasts of the surrounding nations: "Thy carcase shall be meat... unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away" (AV). This alludes to the fowls being frayed away while the covenant was made to Abraham. Thus while Israel abode in the covenant, the neighbouring nations surrounding them were kept away. Similarly Ez. 34:25 associates the making of the covenant with Israel in the last days, with the "evil beasts" leaving the land. Time and again Israel's neighbouring enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Ez. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Dt. 7:22. Job's Sabean invaders are called "the beasts of the earth... the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Ez. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads/horns).

Ps. 74:19 RV asks God not to deliver His people "unto the wild beast". This is one of the Asaph Psalms, written in the context of the restoration. The 'beast' threatening to destroy Judah then was a confederacy of her surrounding neighbours. Ps. 73:13,14 likens these enemies to a many headed dragon. Another such Psalm, Ps. 83, asks for protection against a confederacy of 10 such nations. In all this we have a remarkable type of the last days after the pattern of Daniel and Revelation-a beast with 10 horns, seeking to devour the recently returned people of God from off their land.

There is repeatedly the theme that Israel's enemies are confederated together under

one confederacy which has one leader. Ps. 118 can be shown to be relevant to Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion (see George Booker, *Psalm Studies*). He speaks of how “all nations compassed me about”, i.e. the surrounding Arab nations confederate with Assyria. And yet Hezekiah speaks about them as if they are really headed up by one individual: “Thou [you singular] didst thrust sore at me” (Ps. 118:13). The beast is to punish people by beheading them (Rev. 20:4)- and it's only Islam at the moment which legally practices beheading as a form of execution.

The symbology of the beast was particularly used concerning Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's king, was given a beast's heart and lived with them (Dan. 4:16) to show his personification of the beast. "The beasts of the field, i.e. the surrounding nations, were given into his control (Dan. 2:38), thus they constituted part of the beast of Babylon, " the noisome beast" of Ez. 14:21. Babylon's army is likened to "beasts" in Jer. 34:20,21. As God gave power to Assyria and Babylon to achieve His will (Is. 10), so He will to the latter-day beast (Rev. 13:5,7). The description of the beast leading people into captivity (Rev. 13:10) shows another connection with Assyria/Babylon, whose trains of captives were well known. The beast causing men to worship it (Rev. 13:12) recalls Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the statue on the plain of Dura (Dan. 3:1,5). The historical "beast of the field" was associated with the wilderness (Is. 43:20), as the beast of Rev. 17:3 is a wilderness power.

13:12 *He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. He makes the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose wound had been healed*- The earth beast demands worship for the wounded and healed sea beast, and to "the image of the beast". The beasts may destroy themselves by infighting, or by temporary victories against them by Israel and the West. But they continue reincarnating, repeating the ideology of the dragon system of chapter 12. The beast is identified with its notable wounded horn. Just as the dragon loses power but somehow continues in influence, so the sea beast is down but not out; for the earth beast operates "in his sight" or presence. This could refer to a very fast sequence of Islamist entities dominating the land in the last days. Or it could be that again we have a kaleidoscope of images, and the images revealing different aspects of the beasts overlap with each other as they rotate. All Daniel's four beasts must exist in the last days, just as the four beasts of Revelation co-exist with each other (dragon, sea and earth beasts and scarlet beast).

Those who dwell in the earth / land are forced to worship the first beast. The idea of forced worship fits exactly with the jihadist way of enforcing conversion to their brand of Islam.

Babylon and the beast with which it is associated is said to have power over the nations of whole earth / land (Dan. 7:23; Rev. 13:12). This is referring back to the way in which historical Babylon was praised by the whole earth / land (Jer. 51:41), and had an army which included men from "the whole earth", the territory promised to Abraham (Jer. 34:1). As Babylon of the last days will influence all nations of the earth with her wine, so Babylon of old is spoken of in the same way (Jer. 51:7 cp. Rev. 17:2,4). Thus several prophecies speak of how Babylon's fall had effects on the whole earth (e.g. Jer. 50:46); and latter day Babylon likewise (Rev. 18:9,10). If we are correct in interpreting "Babylon" as a radical Islamic power of the last days, based on the prototype of historical Babylon, then we must look for a nation like Iran or Iraq to gather together the surrounding powers for an assault on Israel, and to somehow bring the whole world under the control of this confederacy. An Muslim-dominated UN [or Muslim-fearful] or other global political power could bring this about. "The Charter

of Allah" makes it clear that Islam aims for world domination, within which "co-existence is possible with other religions, but only on Islamic terms and under Islamic domination". Thus the control of the other peoples within the earth / land, and even of the rest of the world may not be as difficult in practice as it may seem; if, for example, the Pope makes some suitable deference to Islam on behalf of all 'Christians', such a situation would come into existence.

13:13 *And he does great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men*- The beast makes fire come down from heaven, just as Elijah did. The inference is that the latter day miracles of the Elijah ministry will be matched, to some degree, by the false claims of the beast. The miracles performed at Israel's deliverance from Egypt were likewise mimicked by the persecutors of God's people. The beast acquires a puppet beast (or "publicity agent" in the words of Peter Watkins) who does "great wonders" (miracles) which deceive many (13:13,14; 19:20). These miracles must be impressive, seeing that they result in *all* that dwell on the earth / land, except the faithful, receiving the mark, of the beast. It is hard to make this prophecy of such impressive false miracles have a significant fulfilment in the past. Miracles of the credibility described here have not been seen since the first century. Again, remember that the Olivet prophecy describes false miracles being done in the last days, which almost convince the very elect. They must therefore really be something very impressive.

13:14 *And he deceives those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which were given to him to do in the sight of the beast, saying to those that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword but lived*- "The sight / presence" of the beast refers to the first, sea beast; see on :12.

The two beasts of Rev. 13 appear to effectively operate as one, just as the beast is identified with its horn which is mortally wounded and yet revives (the same language is used of the beast- Rev. 13:3 cp. 12,14). It seems that the beast has publicity agents-another beast which appears to be a lamb but speaks as the dragon. Perhaps the idea is that a religious entity like the false Christian / Catholic / Orthodox Church seeks to get people to worship the Islamic beast under colour of some compromise. There will be apparent miracles which encourage people to believe these entities have credibility. Rev. 13:14,15 speaks of an image being made to the beast and the image speaking. It was common in the first century to claim that statues could speak; the Simon Magus of Acts 8:9 is recorded in extra-Biblical history as being able to do this (see G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* p. 184). God will ‘allow’ this to happen, in line with His way of deceiving the deceivers and confirming them in the way they wish to go. The bringing to life of an image recalls the way that God created Adam and then gave him the breath of life. The claim will be that resurrection and new life are in the power of the new entity and its leader; perhaps there will be a claim to be the resurrected Mahdi figure of Islam or something similar. And God will “allow” this, or give real power to make it appear that these miracles have really happened.

Perhaps all those living in the earth / land will be forced to make or have some image to the beast, some physical item which demonstrates their allegiance; perhaps worn as a necklace or ring. This would then have the mark of the beast upon it; see on :16-18 where we suggest this is the seal of Mohammed.

The beast of the earth in Rev. 13:11-18 seems to have some first century application to the cult of emperor worship which became so popular throughout the Roman empire: it speaks in the voice of the dragon (:11), from whom it receives its power; and like the first Beast, it attempts to mimic the Lamb (:12, 13). It seems to be

a personification of an Antichrist embodied in the pagan priesthood, which endeavoured to draw all men to the cult of the emperor. In these thoughts we see just how radical was the Apocalypse in its first century context. "The image to the beast" (13:13) would refer to representations of the divinized Roman emperors. "The wound of the sword" (13:13) is possibly an allusion to the mortal wound Nero inflicted upon himself in ad 68. Nero was perceived to live again in the persecutor Domitian (Tertullian, *Apol.* 5). Note how it is "the beast" who appears to have died or been wounded and then revives (17:8)- and yet these are references to what happened to Nero. The symbolism correctly perceives how the empire was incarnated in one man, the emperor.

13:15 *And he was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should speak, and cause to have killed as many as would not worship the image of the beast*- I suggested on :14 that each person dwelling in the earth / land will be forced to make this image to the beast. He is "permitted", by God, to make these images of the beast appear to have real life. This will then be the great example of God confirming people in their misbelief, by allowing these images to have some kind of apparent life and power. Any who would not worship it would then be killed. 13:10 has said that he who kills [s.w.] with the sword shall be killed with the sword; and this will come true at the Lord's return (19:21). So the killing is by the sword or dagger / knife, which is typical of how jihadists kill those who refuse to convert and obey them.

The beasts of Revelation seem to be described in terms of the Kingdom of God, and the descriptions link within Revelation to the descriptions of God's Kingdom. The point is being made that these beasts, both over time and in the last days, are fake Kingdoms of God.

Beasts	The Kingdom Of God
The dragon has Angels (Rev. 12:9)	As Christ
He figuratively comes from heaven to earth (12:10)	"
Speaks of us day and night before God's throne (12:10)	"
Has a name in his forehead (13:2)	"
Given power, throne and authority (13:13)	"
Does great miracles and signs (13:13)	"
Faithful followers have mark in their hands and foreheads (13:17; 20:4) and are " sealed" (13:16)	Ez. 9:4; Rev. 7:3
All the world worships the beast (13:12)	All the world will worship God (15:4)
Followers as numerous as sand on the sea shore (20:8)	As the seed of Abraham

Their followers have one mind (17:3), and are world-wide	How it should be amongst us
The woman clothed with a blood red robe and a cup (17:4)	Cp. the sacrificial office of Christ
The beast is, was and will be (17:8-11); an allusion to the Yahweh Name	God is, will and will be (16:5)

The beast systems, as Babylon and Assyria before them, were false Kingdoms of God. The beast has the power to give *pneuma* to the image / body of the first beast (Rev. 13:15)- an evident mimicry of God's creation of Adam. They appear to offer, here and now, the things of the Kingdom, and the fleshly-minded are persuaded by them. This is all playing out the drama of Eden again; the serpent offered equality with God, the wisdom of God, when it was actually the wisdom of the serpent. Adam and Eve grasped for what was offered, unlike the Lord Jesus, who refused to grasp at equality with God (Phil. 2 is full of allusion to the events of Gen. 3). What happened in Eden is in essence the epitome, the prototype of all temptation and sin (1 Jn. 2:16 = Gen. 3:6). Every one of our temptations has an element of this; we are tempted to grasp for what looks like the Kingdom here and now. Pentecostals are an evident example of this; they think they can obtain the full healing and physical ecstasy of the future Kingdom here and now. And on a more common level, there are many of us who reach out for the supposed fulfilment of hobbies, the supposed peace and 'security' of a nice home and bank balance, when these things are actually a false fulfilment, peace and security, the peace and security of Satan's Kingdom which is a counterfeit of the spiritual fulfilment, peace and security of Christ's Kingdom. A very evident example of this is found in Rabshakeh's offer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'If you reject Yahweh as your God, the King of Assyria will give you a Kingdom where you will "eat every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree" ' (Is. 36:16); in saying this, Rabshakeh was quoting the very words of Mic. 4:4 concerning the Kingdom of God. The Jews were faced with the choice of God's Kingdom, or Satan's Kingdom, couched as it was in terms of God's Kingdom. Likewise, the world around us isn't passive. It is actively seeking to deceive. There is a tension between us and this world, including the apostate 'Christian' world, which is vital to recognize if we are to share the salvation of God's Kingdom and avoid the condemnation of Satan's Kingdom. There can be no half way position.

Those who will refuse to worship the beast will be killed (Rev. 13:15); but those (responsible) who try to avoid this death will themselves be *tortured* to death by the Lamb, because they worshipped the beast and did not openly testify to their faith (14:9-11; 16:2). See on Mt. 3:11.

13:16 *And he causes all, the small and the great and the rich and the poor and the free and the bondservant, to be given a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead*- The beast system will insist that all people receive the mark in their foreheads (Rev. 13:15,16; 14:11). This was an allusion to the way slaves were branded with a mark of ownership. And so in the very last days it will intensely cost to have the stigmata, the marks / brand, of being true servants of Jesus. It will cost and hurt to really believe His words, that we cannot serve two masters. This is why those who are slaves of others are pictured here as all becoming slaves of this beastly coalition.

We either receive the mark of the beast and ultimately face torture and the wine of God's wrath; or we refuse it and face Babylon's wrath (Rev. 13:16,17; 14:9,10). Now is the time for self-examination.

13:17 *So that no one should be able to buy or to sell, unless he has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name*- This is very much the language of how those excluded from the synagogues were treated for accepting Jesus as Christ (Jn. 9:22). The figure of 666 (:18) is only found in the Bible concerning Solomon's Israelite kingdom. This of course was but an incipient fulfilment of the final terrorizing of Jews and Christians by the jihadist entity. Likewise it has been shown that in Nero's time it was forbidden for Christians to use Imperial coinage, with its images of Caesar as Lord. It was in this sense impossible to buy or sell unless one was willing to accept the mark of the beast- exactly as in Rev. 13:17. The next verse goes on to identify the number of the beast / man as being 666. And yet this is the sum of the Hebrew letters in 'Neron Caesar'! Whatever other application these verses may be seen to have to Catholic persecution, there can be little doubt that their first century context applies to the persecution of the early converts. Later, Domitian demanded that he be worshipped as Lord and God, "Dominus et deus noster" (Suetonius, *Domitiani Vita,* 13.4). John records how Thomas called the Lord Jesus "my lord and my God", in active opposition to this kind of thinking (although Domitian came after Thomas). One couldn't worship Caesar and the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself had foreseen this when He warned that His followers couldn't serve two masters. Domitian demanded to be called 'Master', but this was impossible for the Christian. Indeed, much of Revelation seems taken up with this theme of the first century refusal to worship the Caesars and deified Roman empire on pain of persecution (Rev. 13:4; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20). "Following the Neronian persecution, being a Christian was tantamount to being part of a criminal conspiracy, and Christians (unlike other religious groups) were punished simply for being Christians (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.5; Pliny *Letters* 10.96.2-3). Their crime was an unwillingness to worship any God but their own, an exclusiveness the Greeks labelled "atheism." The refusal to sacrifice to pagan gods and on behalf of deified emperors was perceived as a threat to the harmonious relationship between people and the gods" (J.L. Mays, Editor, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Although in many parts of the 21st century world the tension between the believer and the beast is not articulated so starkly, the essential realities of the conflict remain, and must be felt by us.

13:18 *Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty six*- The first beast, representing Babylon, had "the heart of a man" (Dan. 7:4). It was the embodiment of an individual person- Nebuchadnezzar. The latter day Babylon likewise will be centred around a person- the antiChrist figure of the last days, who in turn will profess to be the incarnation or embodiment of the false prophet Mohammed. Nebuchadnezzar in his madness became as a beast- with a body like a beast, hair like an eagle, and nails like those of a beast (Dan. 4:33). This language is all used about the beasts in the later prophetic parts of Daniel's prophecy. They had features of eagles (Dan. 7:4), bodies of beasts (Dan. 7:11), and remarkable nails or claws (Dan. 7:19). Nebuchadnezzar became like such a beast because the latter day beast would be the embodiment of him, just as the image of Daniel 2 had the face of Nebuchadnezzar and was in the form of a man. The beast is epitomized by a man- "the number of the beast... is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18).

The little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed "but not by human power" (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. This is just the language of 2 Thess. 2, of how the Antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord's sudden return. Micah and Isaiah call this individual "the Assyrian" (Is. 10:5; 14:25). We have shown elsewhere that the description of Lucifer being thrown out of heaven can be read as describing the fall of a future King of Babylon in the last days. The most comfortable understanding of antiChrist as being an Assyrian / Babylonian is that he will be an Assyrian / Babylonian, and ruler of those areas. A leader of Iraq would ideally suit this. And their leadership shows every sign of the aggression, megalomania and anti-Semitism which will characterize the antiChrist. Note too that Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal- areas identified by some as being in present Iran / Iraq. The number of the beast is the number of a man (Rev. 13:18); he becomes personally identified with the system that persecutes the saints and Israel in the last days.

The black flags carried by the jihadists have a roughly drawn circle with a brief summary of the Muslim creed: 'There is none other God than Allah and Mohammed is His messenger'. The circle is roughly drawn because it is a replica of Mohammed's seal which he attached to his decrees and communications. To receive the mark of the beast may well refer to receiving such a stamp or carrying such an insignia, perhaps literally on the forehead. Because pictures of jihadist fighters show them with this symbol on their foreheads. The seal of Muhammad was held to have magic qualities, and the loss of the seal amounted to the loss of the caliphate and the loss of unity among Muslims. Now, the Islamists are popularizing the seal again, announcing a caliphate and urging Muslim unity- a unity which will ultimately be focused against Israel. The false prophet and beast are Biblically associated with false miracles, so something to look for would be the claims of false miracles or magic, as was once associated with the seal- see Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, *Muhammad: Seal of the Prophets*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980 (chapter 12). The jihadist flag has a name, just as the British flag is called 'the Union Jack', the Canadian flag 'the maple leaf', the French flag is called the tricolour and the American flag 'the stars and stripes'. It is called The Black Banner or Black Standard, also known as *rāyat al-`uqāb* "the banner of the eagle". The final enemies of Israel are described as coming upon her "as swift as the eagle flies" (Dt. 28:49). Babylon is spoken of as an eagle in Jer. 48:40; Dan. 7:4; Hab. 1:8 and Ez. 17:3,12, as is Assyria (Hos. 8:1) and as are the Ammonites (Jer. 49:16) and Edom (Obadiah 4). The Islamists flying the banner of the eagle therefore associates them with being a reincarnation of Israel's historical enemies.

The mark of the beast is to be worn on the hand, yet the Greek word for "hand" is the same as for "arm". Jihadist fighters are wearing this symbol, the seal of Mohammed, on rings and armbands- and we can expect this to become what they demand of their subject peoples too. We could expect the coinage and other symbols of any such beast entity to include it too, so that literally one could not buy or sell without it, in the earth / land under their control. The mark of the beast in the forehead is clearly intended to be understood as the inverse of the "seal of God" which is in the forehead of the believers (Rev. 9:4). The word *sphragis* used there definitely means a seal, and it is matched by the "mark" of the beast. That mark can be understood, therefore, also as a seal- and what more likely than the seal of Mohammed? It may be that signet rings are used to stamp documents, or it forms part of an insignia without which no business can be done in the land- e.g. on the coins and gold of the earth / land under their domination. The Koran itself speaks of how true Muslims will have

the mark of Mohammad on their foreheads as a sign that they worship: “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. Thou [O Muhammad] seest them bowing and falling prostrate [in worship], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration” (Surah 48.29). In Revelation 14:9,11, having the mark of the beast is connected with worshipping him. The Islamic jihadist movement set to take over Israel is a highly religious movement, seeking to strictly obey the Koran. They are highly conscious of these verses.

The Biblical data concerning the mark of the beast suggests that this will be used by "the beast" and will be enforced upon those who "dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 13:14,17). "The earth" Biblically refers to either the whole planet, or the land- the land promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates. This promised land is the focus of the Bible. The beast of Revelation is another take on the beast of Daniel 7, which in turn is an amplification of the fourth empire of the image of Daniel 2. The empires or kings of Daniel 2 all refer to those entities who reigned over "the whole earth / land"- of Israel, as discussed further in my exposition of Daniel 2. The same earth / land is in view here in Revelation. The latter day Islamic entity can therefore be expected to gain control over that territory and to enforce the acceptance of Islam there. The mark is specifically the mark of a man (Rev. 13:18)- and that man is clearly Mohammed, seeing that the ensign of the jihadists is the seal of Mohammed. And according to some usages of gematria [whereby each letter in the Hebrew or Arabic alphabet has a numerical value], Mohammed in Greek, Mahomet, (Μαομετις has) has a value of 666:

Mu	Alpha	Omicron	Mu	Epsilon	Tau	Iota	Sigma
40	1	70	40	5	300	10	200

TOTAL: 666

Don't dismiss gematria too quickly. The Bible itself uses it here in Rev. 13:18. There, the number 666 is not written as it would normally have been, as a number, but rather as three Greek letters, *chi xi stigma*; which between them add up to 666 by gematria. So it would seem that we are being invited to work out the riddle through the use of gematria. There are some connections in form between the letters of the Greek and Arabic alphabets, just as there are between the letters of the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets (e.g. 'R' in the Latin alphabet is the inverse of 'я' in the Cyrillic). When those three Greek letters are turned on their side, they read exactly as the Arabic letters which spell *Bis'm Allah*- "In the name of Allah", which is the credo of Islam and the jihadists. This appears to be another connection between Islam and the mark of the beast.

We note too from Rev. 13:14 that the beast system does apparent 'miracles'; and the seal of Mohammed was historically supposed to be able to perform miracles. We could expect such false claims to be made within the territory dominated by the latter day Islamists also. The Islamic State has already demonstrated how they dealt with areas they conquered- all economic life was controlled by them and people were forced into submission to the new system. Nobody will be able to buy and sell in the territory of the earth / land promised to Abraham without displaying the mark of loyalty to the jihadists- the seal of Mohammed.

The book of Revelation, like all Bible prophecy, will have particular and acute relevance to those who live in the very last days before Christ comes. There is a particular blessing repeated for those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast. That brave and tiny minority will be comprised of those Jews who refuse to convert, and

instead convert to Jesus Christ in their desperation. And for them, the book of Revelation holds out particular blessing (Rev. 14:9-11; 15:2; 20:4).

The little horn of Daniel 7 is the beast of Revelation 13:

Daniel 7	Revelation 13
"... a mouth speaking great things" (verse 8) "And he shall speak great words against the most High ..." (verse 25) "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (verse 21)	"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (verses 5,6) "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (verse 7)

Notice that the little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

The little horn is also to be connected with the “King of the north” of Daniel 11, which is based upon Antiochus and the leaders of the northern part of the Greek empire, from Syria. The fact the current jihadist leadership has emerged from Syria is maybe significant in this context:

	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Daniel 11
1.	The little horn	The little horn	"The king"
2.	At the end of the times of the Gentiles	At the end of the times of the Gentiles	At the end of the times of the Gentiles
3.	Very aggressive	Very aggressive	Very aggressive
4.	"A look more stout than his fellows"	Magnifies himself	Magnifies himself
5.	A mouth speaking great things against the Most High		Speaks marvellous things against the God of gods

6.	Makes war against the saints and prevails	Destroys the holy people
7.	Destroyed by the Ancient of days	Destroyed by the Prince of princes

The first beast, representing Babylon, had "the heart of a man" (Dan. 7:4). It was the embodiment of an individual person- Nebuchadnezzar. The latter day Babylon likewise will be centred around a person- the antiChrist figure of the last days, who in turn will profess to be the incarnation or embodiment of the false prophet Mohammed. Nebuchadnezzar in his madness became as a beast- with a body like a beast, hair like an eagle, and nails like those of a beast (Dan. 4:33). This language is all used about the beasts in the later prophetic parts of Daniel's prophecy. They had features of eagles (Dan. 7:4), bodies of beasts (Dan. 7:11), and remarkable nails or claws (Dan. 7:19). Nebuchadnezzar became like such a beast because the latter day beast would be the embodiment of him, just as the image of Daniel 2 had the face of Nebuchadnezzar and was in the form of a man. The beast is epitomized by a man- "the number of the beast...is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18).

REVELATION CHAPTER 14

14:1- see on 2 Tim. 4:17.

And I looked, and beheld the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty four thousand, each having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads- See on :3. There is an important difference between the 144,000 in chapter 7 and those in chapter 14. Chapter 7 concerns the *sealing* of the faithful Israelite believers as the latter day tribulation in the land begins. They are marked as God's people, marked for protection, as were the Israelites whose houses were covered by the blood of the Passover lamb, and as repentant Jews were marked on the forehead in Ezekiel 9. In Revelation 14 these redeemed Israelites are *harvested.* They are united to each other and to the Lord Jesus Christ at His return. They are called firstfruits, hinting at the great ingathering later in the same chapter. It seems this group of saints are resurrected before the great multitude from all nations; or perhaps they refer to the Jewish converts within Israel who are snatched away from persecution (11:12; 12:5). This would be another application of the principle, "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. 2:10). Again, there is an allusion to the events of the Lord's death here; for the graves were opened and Jewish believers who had recently died were resurrected and appeared as witnesses against the system who had crucified their Lord.

The Lamb comes to be on Mt. Zion with the believers in that they are snatched away there and judged there; see on 11:12; 12:5. John maybe has the reverse image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion facing the hostile world.

The Name- i.e. God's character- has been engraved in their foreheads, in distinction to the name of the beast being upon the foreheads of his followers at the end of chapter 13. In 14:11 the name of the beast has to be merely 'received'- a rather passive verb, perhaps reflecting how the beast forces token conversion and worship. We either 'receive' the beast's name, or have God's name slowly engraved. We can't have a forehead / mind / underlying heartbeat which has both names. See 14:9 note. "His *Father's* Name" is used rather than simply 'God's Name', to show how we have God's Name placed upon us because of His revelation in the Lamb, His Son.

14:2 *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers playing their harps*- They are the Heavenly antithesis to the harpers within the Babylon-beast system (Rev. 18:22), just as the 144,000 sealed with the Lord's Name on their foreheads are the antithesis to those at the end of the preceding chapter 13 who have the beast's mark of 666 in their foreheads. Perhaps the harpers refer to the Angels John was beholding in the heavenly vision of the throne room? But in what sense are the harpers different from the four beasts and the 144,000 [believers] of :3? Or was God's one voice somehow like the voice of many harpers, unity in diversity? Or is it that the believers are each represented by an Angel before God, and so the voice and harping of the Angels is that of their charges on earth, those whom they represent? This is the option I prefer.

John often 'flits' between earth and Heaven in his visions, because he is demonstrating how situations and people on earth have their representatives in Heaven amongst the Angels who are before God's throne in the Heavenly court room. Here, John sees the 144,000 on Mount Zion, on earth. But he then hears a crowd in Heaven singing the song which only the 144,000 can learn. The voices in Heaven are those of their representative Angels; the singing of victory songs in Heaven with harps is likewise performed by Angels in Rev. 5:8,11,12. The 144,000 are "without fault before the throne of God" (14:5) because their representative Angels stand there before the throne acceptable to God (14:3). The Lamb, the Lord Jesus, is now *standing* on earth, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, rather than *sitting* at the Father's right hand in Heaven. This surely speaks of the time of His return to earth. Psalm 2:6-12 anticipates the Messiah as being enthroned on Mount Zion; then will be fulfilled Is. 24:23 "The Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion".

14:3 *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders*- Here we have the situation on earth merging with the situation John is beholding in Heaven. There's a frequent connection made between the Angels and the redeemed at the Lord's return, for He returns from Heaven with the Angels. It will be so appropriate for the believers to be united with their guardian Angels at this time. We shall stand before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Rev. 14:3 paints the picture of the righteous singing before the throne of judgment. In Him, in that day, will be fulfilled Zeph. 3:17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee... He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful (us) for the solemn assembly", when the Lord will keep Passover with us again.

And no one could learn the song- This implies there will be those who try to repeat the song, seek to enter the life eternal, but cannot. Eternal life, salvation, redemption, is likened to an eternally sung song.

Save the hundred and forty four thousand, they that had been purchased out of the earth- The 144,000 refers therefore to those who had been redeemed from the earth / land promised to Abraham during the last day tribulation. The idea of purchased "out of" may refer to how some of these latter day Jewish converts are apparently taken out of the earth / land to some safe place (see on 11:12; 12:5). Perhaps there will be a literal 144,000 who repent and convert to Christ, and seeing they did so in the face of the worst tribulation, they are worthy of special mention.

14:4 *These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins*- The "women" are the prostitute women associated with the Babylon system. The contrast is with Babylon the whore who rides the beast system. We have not yet encountered her in Revelation; but as I have stressed so often, we do not have here a linear, chronological timeline being presented. Rather do images rotate and merge, as is typical of the apocalyptic genre.

The faithful Jewish remnant within the land will have resisted pressure to convert to Islam. Such Muslim pressure upon Jews living in the land to convert to Islam is easily imaginable. For the Koran teaches Moslems that they have a special duty to bring Jews to Islam: "O children of Israel!... Believe in what I have sent down to you (this Qu'ran), confirming that which is with you, the Taurat [Torah]... and mix not truth with falsehood" (Surah 2:40-42). Indeed, much of the lengthy second Surah of the Koran is full of such demands for "the children of Israel" to submit to Islam. The reason given is that the Jews supposedly "conceal the truth while they know it" because the Torah supposedly supports Islam, although Muslims claim the Jews

changed the original (Surah 2.146); and also that Mohammed was sent to the Jews but they rejected Him (Surah 2.151).

These are they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes- Alluding to Mk. 15:41, the women who followed Jesus around Galilee in the days of popularity and mass adulation, followed Him also to the rejection and loneliness of the cross. To follow "whithersoever" is a challenge. Mk. 15:40,41 makes the point that the women who followed the Lord in fair weather times in Galilee also followed Him to the darkness of the cross: “There were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the little and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him”. Mt. 13:55 makes it apparent that Mary the mother of James and Joses is clearly enough Mary the mother of Jesus- for He had brothers of those names. She had followed Him to Cana, and now, she faithfully followed Him to the cross. But Rev. 14:4 alludes to all this by saying that all the redeemed follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Thus Mary and the ministering women, following even to the cross, become typical of us all. Not only following the Lord in popularity, but also in the real and radical demands of His cross.

These were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb- The promise of greater harvest is perhaps implied in the subsequent presentation of the Gospel we meet here. At the time of the Lord's return, many others will be converted, far greater in number than those redeemed in this dispensation? Surely "firstfruits" implies that.

14:5 *And in their mouth was found no lie. They are without blemish*- The very language used about the Lord Jesus in 1 Pet. 2:22. His personality and character, down to His way of speaking, are imputed to us. Only by imputed righteousness can it be said that a person has no guile (Ps. 32:2). Guile / deceit / dishonesty is seen as the epitome of sin, and to be without guile is the height of righteousness. To be honest about who we are, not seeking to impress, being straightforward, who we are matching what we say- this, rather than dramatic works, is the height of righteousness. "Found" implies a process of searching- at the judgment? "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev. 14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

The reference is to Zeph. 3:13 concerning the repentant remnant of Israel. 'Guile' is an allusion to Jacob- this is the true Israel purged of Jacob's negative side. This confirms my suggestion that primarily the 144,000 refer to a group of Jewish Christians redeemed from the earth / land of Israel as a result of their righteous response to the tribulation which comes upon them and their land. It is of course the Lord Jesus who has no guile in His mouth (Is. 53:9)- they are counted as "in Christ" because by faith and baptism they have become in Him, as a result of the Elijah ministry of the last days. We should be beginning that work now.

"Without blemish" is the language of spotless sacrifice in the LXX (Ex. 29;1; Lev. 1:3; 4:3; 5:15; Ez. 43:22,23). As in Col. 1:22 and Jude 24, the faithful are presented faultless before God's throne- only by the Lord's righteousness being counted to them.

14:6- see on Dan. 4:17.

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good news to proclaim to those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people- Rev. 14:6 describes the great latter fulfilment of the great preaching commission in terms of an Angel flying in Heaven with the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached to all nations and languages. Surely the implication is that the latter day preachers of the Gospel are walking on earth in league with an Angelic system above them, empowering and enabling them. See on Gal. 5:25. Rev. 14:6 appears to draw a distinction between "them that dwell on the earth" and the more general inhabitants of the world: "every nation, kindred, tongue and people".

An Angel may be given a mission to preach somewhere, and success may be arranged by Him in prospect, but it is for us to put the work into practical effect, without which the converts will not be produced, despite the Angels preparatory work, although of course ultimately this is all foreknown by God Himself. Thus we read in Rev. 14:6 of an Angel being sent "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth (same word as 'land'- i.e. the land of Israel), and to every nation, kindred and tongue and people "(i.e. the whole world as well). However, this actual work of preaching to the Jews and to the world will be done by the saints; thus they will work out in practice what was achieved by the Angel in God's plan. In this context it is worth considering how the great commission as recorded in Mt. 28:18,19 is set in the context of other references in Matthew to world-wide preaching. We are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations; and yet it is the Angels who will gather the harvest from "the world" (Mt. 13:38), Angels who will "repay" us for our work at the last day (Mt. 16:27), Angels who gather the elect from "the four winds" (Mt. 24:31) and gather [converts from] "all nations" to judgment (Mt. 25:32). The implication surely is that in our preaching work, the Angels are with us and will gather in the converts which we have made.

The whole scene in 14:6-9 makes more sense if we imagine the nations presently living in the land promised to Abraham, confederated against Israel under Babylon, now having the Gospel preached to them. They are told *not* to confederate under Babylon. The 'earth dwellers' in the OT (especially in Joshua) invariably refer to the nations dwelling in the land, not the whole planet. Yet Babylon will reign over "the kings of the earth" (17:18), another phrase so often used in the OT of the nations dwelling in the land. So it would seem that generally they will reject the warning given to them to keep separate from her. Yet Revelation ends with: "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it". The kings of the land, once confederate with Babylon, will in the very end come to Zion and accept her rather than Babylon as their capital.

This witness to the nations, tribes etc. living in the earth / land promised to Abraham is also a witness to the entire planet. For the world's attention will be riveted upon what is going on there. But this need not necessarily have to follow chronologically from the 144,000 appearing on Mount Zion. It may be explaining how it came about, that those 144,000 are there; for I have suggested that this group refers to the largely Jewish converts made during the tribulation period, those who responded to the witness made by the "woman" of 12:1 (see note there), whose preaching to them was represented by the Angel flying through the heavenly throne room which John is beholding.

14:7 *He said with a great voice: Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour of His*

judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters- Conversion is a call to worship our creator, not merely assent to a set of theology. In the latter day context, the call is to worship *God* rather than the beast, who demands total worship (13:12,15). This is a last minute appeal: "For the hour of His judgment is come". Like many Old Testament prophets, is this a last minute appeal for repentance in order to avert Israel and the world's final judgment? Perhaps it will succeed, explaining why some potential judgments like the seven thunders do not come (see on 10:4). "When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9); for "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executes" (Ps. 9:16). Israel's condemnation was to be "an instruction" unto the surrounding nations (Ez. 5:14,15). And Israel herself will know that "I am the LORD" in their final condemnation, as Ezekiel so often prophesied. This clearly associates God's judgment with a learning process. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise" (Prov. 21:11). Thus the nations are intended to learn from the experience of Israel's condemnation (Hos. 2:10). The repentance of Egypt will be because "the Lord shall smite Egypt... and they shall return to the Lord" (Is. 19:18-22).

Heaven, earth, sea and waters have all featured in the descriptions of the judgments which have so far fallen upon the earth / land promised to Abraham. The world is bidden accept that the God who brought such turmoil upon them was also their creator.

14:8- see on Rev. 16:12.

And another, a second angel, followed, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication- The word "fallen" occurs many times in Revelation. Believers either fall before the Lord, or fall in condemnation. We must fall and be broken- one way or the other (Mt. 21:44). Making others sin is the ultimate sin. To make just one brother stumble means we should be thrown into the sea with a millstone around our necks (Mk. 9:42). And Babylon has made multitudes stumble. Just as "the beast" is introduced in 11:7 without introduction, so "Babylon" is spoken of here as if we know all about her; although she is only spoken of in detail chapter 17. Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that Babylon or a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

In 18:4 we have the same cry, "Babylon is fallen!" and there is then an appeal to come out from her- to leave the beast system which has been dominating the earth / land. This appeal is repeated here when 14:9 warns that those who receive her mark will be destroyed. This is therefore the equivalent to the urgent appeal in :6 to respond to the Gospel. Babylon has fallen from heaven's perspective, but the fact people are asked to separate from her suggests that on earth, she appears still standing.

The Old Testament source passages teach the same; it is a man on a watchtower who perceives from afar that Babylon has fallen (Is. 21:8-10); and Isaiah's first hearers were hearing this *before* Babylon fell. Likewise Jer. 51:8 suggests that at the time of the cry that "Babylon is fallen!", she could still repent and avert her judgment: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed". And the context speaks of her *impending* fall and destruction as if it is yet future: "I will send to Babylon strangers who shall winnow her; and they shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her around... They shall fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans" (Jer. 51:2,4).

Drinking a cup of wine is a double symbol. It's either "the cup of blessing" or the cup of condemnation. Hence the breaking of bread service leads us to a T-intersection, we take the cup either to our eternal blessing or eternal condemnation. And we can't flunk the choice. God's judgment of her is because of her fornication. Babylon caused the nations around her to drink her wine of fornication, making them "mad" (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8). Wine being a symbol of teaching, this must point to 'Babylon' spreading the idea of Islamic fundamentalism to the nations around Israel (as "the nations" seem to normally refer to), making them "mad" in their hatred of Israel. Iran and Iraq, geographical Babylon/Assyria, are already noted for this. As Sennacherib relied heavily on propaganda and religious rhetoric, so Nebuchadnezzar and his latter-day equivalent will do even more so. Jer. 51:55 speaks of Babylon as "the great voice", referring to her religious propaganda. This will be quite complex, carrying with it all the power and persuasion of a pseudo-intellectuality: "Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you" (Is. 47:10).

14:9 *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives the mark on his forehead, or upon his hand*- As noted on :8, this is an appeal not to continue part of the Babylon system, to be one of the brave who refuse to have the mark of the beast upon them (see on 13:17). This is particularly an appeal to those dominated by the beast, within the territory of her dominion, which is the earth / land promised to Abraham. The mark on the forehead alludes to how prostitutes had their name on their foreheads (Jer. 3:3). By using Babylon as a prostitute, they themselves became as prostitutes. The warning is to come out of the beast / Babylon whore system, or refuse to submit to it even on pain of death.

Daniel's friends' refusal to obey the command to worship Babylon's King is alluded to, which prophesy how the saints of the last days will be tested just as Daniel was, with a like miraculous deliverance. Daniel's representative role is most clearly shown in the figurative death, resurrection and judgment which he receives in Dan. 10. In this Daniel is acting out the experience of each of the approved. The comforting "Fear not Daniel" (Dan. 10:12,19) slots in to many other instances of Angels saying these words to frightened men. This makes it appropriate to speculate that the latter day believers will hear the same words from the Angel who comes to gather them (and cp. Is. 35:4, which gives the same "fear not" message to the generation which sees the second coming).

14:10 *He also shall drink of the wine of the anger of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*- The wine of Babylon's fornication is matched by the wine of God's anger. I will be "without mixture", maybe implying that some who are condemned drink wine mixed with water, i.e. are condemned with a lesser condemnation. To drink wine without any dilution at all was unusual in the first century. It would've been very bitter. But those who are told Babylon has fallen and yet still take her whore's mark into their foreheads with Angels flying overhead appealing for repentance- will be punished most severely. The grades of condemnation inversely reflect the grades of acceptance, one star differing from another in glory, one over five cities, another over two.

The sulphur is to recall the destruction of Sodom. Sodom is equated with Babylon. Those who refused to leave or who turned back [Lot's wife] represent those in the last days who will refuse the Angelic call to leave the Babylon system.

This destruction will be "in the presence of" the Lamb and the Angels. He will be back on earth to judge this system, bringing His angels with Him. The Angels John had seen in vision in heaven would come to earth, to the very situations they had as it were acted out in the heavenly throne room. The other Biblical information about condemnation suggests that the rejected will be taken quickly out of the Lord's presence. He takes no pleasure in their destruction. So maybe we have here a snapshot of their agony in His presence as they perceive their final rejection before they are cast out of His presence. The rejected will be punished in the Lord's presence, and then cast out of His presence (2 Thess. 1:9) into outer darkness. This suggests two stages of condemnation: the slinking away, within the Lord's presence, and then bring cast out into outer darkness (perhaps literal darkness?). The rejected are handed over to the judge who then casts them into prison or fire. The branches are cast forth, and then (stage two) cast into the fire (Jn. 15:6). There are verses which speak of the rejected being slain before Christ, cut in sunder (i.e. slain with the sword) (Is. 63:1-6; Mt. 24:51; Lk. 19:27). This presumably suggests that some will be punished quite soon after their rejection (e.g. the unwilling Jewish 'subjects' of Christ's Kingdom, Lk. 19:27), whilst others will be punished and yet expelled from the Lord's presence to suffer the agony of existing without any relationship with the Lord they once loved. Again, Lk. 19:27 has an example of both. Surely these are the "many stripes" of Lk. 12:47,48, compared to the "few stripes" of immediate death. Likewise the degree of punishment for individual Israelites in the wilderness was surely reflected in how long they were kept alive until they were finally wasted away by the Lord's hand. Some of the nations / political systems of the world are immediately destroyed at the Lord's coming, whilst others have their suffering period extended for a season and time (Dan. 7:12). The rejected amongst the people of God will in some ways share the condemnation of the world which they loved. It may be that there will be different geographical areas of punishment; some are cast into fire, others into outer darkness, into prison (Mt. 5:25)... or are these simply saying that there will be different kinds of punishment? Or are they different figures for the same thing?

14:11 *And the smoke of their torment*- The allusion is to how Abraham saw the smoke of Sodom's destruction from a distance. They themselves are consumed, but the smoke, the memorial of their condemnation, will eternally remain. Smoke is a memorial to destruction- the individuals are totally and permanently destroyed, but the memorial of that remains. We will remember the rejected, in some sense, for eternity.

Goes up for ever and ever- This going on throughout the 'aion of the aions' would suggest that there will always be the reminder of the condemnation of sinners. How this will be achieved in practice is hard to envisage. But in some way, there will always be a reminder of the rejection and judgment of the unworthy of this present dispensation. This will serve as a powerful reminder to the mortals of any future age or dispensation; it may well be something which we use to remind them of the seriousness of sin.

A*nd they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name*- They are the antithesis of the worshippers of God, who have no rest day nor night in worshipping Him (Rev. 4:8). But this doesn't mean they consciously exist, for the Bible is clear that death is unconsciousness. As noted about *the smoke*, it is the memorial of their destruction which remains, and the "rest" in view is that which they could have experienced. For the same word is used of the "rest" which the Lord Jesus promised to those who believe in Him ("I will give you rest", Mt. 11:28); and although a different Greek

word is used, the idea is the same in the descriptions of the Kingdom of God as a "rest" *for the people of God* (Heb. 4:9,10). But these are not the people of God. The way they missed this eternal rest will be eternally remembered. Another possibility is that "They have no rest day nor night" has a different reference to "the smoke" ascending up "for ever and ever". It may refer to the awful moments, days, months, maybe years, the rejected have to exist after their rejection. Their rejection means that simply existing is mental torment.

This situation will be ongoing "day and night". In the new Jerusalem, there will be no night (Rev. 22:5)- but they will be outside of it, where day and night still exist. This is another illustration of the way that the Kingdom of God starts as a little stone at the return of the Lord Jesus, and spreads to fill the earth.

14:12 *Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*- Keeping the commandments and having the Faith in Christ are paralleled. To have the commandments is to keep them (Jn. 14:21 Gk.)- a true understanding leads to obedience in practice. Perhaps the emphasis is on the idea of 'keeping'; for under the beast's domination, the Christians within the territory dominated by it will be sore pressed to renounce their faith.

14:13- see on Rom. 14:8,9.

And I heard the voice from heaven saying: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this time forward. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them- "Yes, says the Spirit" may refer to a Spirit-Angel (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7) who was the "voice from Heaven", gasping as it were at the wonder of how those who die in the Lord will be saved. Their works "follow" them, literally 'walk alongside with them'. Actions are important, even if we are saved by faith. For faith without works is dead. We come to judgment with our works, our lives, standing next to us. Those who do not worship the beast or have his mark will be killed (13:15,16; 14:11 cp. Dan. 3:6); in this context we are told by a special announcement from Heaven "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (14:13)- as if there will be a special blessing for those who die in the tribulation. This is why the 144,000, representing those converted at this time, are singled out for such special attention and blessing. "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast... his image... his mark... sing the song of Moses" (15:2,3)- implying that their persecution by the beast was like being in Egypt, and their deliverance therefore gave rise to a new song of Moses. Their "works" which followed them may simply refer to their enduring in their faith in Christ and refusal of the beast's mark; for in John's Gospel, the work of God is to believe in His Son (Jn. 6:29).

14:14 *And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw one sitting like a Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle*- The white cloud may be representing Angels, or the faithful believers (Heb. 12:1), or simply a reference to how the Lord ascended in a cloud and will return likewise (Acts 1:11). He is now King, crowned, but on account of His humanity as "Son of Man", He is well qualified to judge men. He has intimate personal experience of what it is to be human, and can judge humans appropriately. His sickle is sharpened- He is about to harvest.

14:15 *And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud: Send forth your sickle and reap. For the hour to reap comes. For the harvest of the earth is ripe*- The Lord Jesus reaps the harvest of the earth, what has been brought forth in spiritual fruit in the territory of the earth / land dominated by the beast. This is another explanation of how came about the opening scene of the 144,000 in :1. His emphasis is upon harvesting the good harvest; the

second reaping of :18-20 is of the wicked. In the parable of Mt. 13:30, both the wheat and the tares are "gathered", but to separate places.

The allusion is clearly to the judging of the inhabitants of the land of Israel once "the iniquity of the Amorites [was] full" (Gen. 15:16). And they refer to the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham. The "earth" here is 'the land'- of Israel. There is to be a spiritual harvest of repentant Jews now accepting Christ. This is the 144,000 of :1 (see note there). The harvest is (Gk.) over-ripe. The second coming will be delayed; wickedness and spirituality will be ripe for judgment but it will be delayed [to allow yet more to repent, such is the Lord's grace?].

Both the cross and the final judgment (Rev. 14:7,15) are described in John's writings as 'the hour coming'; the parallel language indicates that he presents the cross as the essence of the judgment. Is. 53 speaks of the Lord as being "bruised" upon the cross. But Is. 42:4 had earlier used this language about Christ, saying that He would be bruised with the result that he would "set judgment in the earth" (RVmg.). His bruising thus set forth judgment to all. There was a *sedile* or seat affixed to the cross, on which the victim sat in order to get temporary relief. Thus some accounts of crucifixion describe the victim as mounting the cross as one would mount a horse. This would make the cross capable of interpretation as some kind of seat or throne. And significantly, there are men on the right hand and left of the Lord, one rejected, the other gloriously accepted. See on Jn. 19:13.

14:16 *And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth and the earth was reaped*- "He that sat..." is the Lord Jesus in 4:3; 5:7. Now His throne is a cloud- of glory, seeing the time for His open glorification has come. The sickle is literally a gathering hook, designed to harvest fruit. It is the fruit of the Spirit which has been developed throughout the tribulation which is His primary interest. "Reaped" is a form of the word for "summer"- literally, 'reaping time'. It is spiritual fruit on the fig tree, the repentance of a remnant in Israel, which means 'summer' or reaping time has come (s.w. Mt. 24:32). In the Olivet prophecy, this is the final and most certain sign that of His return (Mk. 13:28; Lk. 21:30). All the possible sequences of events hinge around this- the repentance of a remnant within Israel. This remnant is the 144,000 (see on :1), which is why they are given such parade importance in Revelation. This is why we read of the 'reaping' of the earth, whereas the next harvesting is not spoken of in those terms; rather is it a gathering of bad crops to destruction.

14:17- see on Heb. 9:23.

Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle- See on :16. This is a gathering unto condemnation. John has been beholding the temple scene in heaven. But now Angels actually come out of it and go to earth in reality to perform things. We note that this Angel comes out of "The temple which is in Heaven" and another coming out of the altar. Does this imply that the one from the altar is responding to the death of God's people on that altar as sacrifices? Or is the altar in view the incense altar, suggesting that this action of judgment is in response to human prayer offered there?

14:18 *And another angel came out from the altar, he that has power over fire, and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. For her grapes are fully ripe*- Notice the Angelic cooperation. One Angel calls to another, informing that the time has come for the action which that Angel had been prepared to. This recalls the mutual function between the two Angels of Passover night; one hovering over the doors with blood on them, so that the destroyer Angel did not go there. See on :17. Perhaps the picture here is of an Angel coming out of the incense altar, and triggered

by the incense of our prayers, asking another Angel to do something dramatic on earth. This is how powerful prayer is, especially in the last days. And it would explain why the exact chronology and nature of events in the last days is to some degree open- because the more prayer, the quicker things will happen. The more the unjust judge was nagged [cp. prayer], the more he responded.

The idea of gathering bad fruit and dead branches from the vine and throwing them into the fire is alluding back to the Gospel of John and the Lord's description of the rejected being branches broken off from the true vine, because of their lack of spiritual fruit (Jn. 15:2). Thus it would appear that there is one Angel responsible for co-ordinating the punishment of the rejected, which he does with fire just outside Jerusalem. This suggests that the rejected will be punished by literal fire in the locality of the historical Gehenna. The judgment is of the wild vine of the earth. The people in view would therefore be apostate Israel, those who collaborated with the Islamic beast; and also of the beast itself, in that jihadist Islam presents themselves as the true vine, the true Israel of God, with the Jews and Christians as the rejected Israel of God.

14:19 *And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the anger of God*- The harvesting of the vine of the earth / land is different from the general judgment of all men and the Gentile world. The vine of the land may refer to specific judgment upon Israel- hence the reference to 1600 furlongs of judgment in 14:20, which was thought to be the length of the land of Israel.

This passage is quoting from Is. 63:1-6, where the treading of the winepress "without the city" (:20) is clearly with reference to the Lord's crucifixion "without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). As He said, in His death, there was the judgment of the [Jewish] world. Our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience. The essential reason why the people of the earth / land will be trampled there is because they had not accepted the judgment of the cross of Christ.

14:20 *And the winepress was trodden outside of the city; and there came out blood from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as a sixteen hundred stadia*- See on :19. Trampled in the winepress "outside the city", i.e. where Jesus was crucified (Jn. 19:20; Heb. 13:11-13) is as if to show that these judgments on Israel came because of what they had done to Jesus, and their refusal of the judgment of His cross. 1600 stadia was reckoned to be the length of the land. The Itenerarum of Antonius of Piacenza says the length of Palestine was 1664 stadia. It could be that the idea of the land becoming awash with blood, the whole length of it, could refer to the final conflagration there. It will be the Lord's judgment of the wild and fruitless vine, but will effectively be brought about by people themselves turning upon each other. And this has often been how God has preferred to have judgment executed throughout history, allowing men to judge themselves by their own actions and with their own swords, rather than by destroying them by bolts of Divine wrath rained down upon them.

"The horses" are not defined. They could be the horses with the Lord Jesus (19:14), but they are "white and clean", and trampling in blood seems an inappropriate clash of symbolism and figure. The other "horses" are those of the jihadist dominators of the land of chapter 6 and 9:17. "The horses" suggests there is indeed reference to some other horses mentioned in Revelation. So the idea would be, as noted above, that the fruitless or wild vine is trampled to destruction by the beast supporters destroying themselves and trampling upon each other. This kind of crazed

hatred within the camp of Israel's enemies has been often noted; and it is the horns who hate the whore who become so incensed against her that they figuratively eat her, performing cannibalism against her (17:16).

REVELATION CHAPTER 15

15:1- see on Rev. 19:11.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous. Seven angels having seven illnesses which are the last woe, for in them is finished the anger of God- Revelation 15 is a short introduction to the vials, and features a picture of a victorious, rejoicing multitude standing on a sea of glass, having gotten the victory over the beast. The vials in chapter 16 explain how this situation came about. One assumes that these seven plagues or illnesses are the seven vials. They may be part of the "plagues" with which the two witnesses smote their opponents "as often as they wished" (11:6; s.w. "illnesses"). In which case we note that they only smote them seven times. The same word for "plagues" (s.w. "illnesses" here) is used in the vials (16:9,21); these are the plagues brought upon Babylon "in one day" (18:4,8). They come, therefore, in quick succession, or even all at the same time; for the fall of Babylon is presented as surprisingly fast and quick. the seven vials / bowls cannot therefore very well refer to events over an extended period of history in the past, as insisted by the continuous historical school.

The purpose of these seven last plagues is not punishment or bloodletting for the sake of it. They are in order to complete the necessary wrath of God, and to usher in the glorious Kingdom situation of :2. This is why in 21:9 it is mentioned that it was the Angel who carried the seven last plagues who was the one who also showed John the vision of the glorified bride. Those plagues were necessary for her final development and exhibition.

15:2 *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those that had conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God*- The sea has been whipped up by winds and by the emergence of the sea beast from it (see on 13:1). Now all is calm, and those "in Christ" can stand on stormy water, just as He did. But the sea water is strangely mixed with fire. This blessed peace could come about only through the fire of Divine judgment. Those paraded upon or by that sea are those who had overcome the beast and the command to make an image to him and have his name upon them. These again refer to the specific group of Christian converts who endure the tribulation, loving not their lives unto death; the 144,000 of 14:1 (see note there). They are now the harpers, as opposed to the harpers of Babylon (18:22). John himself had earlier stood by the sea observing the sea beast emerge (13:1); now, those who endured the beast without losing their faith, and even came to Christian faith during his domination, stand in that same place as John, who himself had undergone tribulation from the Roman and Jewish beast of his day.

15:3 *And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, singing: Great and marvellous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are Your ways, You King of the ages*- The saints will sing "The Song of Moses", which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the

Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Is. 51:9; Ez. 29:3) ... having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels) ... they sing the song of Moses... Who shall not fear You (cp. Ex. 15:14-16) ... all nations shall come and worship before You; for Your judgments are made manifest", referring to how the local nations of Canaan, the earth / land promised to Abraham, were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea deliverance of the faithful.

15:4 *Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You only are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You. For Your righteous acts have been revealed*- "Who shall not...?" suggests that others now surely must agree to glorify the Lord's Name. The events outlined in Revelation so far have involved the complete destruction of all people in the earth / land promised to Abraham apart from the faithful. So this appeal is to the rest of planet earth. All those nations will therefore come and worship at Jerusalem because of the events in the land promised to Abraham which have unfolded before their eyes, exactly in accord with the prophecies of Revelation.

God's judgments are in all the earth right now (Ps. 105:7). God judged nations in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character manifest. This harder side of God converts men, and will convert them at the final judgment. God judged nations [often terribly] in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character manifest. A number of OT passages (e.g. Is. 25:3) hint that a remnant of Israel's latter day enemies will actually repent and accept Yahweh's Truth- *after* their experience of His judgments. God is to be feared and worshipped because of the hour of His judgment (Rev. 14:7); but even later, "when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9).

15:5 *And after these things I saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened*- At the end of the saints' latter day tribulation, the Most Holy is opened, just as it was on Christ's death; as if His hanging on the cross is parallel to the saints' tribulation. The Angels comment "It is done" when the saints are finally delivered (16:17), as our Lord could say "It is finished" at the end of His sufferings. The great earthquake which is then described (16:18) matches the earthquakes at Christ's death and resurrection. See on Mk. 13:13.

In Isaiah 6:1-4 we have a vision of "the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls; 6:4). The Lord "high and lifted up" (6:1) is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord, lifted up and exalted "very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord's crucifixion. So it is established that Is. 6 is a vision of the crucified Lord Jesus, high and lifted up in glory in God's sight, whilst covered in blood and spittle, with no beauty that man should desire Him. Now Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). Now the work of the cross comes to its ultimate term.

Now all those who suffered with the Lord during the tribulation will likewise find heaven opened, the way into the holiest made manifest before their eyes.

15:6 *And there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven illnesses, dressed with precious linen, pure and bright and golden sashes around their chests*- The vials are poured out by angels "clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles" (15:6). This description is similar to that of the One like the Son of man of chapter 1- the Lord Jesus Christ. It could therefore be appropriately applied to those who have identified themselves with the Lord, that is to say, the saints. Rev. 19:8 says that fine linen is "the righteousness of the saints". These are perhaps the latter believers of whom we read in 11:5,6: "If any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies"; and "these have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues [s.w. "illnesses"], as often as they will". Their power "to smite the earth with all plagues" is exactly what happens in the vials, which are full of allusion to the plagues on Egypt. The Angels may therefore represent the believers, whose guardians they are- and it is those latter day believers who pour out the vials of the wrath of God, the seven last plagues.

Given all the allusions to Egypt, we wonder why there are seven plagues and not ten. Perhaps this is to suggest that potentially possible judgments will not happen; perhaps because of the prayers of the saints at the time, or the required repentance of Israel happening, or God's mercy in cutting short the days. See on 10:4.

15:7 *And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the anger of God, who lives for ever and ever*- The idea may be that God's eternity is the backdrop to His judgments. They are temporal, but the God of love is eternal. His judgments are not the flash in a pan, red hot anger of an offended deity. They have been long planned and refined. Yet He does have wrath, for that is all part and parcel of being "love" itself. Verse 1 has spoken of the wrath of God being filled up or finished; and here the bowls are filled with His anger. The image of bowls helps therefore to get the idea over- that His wrath has now ended, in its fullness it has been poured out. And His people shall now bask only in His love.

15:8 *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished*- As noted throughout chapter 14, there is an amazing theme in Revelation of last minute appeals being made to people throughout the closing judgments. Such is the desire of the Father and Son for human salvation. But now, although the way into the holiest is open, into direct personal with God, it is open only to the redeemed. The seven vials must be poured out, and during that time, repentance will be impossible for those upon whom they are poured. The rest of the Gentile world must watch, and then on reflection, come to repentance and acceptance of the Lord. Nobody new can come into fellowship with God whilst the seven bowls / vials are poured out; there is no appeal for repentance in the pouring out of the vials, for it is too late. This totally writes off the continuous historical attempts to apply the vials to events in European history stretching over the last few centuries. For people could as it were enter into the temple in that period.

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

16:1 *And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels: Go and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth*- Rev. 15 has presented the scene of God's people victorious, described in terms of the Red Sea having returned to its place, and the people singing "the song of Moses". But that was achieved by the pouring out of the plagues upon Egypt, and now in Rev. 16 we are shown how that position of triumph was achieved. The bowls are all allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. It has often been observed that Revelation, along with much Bible prophecy, presents the concluding vision and then goes on to explain how that came about. That is so, but for the persecuted first audience of the visions, the idea was surely that they [along with us] are to focus upon the end point- and how that point is reached is incidental to the wonder of the end point. And that is of great comfort to those who are living through the judgments and sufferings which lead up to that end point.

The usage of "bowls" is to connect with the earlier vision of the golden bowls containing incense, which represents the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). The idea is that prayer has direct result in God pouring out judgments on earth. See on :2.

The Old Testament basis for bowls used for pouring out is in the bowls for pouring out found on the table of shewbread (Ex. 25:29; Num. 4:7). But they were not for pouring out liquid, but for the frankincense which was to be placed upon the shewbread and burnt, in order to turn the bread into a memorial before God (Lev. 24:7). The LXX calls these bowls "incense cups". The pouring out of the seven last bowls of judgment is therefore portrayed in terms of incense / prayer; because it is the prayer of the faithful, especially in the last days, which brings forth these judgments which herald the coming of the Kingdom. Our prayers trigger action by Angels in Heaven which result in major events on earth. That is the sublime power of prayer.

Alfred Norris wisely observed in *The Apocalypse for Everyman*: “But if Trumpets are warnings, Vials or Bowls are outpourings. We have gone beyond mere disclosure, and again beyond the sounding of the alarm, and have reached the point where there is no return, nothing provisional: the end has come. God is pouring out His final judgements on the world, and there can be no turning back. There are a number of parallels in the Old Testament, where the verb *shaphak* is used in just such a way of the ultimate emptying out of God's irreversible judgements on His own or other people (see Psalm 69.24; 79.6; Isaiah 42.25; Jeremiah 10.25; Lamentations 2.4; 4.11; Ezekiel 7.8; 9.8, etc.; Hosea 5.10; Zephaniah 3.8)”. This is why in between the trumpets of warning and the final vials, there is a final desperate appeal through the preaching of the Gospel (Rev. 10:11; 11:3,6; 14:6,7). But after that, the temple is closed and no man can enter it (15:5-8). Revelation stresses God’s creative power- He is the creator of heaven, earth, sea and rivers. In the vials, we see a reversal of His creative activity.

16:2- see on Rev. 8:7; Rev. 13:17.

Harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image- This is after they have been appealed to, to rid themselves of this mark (see on 14:9). There is no opportunity now for repentance (see on 15:8). The sores recall the growths that appeared on the Philistines / Palestinians who captured the ark (1 Sam. 5:6). The destruction of Dagon in that passage perhaps looks forward to the image of the beast. Those who bear the mark of the beast are within the

territory of the beast- which is exactly where the Philistines were. "Harmful" translates a Greek word which in all of its 50 other occurrences means "evil" in a moral sense (e.g. 2:2). Their punishment was appropriate to their own evil. We wonder therefore if their usage of nuclear weaponry against Israel backfires upon them, and they themselves suffer the tumours associated with nuclear fallout.

I noted on :2 that these judgments come as a result of the prayers of the persecuted believers. The allusion of this first bowl is to the boils that broke out upon the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8-12). They were caused by Moses tossing ashes up into the air; whereas the boils of Rev. 16:2 come from a bowl being poured out upon earth. The ashes tossed into the air perhaps also represent prayer, rather similar to the incense which was in the bowl in Rev. 5:8. The ashes represent human prayer, the words of mere dust and ashes, a term Abraham used about himself when praying to God ("I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes", Gen. 18:27). So the equivalent of that symbolic offering of prayer was the pouring out of the bowl of judgment with boils in it. These associations would have been more immediately grasped by an illiterate audience, with their far greater visual sensitivity than we have as literate people.

But boils were one of the curses for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:27,35). Likewise Is. 1:6; 3:17: "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: wounds, welts, and open sores... therefore the Lord brings sores on the crown of the head of the women of Zion". We can assume that those Jews within the land receive these curses as a result of having impenitently broken the covenant. And yet boils were also the judgment upon Egypt. See also on :11. So we have here an example of where the unfaithful amongst God's people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). We are to examine ourselves at the breaking of bread and perceive that we drink the cup or bowl of either blessing or condemnation. For "bowl" here in Rev. 16 is really a 'cup', continuing the frequent OT idea of the judgments of God being a cup of wrath.

It's also significant that extreme, visible skin disease such as boils made a person an outcast from society. We recall how the beggar in the parable had "sores" (Lk. 16:20,21). Those who sided with the beast in order to keep "in" with society are now placed outside of society, in the terrible aloneness of condemnation.

16:3 *And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died, even the things that were in the sea*- The allusion is to the turning of the Nile into blood so that all the fish died (Ex. 7:14-25). But this is far more intense- the whole sea becomes blood, not just a river; and absolutely everything in it dies, not just the fish. This is Divine judgment on earth such as has never been seen before. That is the simple message. And yet the plagues on Egypt were each designed to elicit repentance, and that is the case here too.

Notice how the blood is what kills the life. When blood is the symbol of life, in the Hebrew Bible; and there is salvation and life eternal through the blood of Jesus. Again we see how there is a complete inversion of values, and the Christian worldview is antithetical to that of the surrounding world system. There can be no compromise. Drinking this blood brings death; drinking the Lord's blood gives life, and His people thereby drink springs of living water (Rev. 7:17; 22:14).

I suggested on 13:1 that the earth / land referring to the territory promised to Abraham, the "sea" refers to the areas immediately surrounding that territory- areas we now know as Iran, Egypt and Turkey. The allusion is to how the waters of Egypt were turned into blood (Ex. 7:17)- not simply as punishment in itself, but as an appeal to let Israel go, to stop persecuting the Hebrews. Which admirably fits the latter day

scenario we have suggested. The blood of a dead man is not liquid, but congealed. The picture is of mass death in these areas which gave birth to the sea beast of 13:1. Previously, a third part of the sea had become blood (8:8). But this failed to elicit repentance, and so now the other two thirds become blood too. The sea appearing blood red may allude to how a "part" of Israel were to be burned as if sea burned by fire (Am. 7:4); what had been done to Israel in 8:8 is now done to their persecutors from the neighbouring nations.

16:4 *And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters, and they became blood*- This is referring to judgments within the earth / land promised to Abraham; the surrounding sea has already been judged in :3. Again the allusion is to the judgments upon water sources which was part of the plagues upon Egypt in Ex. 7:19. That plague is alluded to in another judgment upon Egypt found in Ez. 32:6, where Egypt is told that she shall be covered with her own blood to the extent that her rivers will run with her own blood. And that prophecy goes on to state that her sun, moon and stars shall be extinguished, causing darkness (Ez. 32:7,8)- ideas to be developed here in :8,10. It is unclear when this prophecy of Ezekiel had its fulfilment. The initial context is of Israel trusting in Egypt for help against the Assyrian. And latter day Israel may likewise look to Egypt for help against the latter day Assyrian. But Egypt too, part of the "sea", the territory immediately bordering the "land" promised to Abraham, is to be destroyed. Water turning in the blood of death may refer to some form of literal turning of water into the source of death- perhaps some form of biological warfare against Israel ends up affecting all within the land promised to Abraham. This is how God typically prefers to operate- allowing wicked men to be destroyed by the backfiring of their own devices, rather than by bolts of direct Divine judgment.

16:5 *And I heard the angel of the waters saying: Righteous are You, who is and who was, You Holy One, because You did thus judge*- Revelation abounds with examples of Angels talking and co-operating with each other in order to execute God's purpose; just as the Passover Angel hovered over the doors of the Israelites to as it were stop the destroyer Angel from killing the firstborns there. Gen. 1:26 "Let us make man..." is another example of Angelic cooperation. Here we have an Angel praising God on reflecting upon the wisdom of what has been done. The judgments of the Holy One are effected in practice by a specific Angel. This is the kind of thing we shall do throughout eternity. There is a recognition by the Angel that the awful judgments performed on earth at this point are a reflection of God's holiness and not of any evil or caprice ("You Holy One").

That a specific Angel controls “the waters” in an area is also implied by the way flood waters are described as praising God (Ps. 42:8; 148:7), water trembling at God’s presence (Ps. 77:17; Hab. 3:10), and the deep waters mourning (Ez. 31:15). How else can waters sensibly be personified as having such feelings, unless these figures of speech are in fact based upon the real existence of a personal “Angel of the waters”? We note that there is also an Angel controlling the four winds (Rev. 7:1,2) and another with power over fire (Rev. 14:18). Clearly we are to understand that the entire cosmos is split up under the control of specific Angels; and we to some extent will take over from the Angels. For the "world to come" is for us to take over and not for Angels. This delegation of specific responsibilities to God's people is a strong theme in the Bible. Each member of the household is given specific tasks to do, there were good works intended for us from the foundation of the world, another parable speaks of being given five or two cities to rule over, we shall be king-priests (Rev. 5:10), and the priests had specific responsibilities. It is seen now in the body of Christ, where

each has a unique role as members of that body. All this provides a window onto what eternity will be like.

16:6 *For they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy*- As the blood of the "saints and prophets" was poured out, so the Angel had poured out a bowl of judgment. The "saints" may refer to Israel as well as Christian believers, those trodden down by the beast (Dan. 7:25). The "prophets" could refer to those killed by the beast system for their latter day preaching; for 'prophesy' is strictly just a speaking forth of God's word, and not necessarily a transmitting of new material by Divine inspiration. But perhaps the murder of the two witnesses is in view, who faithfully prophesied throughout the three-and-a-half-year tribulation before being killed (see on 11:3). The pouring out of blood is the language of sacrifice upon an altar; perhaps literally the saints and Christian preachers will be killed and sacrificed by the jihadists. Which would explain why an angel from the heavenly altar now speaks (:7).

16:7 *And I heard another angel out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments*- As noted on :6, the jihadists may pour out the blood of their victims literally on altars, as if in sacrifice. Which is why now the angel associated with the heavenly altar agrees that the judgment of these people is in truth and righteousness. It is not the expression of the wrath of some capricious God; the judgment is appropriate and a reflection of righteousness rather than of evil intent.

The justice of Divine judgment is emphasized repeatedly; and that all God's people will recognize and appreciate His justice. This is distasteful to modern man, who prefers to think that consequences for sin can and ought to be cleverly gotten around. Those who borrowed more than they could repay... should just be shown debt forgiveness. Those who become mentally and physically ill as a result of abusive choices... should just be healed by medical science. Disobedience is to be endlessly justified by obsessive considersation of background factors. *Why* someone misbehaves has become all important, eclipsing the misbehaviour and consequences thereof. The death penalty is seen as totally unacceptable as a consequence for sin- when it is in fact the penalty God has given [although I personally disagree with man administering that penalty on his own judgment]. Succesful life is seen as all about getting around the consequences for sin. But all this cannot ultimately be the case. Sin is serious, and brings death. Once we allow ourselves to be convicted of sin, then the struggles over Divine justice become less. Judgment for sin is then acceptable by us. There is a God, whose judgments will ultimately be done in this earth. And His children, who see things from His perspective, will join the Angels in glorifying Him for how He has judged.

16:8 *And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire*- As noted on :4, the judgment of the sun is mentioned in Ez. 32:7,8 as part of the plagues upon latter day Egypt, whereby her water is turned to blood and darkness comes upon her as a result of judgment upon her sun. But before that happens, the sun becomes very hot and scorches those upon the earth / land; or perhaps this specifically happens to latter day Egypt. The language of scorching may suggest nuclear holocaust; if the attempts to destroy the state of Israel by nuclear weaponry backfire, or the weapons are turned against each other due to internal conflict, then such a scenario is imaginable. And it would be appropriate to the way that God prefers to let men judge themselves rather than judging by His direct bolts of judgment. The "sun" might refer to some particular leader within the beast's political leadership, which are often described as the sun, moon and stars of a nation or

coalition. And this is just how they are used in Ez. 32:7,8 which is the source passage for these bowls of judgment. Again we note that "it was given to it..." to scorch men. All power is of God, the cataclysms of these very last days will not at all mean that earth has come adrift from God and evil has found its own momentum and power. All is and will be under His direct supervision and control.

16:9 *And men were scorched with great heat*- The scorching is a plague, an illness. As noted on :8, this seems the language of nuclear holocaust. In their time of destruction, they will realize that all this is from God. But the tragedy of the rejected is that they will perceive God's hand, "know Yahweh" by His judgments, but all too late. See on 1:7. Now is the time for repentance; the rejected will be brought to the point of recognizing God and His Son, but all tragically too late. Being scorched with great heat from the sun is the language only used elsewhere of the suffering of the faithful latter day remnant in Israel at the hands of the beast (7:16). What the beast members did to God's people shall now be done to them. Scorching by the sun is the idea used in the parable of the sower concerning those believers who stumble because the sun of tribulation and persecution scorches them (Mt. 13:6,21). This will have particular reference to the tribulation. Some will fall away because of it; but by doing so, they experience their final judgment. The condemnation process will therefore be a giving of people what they have themselves decided in this life. And those who scorch others and make them stumble shall themselves be scorched at the last day.

And they cursed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues- It is the beast who is characterized by blasphemy (Rev. 13:1,5,6; 17:3). They preferred to follow the mindset of the world around them, rather than repent.

And they did not repent and give Him glory- This continues the allusions to the plagues on Egypt, in that Pharaoh is described as not repenting and therefore not giving God glory. In Rev. 14:7, the appeal has been made to repent and give glory to God ("Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour of His judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth"). The purpose of the bowls of judgment was to elicit repentance, and as with the plagues on Egypt, they could be cut short at any time if people repented. We note that glory is given to God by repentance; hence Achan was asked to give God glory by repenting ("give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me now what you have done!", Josh. 7:19). The frequent appeals to nations to give glory to God are likewise appeals for repentance (e.g. Ps. 96:7). This is the true beauty of holiness: " Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name. Bring an offering, and come before Him. Worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29). A man standing at a tram stop repenting of a sin of three months ago as he recalls it... this is the beauty of holiness. Thus Judah were to give glory to God lest judgment come- i.e. they were to repent (Jer. 13:16; Mal. 2:2).

Admittedly the scorching by the sun is not featured in the recorded plagues on Egypt, although all the other bowls do allude to them. But we note that On or Heliopolis was 'sun city' and the allusion may be to a plague upon that city which is not recorded in Exodus. This may also be alluded to in Jer. 50:13 LXX. The idea may simply be that the latter day judgments are based upon those plagues, but are not exactly identical (thus there are seven of them, whereas there were ten plagues on Egypt; and the order bears no resemblance apart from the seventh bowl and seventh plague both including hail). Although we note that Israel were unaffected by seven of the ten plagues, and here we have seven plagues; perhaps suggesting that the faithful in Israel likewise will be preserved from these plagues.

16:10 *And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain because of the pain*- This continues the allusions to the plagues on Egypt; in this case, to the plague of darkness (Ex. 10:21-29). That plague was specifically aimed at Pharaoh, who considered himself the incarnation of Ra, the sun god. Likewise this plague of darkness is specifically against the "throne of the beast", the leadership, the latter day Pharaoh / Antichrist. Just as God had a remarkable desire for Pharaoh personally to repent, so He even desires that Pharaoh's latter day equivalent repents. When we likely would have just assumed that such a person is not worthy of our evangelical attention. Such is God's desire that literally all men repent.

As noted on :4, the judgment of the sun is mentioned in Ez. 32:7,8 as part of the plagues upon latter day Egypt, whereby her water is turned to blood and darkness comes upon her as a result of judgment upon her sun. The beast has a throne and Kingdom, just as the Lord has; the beast is an anti-Christ, a fake Messiah with a fake Kingdom of God on earth. "The throne of the beast" could refer to his capital city. His "kingdom" refers to his people, those recognizing him as their king; for it is they, as persons rather than just an abstract entity, who gnaw tongues for pain. His capital city or centre of rulership could be in Jerusalem, or part thereof. The gnawing of tongues recalls the Lord's pictures of condemnation as a gnashing of teeth. The faithful are comforted that they shall no longer experience "pain" (21:4 s.w.), suggesting that the pain these beast worshippers now experience is the pain they inflicted upon the Lord's followers in the tribulation.

16:11 *They cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds*- As noted on :9, they recognize all too late that there is indeed a "God of heaven", a phrase often used at the time of Israel's exile in Babylon and whilst under Babylonian dominion. Their "sores" could refer to the result of nuclear radiation, brought upon them by the backfiring of their own devices against Israel; see on :2.

The language here of unbearable pain, sores and darkness is all taken from the description of the curses that would come upon God's people for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:28,29: "Yahweh will strike you with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart. You shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness"). As noted on :2, we have here an example of where the unfaithful amongst God's people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

16:12 *And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates, and the water of it dried up, so that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the east*- See on 9:14,15,16 16:12 and Jn. 3:32 and 9:14,15,16 for the significance of the Euphrates. I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. The drying up of "the great river" does indeed refer to Euphrates and the fall of Babylon, but this in turn is based upon the drying up of the Red Sea for God's people to leave Egypt. The implication is that they are under persecution but are released by judgment upon the world system which is oppressing them. Just as Israel were released from Egypt, and Judah were released from Babylon, so God's people will be released in the last days. But in both those historical precedents, there is ample evidence that many of them preferred to remain where they were, or to return there. And so it will be in the last day. The foolish virgins don't respond immediately.

The sixth trumpet in Rev. 9:14 and the sixth vial in Rev. 16:12,13 both refer to the Euphrates and are therefore referring to the same events. We needn't get too fazed by issues of chronological sequence in fulfilment. The trumpets and vials aren't necessarily events which follow each other chronologically. This is the assumption of a Greek-Latin mindset; but in the Hebrew thought which underpins the New Testament, events can be described without attention to sequence. The Old Testament prophecies therefore often appear to 'jump around' in fulfilment, with no clear sequence in mind. Each vial or trumpet can be a description of events which happen around the time of the Lord's coming, but not necessarily in sequence chronologically. The 'continuous historic' school of interpretation is driven by this insistence upon chronological sequence, but this results in seeking unrealistic fulfilments of the earlier phases of the sequence. These suggested fulfilments often do not hold true to actual history, and are out of context with the main thrust of the prophecies, which concern the situation in the land of Israel in the last days. The masses of aggressive horsemen in Rev. 9 are the "kings of the east" of Rev. 16:12- rulers who come from the East of Israel. This would easily refer to the way in which the jihadist coalition and many of its fighters originated in Iran and Afghanistan, East of the Euphrates, and then are released and allowed to march towards Israel. The allusion is to how God allowed Cyrus to dry up [or divert] the Euphrates, and Babylon fell as the Medes and Persians under Cyrus approached from the East. The kings of the East are therefore not believers, but the unbelieving enemies of Israel. I have elsewhere pointed out that the jihadists see themselves as warriors coming from the East to destroy Israel, as one of their own Hadith states: “The final battle will be waged by Muslim faithful coming on the backs of horses… carrying black banners. They will stand on the East side of the Jordan River and will wage war that the earth has never seen before... The black flags will come from the East, led by mighty men, with long hair and beards". These "kings of the east" who are released from the Euphrates are matched in Rev. 9:17-19 by John's description in first century language of the most terrifying technology and aggression of the hordes of horsemen who will be released upon Israel from the Euphrates: "They wore breastplates the colour of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur coming out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound". The killing of a third of those in the earth / land surely connects with the prediction of Zech. 13:8 that when Jerusalem briefly falls, two thirds of the Jews will be killed. Presumably the other third are killed by other methods- there is repeated teaching in Rev. 8 of how the 'thirds' of those in the land will suffer in the final tribulation.

Dan. 11:40 speaks of the latter day "king of the north" coming with horsemen and entering into the *eretz*, the land, like a restrained mighty river that is now gushing and overflowing its banks. This is absolutely the picture of Revelation 16: hordes of horsemen surging from the Euphrates river towards Israel. For the "king of the north" [historically this was Babylon or Assyria] to enter into the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham, he would have to cross the boundary of that land at the Euphrates anyway. He firstly enters the general *eretz* and then enters specifically the *eretz* of glory (Dan. 11:41)- the land inhabited by the Jews. This is described in Ez. 20:6 using the same Hebrew words- "a land... flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all the *eretz*". The land flowing with milk and honey hardly referred to the entire land promised to Abraham up to the Euphrates, much of which is barren desert. The glory

of the *eretz* was and is Canaan. We can see the process starting- the Islamists are taking over the wider *eretz*, and will then proceed to focus upon entering into the glory of the *eretz*, the current territory of Israel.

The allusion to the drying up of the Euphrates by Cyrus to bring about the fall of Babylon and the return of the exiles. Babylon fell- but the exiles generally didn't return as God intended. The fall of latter day Babylon is mentioned three times in Revelation (Rev. 14:8; 16:17-19; 17:16,17); and it's hard to work out *when* this happens; Rev. 16:17-19 places the fall of Babylon *after* Armageddon and Christ's return, whilst Rev. 17:16,17 places it *before* Armageddon. I see no contradiction here; it's just that the timing of the actual fall of Babylon and return of Christ are events which depend on various preconditions which may or may not be fulfilled by human freewill decisions. Such considerations may explain why it remains unclear whether Christ returns at the time of the 6th, or 7th vial. The language of both vials has application to His return, and yet some of it seems to speak of *before* His return. Perhaps it's beyond the technique of Biblical exposition to reconcile this language- it may simply be that the actual coming of Christ is dependent upon various conditional factors, and the inspired language of predictive prophecy is therefore appropriately ambiguous. Or take the way Revelation consistently speaks of "the beast" as if there is only one- and yet we read of three beasts, from the sea, the land and the abyss (Rev. 13,17). Is it really that the beast changes form over time- or are there three possible manifestations of "the beast" dependent upon various possible factors in human response? This approach would explain why Revelation is so hard to interpret if we insist on forcing all the events and pictures presented into a strictly progressive chronological sequence.

Another take on this problem is that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images, some of them overlapping; there is no attempt to give a chronological timeline of events, but rather rotating images, some of which overlap at the edges with each other, giving different angles and takes on the same events.

The drying up of the Euphrates in Rev. 16:12 is parallel with the four Angels being released in 9:14. Angels can represent nations, as we find in Daniel- in that each nation has a representative Angel in the court of Heaven. The Euphrates is literally drying up- water flows are at their lowest ever in recorded history, and it may be that the predicted water crisis in the Tigris-Euphrates ecoregion is what drives the peoples of that area to look westwards towards Israel, and to seek to resolve their problems by a united *jihad* against Israel. The problem of water is acute in the region: "There are thousands of new “water refugees” in Southern Iraq: people displaced by the changes to their natural environment. “Many villages are depopulated because of that. It has a terrible economic impact upon the population”" (Bakhtiar Amin, Human Rights Minister of Iraq from 2004 to 2005, as quoted at http://thoughtfulwander.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/marsh-arabs.html). Historically, the literal drying up, or diversion, of the Euphrates was what led to the fall of Babylon. It may well be that we are intended to make this connection when we read in Rev. 16:12 of the drying up of the Euphrates. The logical deduction is: 'So Babylon is about to fall'. And the fall of Babylon is spoken of in Revelation as coming about at the return of Christ to earth.

But it may not be simply that the Euphrates dries up of its own accord. Now that the key dams could easily fall into the hands of the Islamists, it could be that they like Saddam Hussein before them, dry up the river in order to exert their power over others. And this will bring about the required fulfilment of the prophecy. We recall

how the King of Assyria, another prototype of the latter day invader of Israel, boasted that he had dried up rivers and manipulated water sources, and therefore Jerusalem too would fall into his hands: "I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers" (2 Kings 19:24).

16:13 *And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, that looked like frogs*- I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. The connection here is clearly with the plague of frogs, the last plague which Pharaoh's magicians were able to fraudulently mimic by their false miracles (Ex. 8:1-15). And that is a theme here.

The drying up of the Euphrates leads to unclean spirits like frogs going out to deceive the nations and gather them to Armageddon. No particularly convincing explanation of the figure of frogs has yet been come up with. The suggestion that it refers to the spirit of the French revolution is desperate; the passage clearly demands a latter day fulfilment, and it would be hard to demonstrate that liberty, equality and fraternity came from dragon, beast and false prophet. It would be impossible to argue that e.g. the spirit of liberty came from the dragon, equality from the beast, etc. The idea is surely that as a frog jumps, so the spirit or teaching / influence of these entities spreads in leaps and bounds. But the appropriacy of the symbol becomes apparent when we realize that the Euphrates is fed by tributaries which feed into the Euphrates through vast marshes. The marshes around the Euphrates are so vast that they have given rise to the description of the locals there as 'the marsh Arabs'. Saddam Hussein drained some of these marsh areas and cut off water to others in his attempt to persecute the very groups which later fought against him and radicalized into the Islamic State. In a literal sense, the hordes pouring forth against Israel are the result of the Euphrates being literally dried up. Wikipedia claims that "According to the United Nations Environmental Program and the AMAR Charitable Foundation, between 84% and 90% of the marshes have been destroyed since the 1970s. In 1994, 60 percent of the wetlands were destroyed by Hussein's regime – drained to permit military access and greater political control of the native Marsh Arabs... After the 1991 Gulf War, Shia Muslims in southern Iraq rebelled against Saddam Hussein who in turned crushed the rebellion and further accelerated the draining of the Central and Hammar marshes in order to evict Shias that have taken refuge in the marshes" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tigris%E2%80%93Euphrates_river_system and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_Marshes accessed 12.08.2014].

These huge marshlands are full of frogs! The drying up of the Euphrates would be bad news for the frogs, who will have to leap and bound further afield in desperation. And so the idea seems to be that the Angel dries up the Euphrates, the hordes burst forth over that border towards the earth / land promised to Abraham; and the teaching of *jihad* against Israel, anti-Semitism in its final term, is spread by leaps and bounds out of the Euphrates basin, leading people from throughout the region and indeed the whole world, to come up against Israel. We note that there are even jihadist fighters from as far away as Australia fighting for the Islamists at the moment. Joel 3:9 speaks of huge multitudes of people being 'awoken' and going up to Jerusalem. The postmodern daze in which many people now live has created a desire for reality, for action, for escape from the virtual world into something truly exciting and passionate. And this is why well-heeled young white Australians are getting caught up in Islamic extremism and heading off to fight for them. Young unemployed males are now seeing the opportunity to play their violent online games in reality... they are awaking from the postmodernist haze of indifference. But sadly to the wrong reality.

This awakening is likely to continue and become ever more attractive, likely fuelled by the media's hatred of Israel and desire to portray her as a situation needing radical resolution.

"The beast" has "the false prophet" with him as a kind of associated act (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), the scarlet beast has a whore riding it, the sea beast has a horn which becomes its representative, the earth beast has an image of the beast. These associated acts indicate that each of these entities has an individual controlling them- and this is the antichrist figure. The dragon is described as having "his angels" with him during the fight against Michael and His Angels- which suggests he is to be seen as representative of a person. We note that the dragon was used in the Old Testament not as a symbol of Egypt, but specifically as a symbol of the individual Pharaoh of Egypt (Ez. 29:3); and likewise the dragon is used as the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar personally (Jer. 51:34).

"The false prophet" is given no introduction; he is introduced just as is the beast (see on 11:7). This may be because we have here in Revelation a kaleidoscope of images, according to the genre of apocalyptic. It is tempting to apply this term to the false prophet Mohammad. But perhaps there will arise an individual who claims to be a Divinely inspired Islamic prophet, the Mahdi. The dragon is still around, giving ideological support even if he has been politically destroyed in chapter 12, thrown out of political heaven as it were. And "the beast" suggests that the sea and earth beasts of chapter 13 are effectively one. The unclean spirits coming from their mouths are their teachings, beckoning people worldwide to come to the land promised to Abraham and fight against God's people. In the uprise of the Islamic State we saw for the first time this kind of thing happening on a global level. Babylon is the hold of these unclean spirits (18:2). Yet in the Gospels, to say a man had an unclean spirit or demon was to say he was mad. There will be a spirit of madness, extreme fanaticism, emanating from these three sources of propaganda.

16:14 *For they are spirits of demons, who work signs*- I suggested on :13 that the reference is to propaganda spread worldwide by three separate jihadist agencies, which stir up a frenzy, a mania, which John understood as the Gospel records do in terms of demon possession, a way of expressing madness. They work signs, false miracles, as noted on 13:13 and :14. So far, chapter 16 has been full of allusion to the plagues upon Egypt; and Egypt therefore becomes a prototype of the beast system. Some of the plagues upon Egypt were countered by false miracles from Pharaoh's magicians, pointing forward to the false miracles which will be claimed by the beast system of the last days.

These go to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty- The "whole world" could refer to the world of the land promised to Abraham and its environs. But given the power of communication media today, there may well be a global reference. Radical Islam may pressurize the whole world system to give at least token support to their battle. The "war" or (Gk.) battle is that for which the jihadist locusts of 9:7,9 are prepared- by the propaganda from the three sources of :13. This is the final battle against the Jews and Christians in the land spoken of in 11:7; 12:17 and 13:7, a kind of "final solution". But it is effectively a gathering together to battle against the returned Lord Jesus (19:19; 20:8). The same word for war / battle is used in all these references.

The previous invasions of Israel by her neighbour typify those of the future, and they also mention this 'gathering together': Sisera's forces did this (Jud. 4:13), as did those of Ammon (Jud. 10:19; 1 Chron. 19:7), the Amorites (Jud. 11:20), the Arab

powers with Assyria in Hezekiah's time (Mic. 4:11), Gog's forces (Ez. 38:7), the Arab-Canaanite tribes (Gen. 34:30) and especially the Philistines (Jud. 16:33; 1 Sam. 13:5,11; 17:1; 25:1; 28:1; 29:1; 2 Sam. 23:11). This is quite some emphasis. Thus while we can expect to see greater potential Arab unity developing around the Israel issue and perhaps a common allegiance to a charismatic 'Nebuchadnezzar' figure for a brief period, their complete meeting of minds will not be until the final push against Jerusalem.

We need not be concerned that this appears to happen after all the judgments upon the beast system which we have read of earlier in this chapter. Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images; it is simply not chronological. We are now being given to understand *how* the situation came about whereby the beast system is so permanently judged and destroyed, as explained in the preceding verses.

16:15- see on 1 Jn. 2:28.

Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed! - This is a call to those Christians who have not come out and testified under the beast's domination, thinking they can hide under the garments of nominal acceptance of the beast. They must keep their white garments around them. The paradox is that they will then be exposed as naked; they are apparently clothed, but not in the distinctive white garments of Christ, which publicize their position to all. His thief life coming is an idea used elsewhere about His coming being like this to those within His household who are unprepared. Clearly there will be true believers living under the domination of the latter day beast within its territory, the land promised to Abraham. This is a sober thought. Their numbers at this time are small, but perhaps the witness of the Elijah ministry and various gospel proclamations mentioned throughout the tribulation prophecies will result in many converts.

1 Tim. 5:24,25 implies a 'going through' of the good and bad works of men, with the added implication that it is done in the presence of others. Thus they will "see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). “All that behold” the unfinished spiritual building of the wicked “will mock him” (Lk. 14:29); and the accepted will praise each other for their humility in taking the lowest seat in ecclesial life (Lk. 14:10). The rejected will awake to "the reproach and abhorrence of the age" (Dan. 12:2 Dr. Thomas' translation)- as if they will be reproached by some. "When the wicked are cut off, [the righteous] shall see it" (Ps. 37:34). The 12 disciples will judge the tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28). At judgment day, the children of the Jews who criticized Jesus would judge them- "they shall be your judges" rather than Jesus Himself (Lk. 11:19). "The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. 3:35) is looking ahead to the judgment. But "shame" must be in the eyes of someone; therefore the rejection of the wicked will be in the eyes of those who once knew them in the ecclesia. The men of Nineveh will condemn first century Israel (Mt. 12:41); the folly of the rejected will be made manifest unto all men (2 Tim. 3:9). This is not so as to simply humiliate the rejected. It is so that the faithful *learn* something too. This was all foreshadowed in the way that Israel experienced their judgments in the sight of the nations, so that God's principles would be taught even to the Gentile world (Ez. 5:8,15). Indeed, the idea of God executing judgment on His people *in the sight* of others is quite common (e.g. Ez. 5:8; 16:41). But we can learn the principles of God's judgments right now, from His word.

A read through Rev. 16:13-16 makes it evident that the 6th vial concerns the

gathering of the nations to Armageddon; but right in the middle of this section we read: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked"- clearly relevant to the saints. It's as if the punishment of the unworthy believers and that of the nations is to be connected. The collapsing of time at the judgment would enable this to actually happen- the events used to punish the world could fall upon the rejected from the judgment seat. These unfortunate individuals will be threshed, as will the world be (Mt. 3:12; Rev. 16:16). This is foreshadowed by the way apostate Israel were treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Thus in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. "They shall return to Egypt" had been God's earlier prophesy (Hos. 8:13; 9:3). Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

16:16 *And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Harmagedon*- Perhaps this is explaining how the earlier judgment upon the throne / seat of the beast happens (:10).

"Megiddo" and the descriptions of Sisera *gathering* his chariots and God *drawing* them into battle (Jud. 5:19) must link with the nations being *gathered* to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). If this connection is valid, then "the kings of the earth (land - of Israel?) and of the whole world" which are gathered (Rev. 16:14) would primarily refer to the kings of the Islamic world within and around the earth / land promised to Abraham, Sisera of the latter days.

Rev. 16:14-16 and Rev. 19:19 appear to be based upon the ideas of the 'gathering together' of Israel's local enemies outlined in the commentary on Rev. 16:14, and also upon Zech. 12:3. "The kings of the earth" can be interpreted as in Zech. 12:3;" of the whole world" may refer to the world in relation to Israel (as in Dan. 2), or possibly to the fact that all nations literally will be incited to attack Israel, kidded by the beast that some "final solution" to the Middle Eastern problem is necessary. 'Armageddon' meaning 'the valley of Megiddo', takes us back to Zech. 12:9,11: "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem... in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as... in the valley of Megiddon". The conclusion from this is that although a minority within Israel have repented before their victory in the valley of Jehoshaphat (the same area in terms of prophecy), according to the typology of 2 Chron. 20 and other passages, their full realization of the enormity of their sin of crucifying Jesus only comes home to them on seeing His complete rout of their enemies. Thus their returning to Jerusalem with joy (2 Chron. 20:27) will be preceded by, or mixed with, tears of pent-up emotional release. The similarity of the 'gather together' language has led us to associate the following:-

- The gathering together of Israel's Arab enemies against her at various times
- The gathering of the Arab nations into a valley near Jerusalem (2 Chron. 20:16, A.V. mg.) for destruction in Hezekiah's time
- Joel's prophecy of all nations being gathered into the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (3:2)
- The gathering together of the Arab nations into the 'valley of Megiddo' (Rev. 16:16) to fight Israel in the last days.

It could be objected that the valley of Megiddo is in the North of Israel whilst that of Jehoshaphat is in the South, near Jerusalem. However, the other similarities of language and context are so great as to suggest that they must refer to the same place.

It may be that Megiddo having been the scene of many previous Arab battles in Israel's history, it is being used symbolically in Rev. 16:16 rather than as a literal geographical reference. Back in Rev. 16, the sixth vial has described how the nations will be gathered to their place of judgment in Armageddon. The seventh vial then records the destruction of Babylon, who receives "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" in the form of huge hailstones (Rev. 16:19,21). This equates the nations who are gathered to Armageddon with Babylon, which heads up the coalition elsewhere known as the beast. The cup of the wrath of God alludes to Zech. 12:2,3, where the peoples from the jihadist nations also are "gathered together" and have burdened themselves with Jerusalem are made to drink "a cup of trembling" by reason of doing so. The punishment with giant hailstones recalls how Israel's enemies were destroyed in the time of Joshua/Jesus (Josh. 20:11). This confirms our interpretation of 'Babylon' as having a Middle Eastern context.

The unclean spirits or teachings released from the beast and his publicity agents gather the nations together to Armageddon. "Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16) is from the Hebrew *har-magedon*. *Har* means 'mountain'. The assumption has been made that *magedon* is the same as 'Megiddo'; but the problem is, Megiddo is a plain and there is no mountain there. Also, the word *magedon* would be spelt slightly differently if it were simply the place name Megiddo. The suggestion has been made and well argued that *magedon* is a form of the Hebrew *mo'ed*, and would literally mean "the mount of assembly / gathering"- the title of Jerusalem in Is. 14:13 [see Meredith Kline, 'Har Magedon', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39/2 (June 1996) pp. 207-222, available online. He explains the presence of the 'g' on the basis that the Hebrew consonant *ayin* is often represented by the Greek *gamma*]. Rev. 16 says that all nations are gathered to Armageddon, but elsewhere we read of all nations being gathered to Jerusalem. The two localities are surely identical, quite apart from the linguistic arguments. We can expect, therefore, far more focus specifically upon Jerusalem. For this is to be the centre to which all are gathered. This makes perfect sense if we see *magedon* as a Greek rendering of the Hebrew *mo'ed*- the nations are gathered to the mount of gathering. The king of Babylon / Assyria so wished to come to the "mount of assembly / gathering" (Is. 14:13), and it was that desire, and executing it, which was effectively his gathering to judgment. And so it will be with the Islamist obsession with Jerusalem- their gathering there will effectively be their gathering to judgment. Associating Armageddon with Jerusalem would more naturally fit with the upcoming description of "the great city", Jerusalem, being judged by an earthquake (:19).

16:17- see on Rev. 15:2.

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air- This could be purely symbolic, as if absolutely everything will now be affected, and there will now be a complete takeover of power above the earth. But this is perhaps another allusion to the plagues upon Egypt; for Moses sprinkled handfuls of ashes into the air which turned into a dust cloud in all the air, bringing forth sores and boils (Ex. 9:8,9). Perhaps literally the air will be full of thunder, lightning and death, as stated on :18.

And there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying: It is done! - Now finally all is finished. But the Lord made a similar pronouncement from the cross. It is only John who records Him saying then: "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). The second coming will be our meeting with the Lord who died for us. To come before Him then will be in essence the same as coming before His cross. Rev. 16 describes the events of the second coming, and yet it is full of allusion back to the

cross: “it is done", the temple of heaven opened (16:17); an earthquake (16:18), a cup of wine (16:19). The believers undergoing the final tribulation will have fellowshipped the Lord's crucifixion sufferings, that they might know His resurrection life once they are over.

16:18 *And there were lightnings and voices and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since men came upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty*- The lightning and thunder may be literal, and the result of the bowl poured into the air (see on :17). The Lord likens His second coming to lightning (Mt. 24:27; Zech. 9:14). The earthquake would be that associated with the second coming, when the Lord sets foot upon the mount of Olives in Zechariah 14.

16:19 *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His anger*- The allusion is to the earthquake of Zech. 14 at the point of the Lord's return. This makes the great city Jerusalem, and yet the great city is mystical "Babylon" in 17:18. The fall of Jerusalem in AD70 was but a small fulfilment of what is envisaged here; although we note that Jerusalem at that time was divided into three opposing camps by internal strife- John, Simon and Elazar (*Wars* 5.1.1,4). The division of the Jews and Jerusalem in particular into three parts for judgment is all Old Testament language (Ez. 5:2,12; Zech. 13:8,9). We are thereby encouraged to see Jerusalem as the great city which is judged. And yet it is paralleled with the fall of Babylon. The latter day Babylon entity will have made Jerusalem its capital, and this shall fall. This earthquake is that of 11:13, where after the tribulation of the believers and Jews in the land for three and a half years, "the tenth part of the city fell"; and clearly the city in view is Jerusalem, the "great city... where also our Lord was crucified" (11:8). Perhaps the tenth part of the city destroyed by the earthquake refers to the encampment of "Babylon", perhaps a mosque complex built on the temple mount. For the abomination which will bring about the desolation of the temple mount will be placed there (Dan. 12:11; Mt. 24:15), and this surely refers to something like a mosque complex or other visual symbol of jihadist Islam. The language of Babylon and the whore has some first century application to the Judaist 'satan' which was enthroned in Jerusalem until AD70, and the language used in chapters 17 and 18 is often allusive to Old Testament prophecies about Israel as the whore. In the latter day application to the "Babylon" entity, this all still is appropriate, in that "Babylon" will make her throne on the temple mount, in Jerusalem.

Perhaps the three parts refers to how three different subdivisions of the beast entity are enthroned in Jerusalem; for the call to come and fight there comes forth from three different entities, each with essentially the same message (:13).

The subdivision of the final invader into three groups will recall the original Assyrian battle plan whereby the Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh. Previous invasions had this feature too:

- "The spoilers of the Philistines / Palestinians (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies "in three companies", perhaps because there were three groups of Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day invaders, has a triple emphasis on Israel attacking them in “three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel, in three bands (Job 1:17). The book of Job has many other links with the

Assyrian invasion.

16:20 *And every island fled away and the mountains were not found*- On 13:1 I suggested that the earth / land is the territory promised to Abraham, and the "sea" refers to the nations immediately bordering that land; areas we now know as Turkey, Egypt and Iran. The "isles of the Gentiles", islands within that "sea", would therefore refer to the nations of the world; mountains likewise refer to nations. But they flee away, retreating from the scene in the land, having been urged to come and get involved in the "final solution" of the Jewish / Jerusalem / Middle East problem.

The nations in this confederacy will turn against 'Babylon' in the ultimate 'time of the end'; through them God's judgment against her is administered. Babylon "gathereth unto him all nations", but "shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him... shall they not rise up suddenly (and) bite thee... and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" (Hab. 2:5-8 AV). First of all the islands (nations) flee away from Babylon (Rev. 16:20), the birds and animals scatter from under the big tree as it starts to totter. But fleeing away suggests they are not all caught up in her judgment; the same word is used in Mt. 3:7 of fleeing from the wrath to come in repentance. This is in response to the Lord's command to flee [s.w.] Jerusalem (Mt. 24:16).

16:21 *And great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, came down out of heaven upon men, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail. For the plague was so severe*- There may have been a limited fulfilment in the catapults throwing stones of this size upon Jerusalem in AD70; Josephus records them as being a white colour, similar to hail, and weighing about a talent. But this all speaks of the final judgment of God against Israel's enemies in Jerusalem; again the allusion is to the plagues on Egypt for their abuse of the Hebrews, this time to the plague of hail. And again as noted on :9 and :11, these people recognize that all this is from God, they come to know "that I am Yahweh", but all too late. The Hadith speaks of extreme rain as a judgment to come upon the land in the last days: "Then Allah would send rain which no house of clay or (the tent of) camels' hairs would keep out and it would wash away the earth" (Book 41.7015). It is a feature of Divine judgment that the thing men greatly fear comes upon them. The jihadist beast will find itself the victim of the very features of Divine condemnation which their own writings say will come upon the condemned.

I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. Here the reference is to the plague of hail (Ex. 9:13-35). This was the seventh plague, and is alluded to here in the seventh bowl. Hail is also the judgment used against Gog (Ez. 38:19-22). And we think of how the Canaanite opposition to Israel was destroyed by hail (Josh. 10:11). Again we are led to understand these judgments as coming within the land of Israel, against Israel's latter day abusers who are located there.

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

17:1 *And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls and spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute that sits upon many waters*- Babylon is another form of the beast which arose out of the sea (13:1). The same Angel which had just poured out the final judgment upon

Babylon at the end of chapter 16 now gives more detail about this "Babylon" entity. The waters represent nations and peoples; but I suggested on 13:1 that if the earth refers to the land promised to Abraham, then the sea would be the territories immediately adjacent to it- areas we now know as Egypt, Iran and Turkey. But "Babylon" has influence upon many such waters. Historically, Babylon's "sea", i.e. the nations local to Israel whom she had power over, dried up from her- i.e. she no longer controlled them (Jer. 51:36; Rev. 17:1,15), "the sea" (those same peoples which were once her power base) will then come up against Babylon to destroy it (Jer. 51:42). This all looks forward to such support for the beast system of the last day. There may be a difference between the whore and the beast she rides; or within the genre of apocalyptic, we could simply take her as symbolic and representative of it. It could be that "Babylon" the whore speaks of some charismatic individual who will control the beast system- the personal anti-Christ which so many scriptures hint at, the chief prince of Ezekiel 38, the king of the north of Daniel 11, the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2 etc. This individual sits upon "many waters" (= peoples, :15), upon the beast (:3), upon the seven heads of the beast (:9). The beast is therefore a coalition of peoples, with seven heads- perhaps a succession of leaders, or seven leading elements all contemporary with each other. But upon all these, the whore sits; she is supported by them. She "sits" as a queen over them (18:7).

Daniel's fourth beast with the ten horns equates with the legs or iron and ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. This entity will be in existence at the time of Christ's return, because it is to be destroyed by His coming. And we have that same picture in Revelation. Historically, the legs of iron represent Rome, but the beast is not a historical entity, it exists in the last days. So although there are parallels and outline similarities between the metals of the image and the beasts, this is not to say that they are all one and the same. The final beast has elements of all the previous beasts, it is a composite entity including all the elements of the previous systems which have dominated the land and people of Israel. Just as the image stands complete in the last days, so the final beast stands complete. The whore sits on many waters, representing various languages and peoples; and yet she sits upon the beast (Rev. 17:1,3,15). The latter day beast is therefore not one nation but an amalgam of peoples.

17:2 *With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication*- The imagery of being drunk on her wine / teaching is similar to the idea noted on 16:13,14 of the propaganda from the beast system making men crazed and fanatically obsessed. This clearly fits the results of Islamic extremism. The kings of the earth / land suggests that there will be a fast sequence of different rulers over the latter day territory of the earth / land promised to Abraham; or maybe a group of such leaders who exist all at the same time. They along with those dwelling in the "earth" will be radicalized with the fanaticism of her teaching. This is exactly the picture of Islamic extremism.

17:3- see on Rev. 12:14.

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness- The wilderness is where the woman has fled in 12:14; but the dragon has chased her there, she is before "the face" of the serpent / dragon / devil, in his presence, but miraculously preserved from him. The same word is used of how the Lord likewise confronted "the devil" in the wilderness, and overcame. That struggle will be reflected in the struggle of the Lord's people against the devil / dragon / beast in the last days. There is a difference in Revelation between the dragon and the beast, but the beast gives power to the dragon. Perhaps we are to see them as a sequence of entities which dominate the earth / land

of the last days, or simply different takes on the same entity, true to the apocalyptic genre.

And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast- This is the fourth of the four beasts we meet in Revelation; the dragon, the sea beast, earth beast and now this scarlet beast. They are different but similar, perhaps incarnations of each other which arise in quick succession in the earth / land promised to Abraham, or different images of the same reality, which only appear separate from each other because Revelation is a kaleidoscope of revolving images. The four beasts of Daniel 7 are the four metals of the image of Daniel 2; and they all co-exist in the last days. Likewise the four beasts of Revelation co-exist, or are different angles on the same entity.

Israel's neighbours confederated with Babylon in their invasion of Israel. Jeremiah describes this in beast language: "I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar... the beasts of the field have I given him... to serve him... to serve him... all nations (around Israel) shall serve him" (Jer. 27:5-7; 28:14). Ps. 79:1,2, a passage whose links with Rev. 11 give it a clear latter-day application, speaks of the beasts of the surrounding Arab nations being confederate with Babylon. As the horns hate the Babylon/whore and turn against her to destroy her (Rev. 17:16), so the beast nations once confederate with Babylon will come and lie down in her (Jer. 50:39; Is. 13:21). Beasts lying down in a ruined city is representative of nations dominating another one (Zeph. 2:14,15). Note that the beast is "scarlet coloured" (Rev. 17:3). Whilst this may have had reference in its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21). In the light of all this, it is difficult to read the latter day beasts of Revelation as referring to anything other than a conglomeration of Canaanite powers under the leadership of a revived Babylon, between them constituting the most powerful system of opposition to God's people which there has ever been.

Is. 13:14,15 shows the connection of Israel's neighbours with Babylon; people of these areas are urged to "flee every one into his own land (because) every one that is... joined unto (Babylon), shall fall by the sword" in the day of Babylon's judgment. This sounds like a hint that the Arab peoples will be given the opportunity to repent and avoid God's judgments. Their previously being "joined unto" Babylon is the language of marriage/intercourse, showing the brief intensity of their association (remember Babylon is called a whore in Rev. 17:5). The intensity of their joining together is shown by the fact that Babylon is spoken of as the 'hire of the north', although "the north" can refer to other neighbouring powers apart from Babylon (Jer. 1:14,15; 25:9; 46:24). Passages where "the north country" is Babylon include Jer. 3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8; 46:10. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that these powers became part of 'the king of the north' for the purposes of Israel and Jerusalem's invasion and judgment. Jer. 51:20-23 speaks of Babylon as an individual controlling others, i.e. the other neighbouring jihadist nations - e.g. a rider of a horse, a shepherd over a flock, a ploughman over his oxen. This paves the way for Babylon being the whore who rides the beast (Rev. 17:3). In similar vein Is. 49:26 speaks of Israel's enemies being fed "with their own flesh", whilst Babylon's flesh will be eaten by the powers confederate with her (Rev. 17:16). This shows their close association.

The woman sits upon the beast; she sits as a queen (18:7), whereas the Lord is repeatedly presented in Revelation as sitting enthroned as a King (4:2,3,9 etc.). He is the real power, and not her. The seals of chapter 6 have presented Israel's jihadist

invaders as seated upon horses; now there is a charismatic antiChrist individual seated upon a beast, far more powerful. She sits upon seven mountains (:9), headquartered in Jerusalem, the city of seven hills. As explained on 16:19, latter day Babylon makes her capital in Jerusalem; and we note the shift in jihadist theology away from Mecca towards Jerusalem as the key city in their theology. And from there she sits upon all the nations and peoples of the land promised to Abraham (:15).

Full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns- The beast was "full of blasphemous names". Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors' arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world, inscribed on public buildings and monuments. The golden cup which the whore has (cp. 18:6; Jer. 51:7) has contents which would have been understood as idolatrous cults and the vices of Rome-all in sharp contrast with its outward beauty and the splendour of the woman. These prophecies were therefore in direct and open criticism of the Roman empire which surrounded the early ecclesia. And yet we can also interpret the whore in line with the Old Testament presentations of apostate Jerusalem and Israel as a whore (Ez. 23, Hosea etc.). The Lord has earlier stated that He considered the Jewish satan / opposition to the Christians as being blasphemy (2:9).

In the latter day application, the beast system is full of blasphemy in that it persecutes God's people (13:6). Jihadist theology insists that the Jews and Christians are not the people of God and therefore should be persecuted and killed, claiming they are acting as God in judging His people. That is blasphemy indeed. The seven heads and ten horns (as noted on 13:1) could refer to how this beast is the composite summary of all the previous beasts of Daniel's visions; perhaps there will be seven leaders, or a succession of such leaders; and a coalition of ten groups who comprise the strength of the composite beast. But the seven heads are here understood as seven mountains (:9). Mountains can refer to nations or peoples. But a literal application would point to Jerusalem, well known at the time as the city of seven hills or mountains. The claim that Rome was such a city might have been relevant to those living under Nero's persecution; but there are many cities famed for being built on seven hills, not least Istanbul / Constantinople, and even my beloved Vilnius. I made a strong case on 16:19 that Babylon is headquartered in Jerusalem; and this is a city of seven hills, and was recognized as such in John's time. But within that city, wherever it is geographically, there may be seven heads / mountains / spheres of control or leaders.

17:4 *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication*- The materials listed here were all associated with the tabernacle, and we can understand how for first century Christians under Jewish persecution this would have encouraged them. The Judaist system, with all its wealth, based in Jerusalem, was nothing but a whore in God's eyes.

Whilst the purple may have had reference in its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21).

Babylon is given a cup of condemnation to drink (16:19); but here she is pictured holding such a cup and passing it to others in order to make them drunk as she is. The wine would refer to her teaching, whipping up those who drink it into a rage of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian madness. This is clearly appropriate to the effect of jihadist propaganda. Babylon is therefore living out her own condemnation; the cup of wine

she offers to others is that of her and their condemnation. Babylon *is* a cup, so closely identified is she with her teachings and condemnation; and she has made all the nations of the earth / land promised to Abraham drunk with her madness against Israel, both natural and spiritual (Jer. 51:7). The teaching / wine she gives is not only propaganda; it is an invitation to fornicate with her, to closely and intimately associate with her personally.

We can observe that the description of the beast in Rev. 17 is very un-Islamic- in fact, the very opposite. The beast is ridden by a prostitute who is drunk- both abominations to radical Islam. The woman has a golden cup- drinking from golden cups is specifically forbidden to Moslems by the Quran. The cup is full of idolatry- and Sunni Islam particularly is passionately against any idolatry or worship of anything apart from God. An image is set up to the beast and worshipped- also abomination for Moslems. The false prophet does miracles- whereas Moslems claim that Mohammed did no miracles and the Quran itself is the one supreme miracle of Islam. The gaudy decoration of the beast and whore of Rev. 17 is far from the sobriety of jihadist Islam. Why the apparent contradictions? The similarities with what Islam is *not* are so pronounced that a point is surely being made. The beast of Revelation is how God views the jihadist entities and radical Islam. From His perspective, they are the very and exact opposite of all they are claiming. And as has often been observed, the supposed 'religion of peace' is responsible for huge destruction and mass murder. Another possibility is that the more opulent descriptions of the beast actually match well with the Islamic conception of Paradise- as defined, e.g., in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Article 'Jannah'): "One day in paradise is considered equal to a thousand years on earth. Palaces are made from bricks of gold, silver, pearls, among other things. Traditions also note the presence of horses and camels of "dazzling whiteness", along with other creatures. Large trees are described, mountains made of musk, between which rivers flow in valleys of pearl and ruby". It may be that the jihadists seek to portray their caliphate as paradise come on earth.

The image is clearly presented as an idol- this is how the word translated "image" is usually used in the Old Testament. The chief deity of Babylon was Marduk who was considered to be the “god of gold”. Herodotus described the image of Marduk as a golden statue seated upon a golden throne before a golden table and a golden altar. Pliny also notes that the robes of Marduk’s priests were interlaced with gold. The word used for the breaking in pieces of the image (Dan. 2:34) is that used frequently about the breaking in pieces of idols (Ex. 32:20; Dt. 9:21; 2 Kings 23:6,15; 2 Chron. 34:4). The sequence of metals (gold, silver, brass and iron) is found again in Dan. 5:4,23 in describing the materials used by the Babylonian kings for their idols. It's as if they wanted to show that actually all the metals of the image were comprehended within their empire- and they would last for ever. The latter day entity will be distinctly religious, too. The jihadists are passionately against any idols or memorials, hence their destruction of any Shia shrines they take control of. But in a turn of irony which can only be Divine, their religious system is of itself an idol, which is to be destroyed by the Lord's second coming. The entity represented by the image of Daniel 2, which I suggest refers to an Islamic state established in the land promised to Abraham, is destroyed by the return of Christ as of a stone cut out without hands. But the Kaaba stone, the black stone of Mecca which is the central point of the grand mosque in Mecca towards which Moslems pray, is believed by Moslems to have been cut out without human hands and to have come to earth from Heaven, and will reappear at judgment day. And yet this stone, which serves as the focal point of Islam,

will be shown to be but a parody of the ultimately true stone cut without hands, the Lord Jesus, who will return from Heaven as the stone to smash the image.

17:5 *And upon her forehead a name written of a mystery: Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations*- The allusion is to how prostitutes had such names on their foreheads; but this name is that given her by God. The "abominations" of the earth / land were spawned by her. She will set the abomination which will bring about the desolation of the temple mount right there on the temple mount in Jerusalem (Dan. 12:11; Mt. 24:15), and this surely refers to something like a mosque complex or other visual symbol of jihadist Islam. The plural "abominations" may be an intensive plural referring to the one great abomination- that which brings her to desolation. In this context we must read 21:27 which says that there shall be no more abomination allowed in Jerusalem, the holy city of God. For the Islamist abomination there is to be utterly destroyed. The limited AD70 fulfilment was in the icons of Roman gods being placed there by the legionaries. Again, the location for her abomination is Jerusalem. She is clearly set up on the pattern of Jezebel, a woman from what is now Lebanon, who persecuted the Elijah ministry of her day, just as this latter day individual will do according to chapter 11. Radical Islam claims to be against all kind of prostitution and immorality, but the point is that in reality that abusive system is itself a prostitute.

See on 1 Cor. 9:27 for a Jewish / Roman interpretation of “Babylon”. The images and applications unite together is that Babylon is enthroned in Jerusalem at the last day, and the fall of Jerusalem is thereby that of Babylon; see on 16:19. There are other similarities with the apostate Jewish system:

Double unto her double	Jer. 16:18; Is. 40:2
Sound of the millstone no longer heard…	Jer. 25:10
In her was found the blood of the prophets	Jer. 2:34; Lk. 11:50 [the blood of all the prophets was required of Jerusalem in AD70]
Great whore 17:1	Ez. 16,23; Jer. 2,3; Hos. 1-4
Arrayed in purple and scarlet	Ez. 28:5,6,8- a priest, cp. Jer. 4:30
Precious stones	The High Priest’s breastplate
Golden cup full of abominations	Ez. 23:25, 32-34 cp. Mt. 23:28
Upon her forehead a name written	A parody of ‘Yahweh’ written on the High Priestly mitre
Mother of harlots	Ez. 16:44-52
Drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus	The first century martyrs
Burnt with fire	The punishment for harlotry cp. Ez. 16:37-41

The habitation of demons	Mt. 12:43-45
Come out of her my people	Implies they were already within her, as God's people. Ref. To Lk. 21:20,21 and the need for the Christians to leave Judaism.
Her plagues…death, mourning and famine	Jer. 18:21
18:12,13 the things traded in	All used in the temple worship cp. 2 Chron. 2:4,7,8.
Rejoice over her thou heaven…for God hath avenged you	Dt. 32:43 LXX re. Israel
A great millstone cast into the sea	As happened to Judaism / the temple mount as a result of faith in Christ (Mt. 21:21; 18:6)
Harpers harping	In the temple
A candle	The menorah
In her was found the blood of the prophets	A prophet didn't perish outside Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33).
Babylon is "the great city"	Which in Rev. 11:8 is where Jesus was crucified, i.e. Jerusalem.
Babylon divided into three parts for judgement	As Jerusalem was (Ez. 5:1-4; Zech. 14:1-4).

17:6 *And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder*- Hab. 2:16 describes how Babylon is punished at the Lord's return because of her drunkenness. Rev. 17:6 defines this as being "with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", as if to imply that it is the Babylon/ beast's mad, drunken persecution of the saints in the last days that results in the Lord's return in judgment. The "saints" may refer to natural Israel as in Dan. 7:25 and the "martyrs of Jesus" to the witnesses for Him who are killed by the beast, as in chapter 11. Drunkenness is a process; the wine refers to the teaching of Babylon, but it is here the blood of Israel, natural and spiritual. There is the development of a progressive blood lust, the teaching is to kill Israel, and this is exactly the teaching of Jihadism. Once blood is tasted, it becomes the more addictive. Note how after all he has already seen, John marvels at this awful system he now sees portrayed. Although :7 could suggest that the marvelling is a reference to incomprehension.

17:7 *But the angel said to me: Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her*- John himself wrote: "Marvel not if the world hate you" (1 Jn. 3:13). Perhaps this is why he is gently rebuked for marvelling [s.w.] when he now sees the real dimensions of the world's hatred for the believers; for it is those who then dwell on the earth / land who

will "marvel" whereas the Lord's people, armed with the book of Revelation, will not (:8). John "wondered with great admiration" at the scarlet beast (:6), just as the world had wondered after the sea beast (Rev. 13:3). And yet we can read John's "marvel" or wonder more positively. The fear or awe of the Lord, our wonder at Him, is the beginning of wisdom. Wonder isn't a kind of intellectual resignation, giving up on the study of God and retreating into numb feelings. Quite the opposite. True wonder leads to a more earnest seeking after wisdom. The Angel told John that John had 'wondered' in amazement at the visions so that God could now reveal the mystery to him (:6,7). In our wonder we sense we are at the beginning of things of infinite significance, we feel we are starting to grasp something ultimate. And we wish to go further. We will glory in the understanding and knowledge of God which that wonder stimulates us to search out (Jer. 9:22,23)

17:8 *The beast you saw was and is not, and is about to come up*- The allusion is to the Yahweh Name, He who was, is and is to come. The Name of blasphemy on Babylon is therefore a take on His holy Name. Babylon will think: "I am, and there is none else beside me" (Is. 47:8). She appropriates to herself the Name ["I am"] and characteristics of Yahweh; this is her blasphemy.

Out of the abyss, and to go into destruction- This beast which arises out of the bottomless pit is therefore connected with the same beast from the bottomless pit as in Rev. 11:7. The three beasts [sea beast of 13:1, earth beast of 13:11 and now this scarlet beast] are all in the spirit and power of the dragon of chapter 12. I suggest the visions may be revealing different aspects of the same entity; or we may have the idea that the beasts will each be judged by God, or damaged by Israeli or Western attacks upon them, but regroup and reform into another incarnation of the same Jihadist principles. This kind of thing is quite imaginable given the geopolitics of the earth / land promised to Abraham.

And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was and is not, and shall come- As noted on :7, those armed with the book of Revelation will not "wonder" at the beast as they will understand it. Perhaps only that generation will fully understand what we read here; because the purpose of prophecy is so that when it fulfils, then we perceive the meaning of the original prophecy. The idea is not that prophecy enables us to work out a timeline of events ahead of time. 13:3,12 explain that the world [here called the earth dwellers, those within the earth / land] shall wonder after the beast because it recovers from a deadly wound; a wound which led to death. Here we read that the beast was, is not [the deadly wound], and yet has revived. That deadly wound is upon one of the heads (13:3), which is identified with the beast; just as the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 is spoken of as the whole beast. That little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed “but not by human power” (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. So the deadly wound could refer to Western or Israeli victory against the beast, but it likely is the result of direct Divine intervention and judgment.

Like the Lamb, who was killed and then raised up (5:6), the Beast seems to disappear and then return to life. This passage may be a reference to some definite event, such as the murder of Caesar and the healing of the empire under Augustus, the legend of *Nero* redivivus, whereby Nero was believed to have returned from the dead. The marvellous cure of the Beast excites admiration and leads to the adoration of the dragon and the Beast (17:8). This is an allusion to the rapid progress of the emperor cult and to the ready acceptance of the immoral example of the emperors. Thus

Caesar is set up as the very antithesis of the one true Lord and Master, Jesus. The latter day application is likewise to a specific individual, the equivalent of Nero in the very last days.

17:9 *Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains on which the woman sits*- As discussed on :3, the city with seven hills may have in its time referred to Rome, and also to Jerusalem, the seat of the Jewish satan which so persecuted the early church before AD70. But the latter day reference is to the "great city" where Babylon shall be enthroned; and I have argued on 16:19 that this is literal Jerusalem. But the seven mountains may refer also to a system of seven supporting elements within the beast system which are to be found within the beast headquarters in Jerusalem.

17:10 *And they are seven kings. The five are fallen, the one is, the other is yet to come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while*- The seven mountains refer to seven leaders within the beast system, headquartered in Jerusalem, the city of seven hills. They may refer to a sequence of seven kings, or to a group of seven rulers gathered within Jerusalem. But they are photographed, as it were, at the point of the sixth king. The one yet to come provides the connection with how the beast was, is not, and yet is to come. The deadly wounded head will revive in the form of a seventh head. He continues "a little while", the same Greek used in 12:12 for how the dethroned devil / dragon furiously persecutes God's people, knowing that he has but "a little while". His dethronement would correlate with the head receiving a deadly wound in 13:12, the beast 'not being' due to Divine judgment, and then reviving. The judgment and yet revival of Babylon is for a reason; and I suggest that the God who in judgment always remembers mercy does it this way because He seeks even Babylon's repentance. And that is why in the midst of the prophecies of Babylon's judgment, we read that God "would have healed Babylon", of her "deadly wound", but she would not; she refuses the ointment offered (Jer. 51:8,9).

A pre-AD70 date for Revelation has been well argued by J.A.T. Robinson, H.A. Whittaker and Paul Wyns. John would've been pretty old if it was indeed given in AD96 as claimed by some. The many connections between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy and 2 Peter 3 all suggest that it too is a prophecy of AD70. The historical connections are too great to ignore, and seem of little value if the book is simply alluding at a later date to what happened in AD70. Rev. 17:10 speaks of the leadership of the Roman empire, speaking of “five that are fallen”- clearly referring to:

1. Julius Caesar the first Roman Emperor (44 BC-26 BC).
2. Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).
3. Tiberius (AD 14 – 37).
4. Gaius (AD 37 – 41).
5. Claudius (AD 41 – 51)

The leader who "is" would therefore refer to Nero (AD54-68), and the context of persecution would then be that of his reign. The sixth, Nero, was alive when John was given the Revelation; and the seventh was Galba who reigned only 7 months (June 68 - Jan 69). This order of the Caesars is that taken from standard works: Suetonius (*Lives of the Twelve Caesars*); Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 5); Josephus (*Antiquities* 19.1.11 cp. 18.2.2; 18.6.10). The beast's war with the saints for 42 months (13:5-7) would then refer to the Neronian persecution. Note how 13:12,14 interchanges the head with the whole beast. Mosheim confirms this: "The dreadful persecution which took place by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of November in the year of our Lord 64… this dreadful persecution ceased but with the death of

Nero… in the year 68 [June], when he put an end to his own life" L. von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries* vol. 1, tr. Robert Vidal (NY: Converse, 1854) pp 138,139. In the same way as the first century believers could not have accurately predicted how all this would come about, but would have been wonderfully encouraged as they saw it all happening, and perceived then the interpretation- so we will see the Revelation come true, rather than be able to predict its precise fulfilment, in our final "last days".

The problem with the application to Roman Caesars is that the five kings "fall", the same word soon to be used about the fall of Babylon (18:2). The word doesn't mean to die, but to fall from power to destruction. The idea is that five kings will be killed, either together or in quick succession. Any application to the deaths of a succession of Roman Caesars is only a very shadowy fulfilment of the clearer, fuller reality which will be seen in the last days.

17:11 *And the beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into destruction*- We have noted several times the identity between the horns and the beast. The 'seventh which is the eighth' may mean that the final incarnation of the beast is in its seventh horn' as the horns were, are and shall be (:10), so with the beast itself. The apparent confusion between seventh an eighth in Hebrew thought is found in Lk. 9:28, where "an eight days" means seven days, a week. The idea may be that he is the seventh, and even the eighth, reckoning inclusively, because after this 'seventh' there shall be no 'eighth' to follow. Going away into destruction is the same idea as in Mt. 25:46, where the rejected one-time believers "go away into everlasting punishment". Their destruction will be along with the beast; those who in their deepest heart identify with the world shall share the world's judgment.

17:12 *And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings with the beast, for one hour*- These ten kings would correspond with the ten toes of Daniel's image which stand upon the earth / land promised to Abraham just before the "little stone" of the returning Lord Jesus destroys them; the ten nations of the latter day confederacies of Psalm 83 and Ez. 38, the ten Canaanite nations which had to be driven out of the land / earth. The focus here is on the leadership; these ten kings may be located in Jerusalem along with the beast. Their actual possession of power over the land is very brief- just "one hour". And it is in "one hour" that Babylon is destroyed (18:10,17,19).

Radical Islam has a lot to say about the land promised to Abraham- what the Bible prophecies refer to as the *eretz* or land / earth. The Islamic State and al-Nusra Front speak much about it; their definition of the Levant or Sham is pretty much that of the land promised to Abraham. 'Nusra' is an acronym standing for the Front for the Defence of the Levant. They claim to be fighting to prepare the way for the coming of the Mahdi to establish God's Kingdom worldwide; they call the land promised to Abraham "Land of *Malahim*," or "epic battles", and they expect there to be the *al-Malhamah al-Kubra*, the "Great Battle of the last hour", at Jerusalem. This is what the Bible calls Armageddon. When the true Jesus appears in Jerusalem, all nations in the earth / land will be gathered together to battle at Jerusalem. And the jihadist theology is preparing them for this. They consciously speak of their caliphate as being extended over the land promised to Abraham, and they are urging people to leave their native lands as Abraham left his, and journey to live in the caliphate, comprised as they wish it to be, of the territory promised to Abraham. They call their caliph or leader 'Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham', and urge migration or *hijrah* to the land promised to him. The pieces are all falling into place to fulfil the Biblical pictures of the last days. Jihadist theology makes much of 'signs of the times', leading up to the coming of the Mahdi and the final battle against the antiChrist. These 'signs of the times' they look for are

often the same signs which are to be found in the Bible, e.g. the re-establishment of Israel as a nation before Armageddon. So as they apparently come true, Islamists are the more convinced that antiChrist [who they call *Dajjal* and understand to be a Jew] is about to appear in Jerusalem, and they must fight him in the last great battle, in order to enable the Mahdi to return. Who they consider to be the antichrist will in fact be the true Christ. They will rush to fight Him, believing Him to be the antichrist they are expecting. Their destruction by Him will presage the establishment of God's *true* Kingdom on earth, the revived and restored kingdom of Israel. This would explain why many Biblical terms used about the very last days are also found in Jihadist theology. They speak of the events of the very last days before the Mahdi returns as being "the hour"; and yet Revelation speaks of how the kings of the earth / land will have power for "one hour" and be destroyed likewise in "one hour" (Rev. 17:12; 18:10,17,19). These similarities are unsurprising because Mohammed clearly plagiarized the Bible and Judaism for his teachings.

17:13 *These are of one mind; and they give their power and authority to the beast*- Their "one mind" is another point of connection and contrast with the believers, who are of "one mind" with each other and their Lord, giving Him all power and authority in their lives. This is very much the language of John's other writings, and 4:11 and 5:12 speak of how believers will have given power and authority to Him. The beast is a veritable antiChrist, a fake Kingdom of God. Their unity is based upon their common acceptance of the Jihadist doctrine of destruction of Israel and Christianity within the earth / land. When that is achieved, they then start to squabble amongst themselves, just as the iron and clay elements of the 10 toes of Daniel 2 do not otherwise get along with each other.

17:14 *These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful, these also shall overcome*- Overcoming is a major theme of the opening letters of Revelation. Those who overcame in their lives will now have been resurrected and will along with the Lord now overcome this final manifestation of sin. The "war" or (Gk.) battle is that for which the jihadist locusts of 9:7,9 are prepared- by the propaganda from the three sources of 16:13. This is the final battle against the Jews and Christians in the land spoken of in 11:7; 12:17 and 13:7, a kind of "final solution". But it is effectively a gathering together to battle against the returned Lord Jesus (19:19; 20:8). The same word for war / battle is used in all these references.

17:15 *And he said to me: The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues*- Babylon "sits" upon the kings of the earth / land; these are the ones she makes drunk with her teaching. The peoples and nations therefore primarily refer to those within the land promised to Abraham and the "sea", the 'waters' immediately surrounding that land, over which the beat has dominion. It is out of these very peoples that there will arise some genuine Christian converts during the tribulation; see on 5:9; 7:9; 11:9 and 14:6.

17:16 *And the ten horns which you saw: they and the beast, these shall hate the prostitute and shall make her desolate and naked*- According to the prototype of the Old Testament invasions of Israel, their enemies turn against each other. We are to expect this in the last days, so that, e.g., Ethiopia will turn against Assyria as happened historically at the time of the Assyrian attack upon Jerusalem. This may be part of the process whereby the horns "hate the whore" of Babylon/Assyria during the final stage of their persecution of God's people (Rev. 17:16 cp. Hab. 2:8). Nah. 3:9 points out that the real strength of Assyria against Israel was on account of the support

she received from the smaller surrounding powers. Likewise the 'Romans' who destroyed the temple in AD70 were largely Arab and Persian mercenaries. Similarly no one nation presently has any likelihood of dominating the Middle East in terms of military power. Iran and Iraq (geographical 'Assyria') will need the assistance of the other surrounding nations to realistically invade Israel. "*Tidings* out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" (Dan. 11:44) uses the same word translated "rumour" in 2 Kings 19:7, concerning the 'rumour' Sennacherib heard of his Ethiopian allies turning against him. These 'tidings' can be interpreted in a last-days context as referring to news reaching 'Assyria' of her smaller allies turning against her - the horns hating the whore.

Historical Babylon was not destroyed simply by "the Medes" but by her own former allies turning against her. In the same way as God puts this idea into the hearts of the ten kings (:17), so Jer. 50:9 says of Babylon's destruction: "I will stir up and cause to come up against Babylon a company of great nations from the north country". Babylon has just been pictured as sitting upon many waters, the nations within the land promised to Abraham (:15). But these waters are to be dried up from her, and those very waters come upon her in destruction. Thus Jer. 50:38,42: "A drought is on her waters, and they shall be dried up... The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of its waves". The nations who destroy her were from the borders of the earth / land promised to Abraham: "Many kings shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth (Jer. 50:41). These are the ten kings of Rev. 17 who hate the whore and destroy her, the "nations" of "all the earth / land" whom Babylon had made drunk (Jer. 51:7). Her destroyers are likened to locusts (Jer. 51:14), a figure for the jihadist invaders in Rev. 9 who were once supportive of her. There is large emphasis in Jer. 51 that these destroyers of Babylon will have been "prepared" by God, raised up by Him; just as we read in :17 that God puts this idea into their hearts: "*Prepare* the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz... *Prepare* against her the nations" (Jer. 51:27,28).

And shall eat her flesh and shall burn her completely with fire- Eating the flesh of a victim is a Hebraism for total hatred. But within John's thought, the connection is with his record of the Lord's teaching that His followers are to eat His flesh (Jn. 6). The idea may be that although they hate her, yet they are participants in her, as we are in the Lord, and they shall therefore not be saved on account of this but rather judged. Judgment by fire is very much the language of Divine judgment, but we see here how this judgment will actually be brought about by the infighting within the beast system. Under the law, prostitutes were to be burnt to death. So the idea seems to be that indeed Babylon refers to a charismatic individual who leads or rides the beast. As Babylon burnt Jerusalem with fire, so she must be burnt (Jer. 21:10; 51:58).

The animals and birds were even under Babylon's control according to Dan. 2:38. But it is the beasts and birds of the sky who later are prophesied as feasting upon Babylon (Rev. 19:17). This is the equivalent of the horns on the beast hating the whore of Babylon who rides it; the destruction of the Babylon system will ultimately be more by Muslim infighting than direct bolts of destruction from God. Indeed, this was historically God's preferred method of destroying Israel's invaders in Old Testament times.

17:17 *For God did put it in their hearts to do his mind and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished-*

We see here clear evidence that God can act directly upon the hearts of people to make them be of one mind and do His mind. How much more is He willing to do so through the gift of the Spirit to His own people who wish to do His will. We noted on :16 that the nations under Babylon turn against her because God gives them a mind to do so- just as He initially gave them a mind to be supportive of her. We note that they gave their kingdoms to the beast, but the beast does not give them a kingdom until the final "one hour", which is the "one hour" of their destruction; see on :12. Perhaps it is an argument about power sharing and reward, how to carve up the earth / land promised to Abraham, which leads to their bitter hatred of Babylon.

God will make the various nations under Babylon's rule to "agree" (Rev. 17:17)- there will be an unprecedented unity amongst those nations located within the land promised to Abraham. Pan-Arabism will triumph in the end. This union will lead to economic prosperity for the region (Rev. 18:3)- easy to imagine, given the huge oil wealth of these areas. Babylon will become a fake Kingdom of God; hence she is described in terms elsewhere applied to the people and land of Israel (Rev. 18:22,23). Babylon is arrayed in fine linen (Rev. 18:16) as a pseudo-bride of Christ.

The final "day of the Lord" will contain elements of all the previous 'days' of God's manifestation in the affairs of men. It will be the time when "the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17), when "all is fulfilled" (Lk. 21:22,32) - presumably referring to the prophetic word. It is therefore fitting that there are many Old Testament historical backgrounds to the prophecies which relate to the Lord's return; those events were types of the final last day. See on Mt. 24:15. The last days will be the time when *every* prophecy has its ultimate fulfilment (Lk. 21:22; Rev. 17:17); the ultimate climax of prophecy. Therefore we are justified in seeing every prophecy concerning Israel and her neighbours as having at least some latter day application.

17:18- see on Rev. 14:6-9.

And the woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth- "Which reigns" returns us to the immediate reality which John is watching, and the reality of the moment experienced by God's people under Gentile domination at all times. That great city is now reigning; but we have just seen how she shall come to an end. As noted on 16:19, the "great city" in its latter day sense is Babylon enthroned in Jerusalem.

As in Hezekiah's time the Assyrians likened captivity in their land to the wonders of being in God's Kingdom, so too Babylon is likewise depicted as a fake Kingdom of God. All the nations flowed together unto her (Jer. 51:44), as they will to the true Kingdom of God (Is. 2:2). She is called "that great city, which *reigns* (Gk. '*basilia*') over the kings of the earth" (17:18). 'Basilia' is normally used about God's Kingdom. When Jesus described His Kingdom as a tree "greater than all herbs" with "great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Mk.4:32), He was actually quoting from the description of the kingdom of Babylon in Dan. 4. By doing so, He was pointing out that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, legendary as it might be, was but a fake replica of His.

When the mountains flee in Rev. 16:10, Babylon loses the support base of the coalition she leads. These kings are described in Rev. 17:18 as the kings of the land- that promised to Abraham. And within the boundaries of that land we find seven such nations- Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. The appeal in Rev. 14:6-8 and Rev. 18:4 for Christian believers to "come out of her" would imply that there are believers within those nations and that there will be a major witness made to her- and it is surely highly significant that there has been a great growth in

conversions in those areas in recent times! This is a sure sign that we are approaching the time of the end. Sadly Rev. 18:24 implies that believers will be murdered in these areas in the final tribulation- and already the persecution and murder of Christian converts is in full swing there. The description of Babylon sitting upon various peoples, nations and tongues is to be connected with the same use of the phrase in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 to describe the world from which Christian believers are drawn out. And significantly, the same phrase is very commonly used in Daniel to describe the area ruled over by historical Babylon (Dan. 3:4,29; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14).

Issue number 3 of the Islamic State magazine *Dabiq* frequently talks of the call to follow Ibrahim [Abraham] in making *hijrah* [migration] to the land promised to him: "Islam in the end of times will be more manifest in Shām... So the best of the people on the earth in the end of times will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, which is Shām" [Majmū'ul-Fatāwā]. Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullāh) also said, "So he informed that the best of the people on the earth are those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, in contrast to those who pass through it or leave it. The land that Ibrāhīm made hijrah to is Shām... the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah... And the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, has been made for us equal to the land of our Prophet's hijrah. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah". Note how the theology of these jihadists effectively replaces the land of Saudi Arabia and the city of Mecca with that of the Levant, the territory promised to Abraham; and Mecca is replaced in their focus by Jerusalem. With Saudi Arabia now supporting the Western coalition against the jihadists, such a shift in emphasis isn't surprising. But it means that all is being prepared for the last days- for the Bible prophecies focus upon the domination of the land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular. It's significant that the Caliph of the Islamic State Caliphate is referred to by his followers as Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham; the idea is that the faithful will follow him in migrating from their homelands to the land promised to him- which is the very same *eretz* which is the focus of the Bible's latter day prophecies, and which is to be dominated by an antiChrist figure and his beast.

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

18:1 *After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lit with his glory*- Perhaps representing the Lord Jesus. The scene of the land lightened with glory recalls Ez. 43:2, a prophecy of how the Kingdom could have been established at the return from exile. The essence of that prophecy will be fulfilled at the Lord's return, although it seems not the details. The visions of Revelation are not chronological; here we revert to how the destruction of Babylon spoken of in chapter 17 comes about, and the implications for believers. John indeed sees "another angel", but this is not to say that the Angel represents someone different to what Angels represented.

18:2 *And he cried with a mighty voice, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, and has become a habitation of demons, a refuge of every unclean spirit, and a refuge of every unclean and hateful bird*- The Babylon section in Revelation is full of allusion to the Old Testament. "Babylon" can be understood as referring to Judaism, to Israel, to the oppressors of God's people under the Roman Empire, and to a latter day Babylon which is the capital of the beast system, and which I suggest refers to radical Islam dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham. The commentary

seeks to bring out these various applications. Babylon has not yet "fallen" because those within her are urged to come out from within her (:4); her fall is announced in order that she might repent, according to Jer. 51:8: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed". But from God's perspective, she had already fallen. The later call to quit Babylon (:4) is made because she refuses this amazingly gracious invitation to repent: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: [therefore] forsake her" (Jer. 51:9). Earlier the cup was to be given to her but not diluted (Rev. 14:10); now it is to be double filled (:6). This increase in the judgments upon Babylon is because she repeatedly ignored repeated offers of healing and forgiveness. A tenth part of the city falls first (Rev. 11:13) before Babylon completely falls (18:4). She is given the chance of repentance, but instead goes into denial about her loss and real status. This is the idea behind her insistence that she has not been widowed, and is a queen- when she has fallen from power. Yet the very fact these were offered at the last moment, even at 12:01 and not 11:59, reflects the desperate Divine desire for human repentance. Even of His worst enemies. His same passion to save is ever directed toward us too. "Great Babylon" refers specifically to the city of Babylon, which I suggested on 16:19 refers to Jerusalem as the capital of the beast, and place of leadership of the woman known as Babylon, the charismatic leader of the beast system, antiChrist.

There is the assumption by many that all the O.T. prophecies about 'Babylon' were fulfilled in the overrunning of Babylon by the Medes. However, there are many details of those prophecies which didn't have a total fulfilment. It could be argued from this that there must be a literal rebuilding of Babylon and the complete fulfilment of the judgment prophecies against her. However, there are plenty of connections between Babylon and Jerusalem (see on 16:19), and this is the "great city" which shall be judged, where also our Lord was crucified.

The Old Testament judgments upon Babylon were that she would become inhabited by wild, unclean animals: "Therefore the wild animals of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein... a dwelling place for jackals" (Jer. 50:39; 51:37). These animals were thought to be connected with unclean spirits and demons. Because Babylon had become a cage and "hold" [AV] or prison for demons and unclean spirits and birds, so she would be punished by being inhabited by wild animals thought to be demon possessed. The Greek terms translated "refuge" in NEV carry the ideas of a prison and cage. Babylon will not let its people out once they are in; and that is what has happened in many cities overrun by the jihadists. A similar idea is used of how the latter day antiChrist, Gog, the chief prince, will be a "guard" [s.w. "prison"] to a group of ten nations who seek to attack and desolate Israel (Ez. 38:7). This is just what Babylon does.

18:3- see on Rev. 17:18.

For by the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations are fallen- The "anger" in view is surely the anger of the judgment wrath of God against her "fornication". The "all nations" are the kings of the earth / land associated with the Babylon confederacy have already at this point begun to drink of that cup which was given to Babylon earlier. Their identity with her (for "he that is joined to a harlot is one flesh" with her) means that Babylon's "fall" is their fall.

Note that being given a cup of wine to drink is a double symbol- of condemnation and also "the cup of blessing". Hence at the breaking of bread we are to review the two possible outcomes of our being given that cup- blessing or condemnation.

For the kings of the earth had committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich by the power of her greed- The "all nations" are here defined as the kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham. Not every nation on planet earth will be part of 'Babylon'. They grew rich by her prostitution [for Babylon is a whore] presumably in that wealth was given to her for her services, and her greed and love of opulence means that the commercial sector within the earth / land becomes rich. We are therefore to imagine this latter day entity as being immensely wealthy. Such a situation would probably require the financial collapse of the West and some Middle Eastern Islamic entity becoming fantastically wealthy as a result.

The first century applications would refer to the extreme wealth of the Jewish system based in Jerusalem. The Pharisees "were covetous" (Lk. 16:14), as Babylon was greedy. And Rome likewise. It would have seemed that Rome was invincible, economically and politically unshakeable, admired by the whole world. And yet it was to be brought down by Divine judgment.

18:4 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her My people*- A final appeal to those living within the territory of this latter day entity. According to previous teaching in Revelation, this group would likely be Israeli Christians, Jews who have turned to Christ in the very last days. They would be under great pressure from the Islamic state governing them to convert to Islam, and they are being urged not to. "Come out" would therefore refer to a spiritual separation, as geographically they would have no place to run to. However it could be that those who respond to this call to "come out" will have a miraculous way of literal exit opened to them, perhaps by the Lord snatching away those who in their hearts say "Yes" to this invitation. This would be the moment of 1 Thess. 4, where those who are alive at the Lord's coming are literally snatched away to meet Him at His coming.

The first century application would be to the Christians fleeing out of the surrounded Jerusalem, in accordance with the Lord's command to flee to the mountains (Mt. 24:16). This would further suggest that the "Babylon" in view here in Jerusalem. See on 16:19.

Lest you take part in her sins, and partake of her plagues- Here "sins" is put for 'judgment for sins'. Sin is its own judgment. We cannot sin and psychologically assume that in the future, somehow that sin will not be judged. Sin is its judgment right now. Lot's witness completed, he was told to leave Sodom "lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15- alluded to here in Rev. 18:4). Babylon is directly equated with Sodom in Is. 13:19 and Jer. 50:40. Babylon geographically and culturally represents the jihadist neighbours of Israel in our last days- and therefore it is not surprising that related neighbouring nations like Edom, Moab and Ammon are also paralleled with Sodom (Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9). This continues a long-standing Biblical theme that the curses on apostate Israel are the same as those on her enemies- thus Sodom is representative of both Jews and the beast coalition. Jerusalem is the city which is spiritually called Sodom (11:8). The language of Sodom is clearly applied to Jerusalem in the Old Testament (Dt. 29:23; 32:32; Is. 1:10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14). Latter day Babylon is to be punished as Sodom (Is. 13:19; Jer. 50:40). And so we can understand why at this point in Revelation, the judgment of Babylon is framed in terms of Sodom, because Babylon is to be enthroned in Jerusalem (see on 16:19). And will meet a similar destruction.

Babylon (in Rev.)	Sodom
"I will shew unto you the judgment of	Cp. God showing Abraham

the great whore" (Babylon); 17:2	the judgment of Sodom.
The beast supporting Babylon "was and is not and shall ascend"; 17:8	Sodom and surrounding cities were strong, then overrun by Abraham, then revived.
"Her sins have reached unto Heaven, God has remembered her iniquities"; 18:5	"The cry of Sodom... is great because their sin is very grievous ...the cry of it is come unto me" (Gen. 18:20,21)
"She has glorified herself, and lived deliciously";18:7	"Pride... fullness of bread" (Ez. 16:49)
"Utterly burned with fire"; 18:8	'Sodom' = 'burning'.
"Her plagues... death... and famine"; 18:8	"He overthrew all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (cp. "famine"; Gen. 19:25).
"The great city... great Babylon"; 16:19	The city of Sodom.
"There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven" (16:21)	"The Lord rained upon Sodom... brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen. 19:24).
"They shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment" (18:9,10)	Abraham standing far away and seeing the smoke of Sodom's burning indicates that the surrounding kings did likewise (Gen. 19:28).
Merchants suffered through Babylon's fall (18:11-19)	Sodom was a trading centre (Lk. 17:28)

" ...a great millstone cast into the sea ...thus with violence shall... Babylon.. be found no more at all" (18:21)	Sodom now appears to be submerged in the Dead Sea, to be found no more.
"Her smoke rose up" (19:3)	"Sodom... the land of the plain... the smoke of the country went up" (19:28)

As the Jews were called to leave literal Babylon (Zech. 2:6,7) and Lot was called out of Sodom, so Jews and true believers will be encouraged to come out from Babylon of the last days. The prosperity of Sodom and Babylon made God's people disinclined to leave them. And the opulence of Babylon, and the way she is as a cage (see on :2), will make it all the more difficult for the latter day believers to come out of the Babylon system.

And so the apostate amongst God's people will share in Babylon's judgment. And for all of us, if we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. Those who don't come out from Babylon will share her judgments. There are strong parallels between Babylon and Jerusalem; and they are deeper than simply because the beast / Babylon will capture Jerusalem and enthrone themselves there. Jerusalem is judged as Babylon because in spiritual essence, they were no different. Zion lost her children and also her husband whilst still a young woman (Is. 49:21; 54:6), just as Babylon would (Is. 47:9). Each street of Jerusalem was named after an idol, just as was the case in Babylon (Jer. 11:13)- and thus Jerusalem shared Babylon's judgment. Apostate Israel were always treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Israel worshipped the Babylonian gods, and so they were sent along with Bel their idol to Babylon, where their hearts were. And so they were "Condemned with the world...". Likewise in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

18:5 *For her sins have reached even to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*- The language of the Amalekites, the tower of Babel and Sodom. All these are used as historical foretastes of the last days, and they all involve who are now the Islamic peoples of the Middle East. Jerusalem will become the capital of the beast within the earth / land. Perhaps they will seek to build some mosque complex there, the abomination that brings desolation to the temple mount, just as the tower of Babel was built. But like the Amalekites, who were also dwellers in the earth / land promised to Abraham, this gross iniquity will reach a measure beyond which God will dramatically intervene. They were allowed to dwell in the earth / land until a point when their sin was "full" and then God would drive them out of the land and let Israel dwell there again once their tribulation ended (Gen. 15:16).

18:6 *Give to her even as she gave, and repay her double according to her deeds. In the cup in which she mixed, mix for her a double portion*- This appears a stronger judgment than for historical Babylon: "As she has done, do unto her" (Jer. 50:15). This is to be doubled. Earlier the cup was to be given to her but not diluted

(14:10); now it is to be double filled. This increase in the judgments upon Babylon is because she repeatedly ignored repeated offers of healing and forgiveness. As noted on 17:4, the cup of fornication Babylon drunk and offered to others was in fact the cup of her condemnation. She was quite literally drinking condemnation to herself, just as the rejected within the household do (1 Cor. 11:29). If we enquire to whom this command is addressed, we return to the address to "My people" of :4, who are asked to not only come out of Babylon, but to participate in judging her. The prophecies about the fall of Babylon in Jer. 50 and 51 repeatedly state that it is a revived, repentant Judah which shall judge Babylon. This has yet to be fulfilled, as they were disobedient to God's intended program for them at the time of the restoration.

And yet as explained on 17:16, the destruction of Babylon is at the hands of her ten kings.

It would appear from this that there must be two stages in Babylon's judgment: -
1) The jihadist armies attacking her in Jerusalem. They are themselves largely destroyed whilst doing this.
2) The saints and Jews complete the judgment, possibly directing some of the repentant Islamist peoples, giving some of the spoils to them.

18:7 *As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says: I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see*- The image of "luxury" continues the allusions to Sodom in :5 and :9. This all suggests that the latter day Babylon will achieve a striking level of opulence. It's debatable whether Israel's Islamic neighbours have reached such a state at the present time.

The chief sin of all pagan empires consists in their assertion that their power and their authority derive exclusively from themselves, that they are their own masters, recognizing no superior law. Old Testament prophecies about the sudden destruction of literal Babylon are the basis for the words of Revelation about latter day Babylon. Yet they were never literally fulfilled to completion. They will come finally true in the judgments upon the Babylon system of the beast. Consider:

"You who are given to pleasures, that dwells carelessly, that says in your heart, I am, and none else beside me: I shall not sit a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children" (Is. 47:8)	"How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously… for she has said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. 18:7).
"But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood" (Is. 47:9)	"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning" (Rev. 18:8)
"Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up" (Is. 47:13)	"For by your sorceries…" (Rev. 18:23)

Therefore we conclude that the Babylon of Revelation is presented as the reincarnation of the Babylon of Jeremiah and Isaiah, literal Babylon, which awaits her full punishment. This conclusion is strengthened once it is appreciated how the harlot Babylon of Rev. 17, loud, gaudy, decked with jewellery and painted face, is replete

with reference to Semiramis, the goddess / mother of Nimrod, and one of the patron gods of literal Babylon.

Her refusal to accept she is a widow speaks of someone in denial. The dragon is cast down from 'heaven' by direct Divine intervention in chapter 12, and yet goes into the wilderness to furiously persecute the woman. It seems there will be direct judgment from God against Babylon, in order to appeal for her to repent, in the spirit of "take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed" (Jer. 51:8). Truly God does not willingly afflict, but in judgment remembers mercy, and His ultimate aim of achieving His glory. Thus a tenth part of the city falls first (11:13) before Babylon completely falls (18:4). She is given the chance of repentance, but instead goes into denial about her loss and real status. This is the idea behind her insistence that she has not been widowed, and is a queen- when she has fallen from power.

18:8 *Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning and famine*- The Philistines, clearly typical of Israel's present Arab neighbours, will also die from severe famine in the last days (Is. 14:30). This may well be due to the weaponry used to inflict this upon Israel being used by the Islamists against themselves. Babylon's famine coming "in one day" would suggest something along these lines - how else can a famine be suddenly created in a day? Famine coming in a day also speaks of modern 'just in time' supply networks and transport, which once interrupted can bring an area to food bankruptcy very suddenly. Earlier than our own age, this would have been impossible. But we can also understand this strange language of famine in a day by proposing that the meaning of time is collapsed around the Lord's return. This would enable all the latter day prophecies to come true, but not in real time as we know it. Babylon is to be punished with famine in one day; yet famine is a process (Rev. 18:8). In one day her judgments come, and yet also in one hour (18:10). Surely the lesson is that time is compressed. The events around Christ's return were prefigured by those at the time of Joshua's conquest of the land. Some of the records of his campaigns require a huge amount to have been achieved by his soldiers within around 36 hours. The comment that so much was achieved "at one time" (Josh. 10:42) may hint at a compression of time to enable it. "The sun stood still" may well be intended to teach that the meaning of time was collapsed by God, rather than that the sun literally stood still (Josh. 10:12,13). And the sun standing still over Gibeon is mentioned in Is. 28:21 as typical of the time when Yahweh will do "His strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act" in the last days. The same may be true when the shadow went back for Hezekiah. The movement of the planets need not have been altered; the meaning of time was simply suspended. Rev. 8:12, also speaking of the last days, says that “the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise”. Could this mean that one day and one night last only two thirds of their usual length, whilst the judgments of the fourth Angel are poured out upon the land? I would suggest that the Lord had in mind the suspension of time when he asked that "the hour might pass from him" in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:35); rather than asking to escape the cross in this request, he was perhaps asking for it all to happen in only a moment of real time.

And she shall be completely burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judges her- This is the judgment for whores. Babylon is literal Jerusalem where she is enthroned (see on 16:19). The punishment by fire in Jerusalem would then make good sense of the Lord's idea that Gehenna- the always burning fire near Jerusalem- is to be used to destroy all God's enemies of all ages. They will share in the condemnation of the world they so loved in their lives. The burning was Sodom's judgment; and we have seen on :4 that Babylon is Sodom is Jerusalem.

18:9 *And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning*- Alluding to Abraham watching the smoke of Sodom's burning (see on :5 and :7). These kings of the land are those who also played a part in her judgment, who hated the whore (see on 17:16). But their hearts are still with her, lamenting with the grief of those who wistfully keep thinking of what could have been. But as noted on :10, the reference may not be to the actual "kings", the horns of the beast; but to the commercial leaders of the surrounding world who are associated with the princes of the earth (:23).

Is. 34 describes the judgments of "all nations" around Israel, notably "upon Idumea", in language which is clearly alluded to in the later prophecies of Babylon's doom in Revelation (Is. 34:9,10 = Rev. 14:11; 17:16; 18:9; v.11=Is. 14:23). Indeed, all God's prophecies against Israel's enemies have marked points of contact with each other. Thus the prophecies against Tyre in Is. 23 are shot through with links with those against Babylon in Revelation; and "as at the report (prophecy) concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre"(Is. 23:5). Is. 14:3 says that Babylon treated Israel like the Egyptians did; they too gave them "sorrow... fear, and... hard bondage wherein (Israel) wast made to serve". Because of these similarities in how they treated and will treat God's people, their judgments will be similar. Yet a number of these nations, notably Egypt and Tyre, are described as being judged and destroyed by Babylon (e.g. Ez. 26:7). However, there is good reason to think that Babylon's own judgment will be at the hands of nations like these, who come under her umbrella during their invasion of Israel. The resolution of this apparent contradiction lies in the prophecies concerning the Islamist powers destroying each other in the final conflict, thus fulfilling all these prophecies concerning their judging of each other.

18:10 *Standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come*- Their deep grief stands in contradistinction from the Heavenly rejoicing at Babylon's fall (:20). They are her sympathizers and are not brought to repentance by her fall. They fear that her torment shall come upon them. They retreat from her, just as the animals and birds scuttle away from under the falling tree of Babylon. They praise Babylon's strength and glory after she has fallen. They are not themselves in Babylon, but have benefitted from her through commerce, as the rest of the chapter makes clear. They would therefore refer to the commercial leaders of the 'sea' around the 'earth'; the Gentile nations who became enriched by Babylon's wealth and demand for delicacies. Surely Western commercial leaders are within this group. They are stunned by how quickly the whole system fell apart, in one hour. Her "torment" however has been going on throughout the three and a half years of the tribulation; for the two witnesses tormented those who dwelt in the land (11:10 s.w.), leading to such rejoicing when they are killed at the end of the tribulation. That torment was a foretaste of the final torment of condemnation spoken of so often (14:10; 20:10 etc.). Again we can perceive that the torment was in order to give Babylon and the beast a chance of repentance by showing them ahead of time what Divine judgment would look like for them unless they repented.

The destruction of the city is a sudden thing. The phrase "in one hour" occurs three times in Rev. 18. This destruction is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah- in a moment, by Divine intervention through fire, sulphur etc. This is not how Rome came to an end, indeed Rome as a city did not really come to an end; and literal Babylon

was not physically destroyed “in one hour” in 536 BC. The predicted fall of Babylon must therefore be in our last days, referring to the destruction in a moment of the city which has become the capital of the beast- Jerusalem.

18:11 *Standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come*- See on :10. Their fear of sharing in her torment is a major theme.

The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing:

1 Kings	Revelation
10:14	13:17,18
10:23	18:11,12,15
11:1,2	17:1,2
10:22	18:17,19
10:23	18:3,17
10:21,22	18:12
10:11	18:12
10:22	18:12
10:10,25	18:13
10:23	18:3,9
10:28	18:12
9:22	18:13
11:1,5 (Solomon influenced by Zidonian idolatry)	2:20 cp. 1 Kings 16:31
2 Chron. 9:15 (666)	13:18

This serves to cement the connection between Babylon and Jerusalem, especially the Jerusalem temple. In the first century, it was Judaism which was the great satan / adversary and devil / false accuser of the Christians. The temptation was always to give in to the Judaist campaign and return to Judaism. Paul, Peter and John are full of this theme in their letters. But here that system is described in the worst possible terms.

18:12 *Merchandise of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all kinds of scented wood, and every vessel of ivory and every vessel made of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble*- These are the materials associated with Solomon's kingdom and temple, and the materials of the tabernacle and temple cult. We see too a reference to how the High Priest Caiaphas was dressed, also with "purple" (Lk. 16:19), likewise in vain appearance. It was the religious clothing of Israel in Ez. 16:10. Throughout these descriptions we see allusions to the Jewish high priesthood. The whole verse clearly alludes to the glory of Tyre in Ez. 27. These various layers of allusion serve to build up the overall picture- an appearance of Judaistic religiosity which is thoroughly carnal and pagan. Judaism was indeed the first century Babylon; see on :11.

The latter day Babylon will therefore seek to quickly build a kingdom and worship system which apes that of Israel and the temple cult- hence the gross blasphemy and abomination on the temple mount which calls for desolation.

18:13 *And cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and slaves and the souls of men*- As noted on :12, all these things are associated with Solomon's temple and Kingdom, and the materials of the tabernacle and temple cult. It would have been a great comfort to those under pressure from the Jewish satan in

the first century to see God's perspective on that evil system. The latter day application is to an Islamist paradise, more exotic than the citadels of the Gulf states, established in Jerusalem, with distinct religious overtones. And all to be destroyed even quicker than it was established.

Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them. It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

"Slaves and souls of men" is last in the list, as if to give especial emphasis to how "Babylon" was built upon slavery. 'Slaves and souls [bodies] of men' is saying the same thing two or three times over. Slaves were indeed treated as "bodies", and their bodies were inspected in the slave markets as if they were animals. But the point is doubly emphasized- because "bodies" clearly implies they were "men", but "bodies of men" labours the point. So we could even say the point is laboured three times. The power and wealth of Rome was built upon the back of slavery. And a large proportion of first century Christians were slaves. They would have found this greatly comforting. The "soul" of Babylon longed for wealth and luxury; but at the expense of the "souls" of the slaves.

Because the initial audience of Revelation were largely Christian slaves, we find many allusions to slavery throughout the book. Believers were "purchased" by the blood of the Lord- the very term used of slaves being purchased and thus transferred from one master to another. This is a well known theme of the NT letters- we were purchased by the Lord and are therefore His slaves. Even if they were slaves of men, they were the Lord's slaves, and their service to earthly masters was actually performed unto Him. This explains why Revelation speaks so much of Jesus as the real Lord and Master, to whom His people are obedient (Rev. 4:8,11; 6:10; 12:17; 14:12). Obedience is stressed, not because works can save, but because 'obedience' to earthly masters was such a major construct in the life of a slave. The point being, that their obedience was to their true Master, the Lord Jesus, who is Lord of all human lords. The background of slavery likewise helps us better understand the idea of being branded with a seal on the forehead (Rev. 7:3; 14:1). This spoke of how they were permanently owned by the Master whose seal or branding they bore. But a slave was only branded in this way if they had been disobedient or had tried to run away, and had consequently been permanently committed to their Master's usage for all time, until death. Very few slaves were branded upon their foreheads with their master's name. The idea may therefore be that all the Lord's slaves have in fact been disobedient, but they recognize that, and eagerly take His seal or branding upon them, and are now permanently His until death.

18:14 *And the fruits which your soul lusted after are gone from you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are lost to you, never to be found again!* - The prophecy has multiple applications; to Jerusalem of the first century; to Rome; and to the restored Babylon of the last days. The reference is to Israel lusting after the fruits of Egypt, and Adam and Eve lusting for the forbidden fruit in Eden. Their sin will be enshrined and manifested in this final system of evil and lust as never before- all under the guise of the strictest possible interpretation of Islam. Just as Judaism did the

same in Jerusalem in the first century, under the front of careful obedience to the Law of Moses.

18:15 *The merchants of these things who were made rich by her shall stand far away, for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning*- This category are not consumed in her judgments; they have come out of her in response to flee Babylon *lest* they partake in "her torment", just as Lot's wife did; and yet they are equally on her side, with her in spirit, just as materialistic, as Lot's wife was. Or, as suggested on :10, these merchants are those outside of the earth / land, the likes of Western European businessmen, who became wealthy by serving the huge demand for luxury goods which arises from the dominance of the beast. Perhaps the words of lament are as it were put in their mouths, so we realize the nature of Babylon's existence. In fact in Revelation we know little about the apocalyptic Babylon until we read the laments over her after she is destroyed. They are clearly not believers nor are they fully repentant; for their weeping over her fall contrasts with Heaven's rejoicing at it (:20).

We need to note that the same word for "made rich" is used in the opening letters for how there are some in the church of the last days who are likewise "made rich" and thereby turn away from Christ (3:17). Even true Christians will be caught up in the attraction of making quick bucks for the sake of a nominal acceptance of the beast system.

18:16 - see on Rev. 17:18.

Saying: Woe, woe, the great city! She that was dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl!- "Fine linen" would be very relevant to the application of 'Babylon' to apostate Judaism in the first century, with the precious stones referring to the High Priestly breastplate. The items in which Babylon trades are therefore presented in terms of the opulence of Solomon's Israelitish Kingdom. Appearance of spirituality can be deeply obnoxious to God; Isaiah had predicted that He saw Jerusalem as Sodom, the virgin of Israel as a whore (Is. 1:9). And that language is definitely used here. An appearance of spirituality is no guarantee of acceptance with God; it may actually be obnoxious to Him.

The image of fine linen and wealth recalls to our minds images of wealthy sheikhs walking around Islamic citadels in the Gulf states. But the entity briefly created by Babylon in Jerusalem will outstrip them all. The white linen of jihadist religious leaders is an image mixed here with that of obscene wealth, and a pretension to the Jewish high priesthood. The precious stones, scarlet etc. are all associated with the tabernacle system. This is also a false system of worship. The picture exactly fits Islamist supremacy. We note the revival of gold and precious stones as effective currency in the areas now under the control of Islamic fundamentalists in the area around Israel.

And yet pearls refer to the true believers (21:21). The believers are dressed in white linen, symbolizing righteousness (19:8). The suggestion therefore is that Babylon is quasi-religious and appears highly moral, when actually it is morally delinquent. This is exactly what we see in Jihadist Islamism. There is clear reference to the Jewish priesthood, and the description also connects with the white clothing of Islamic religious leaders. But they are a fake kingdom of God, their leaders are fake saints, and their leader is the anti-Christ.

18:17 *For in an hour so many great riches are laid waste. And every shipmaster and everyone that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living at sea, stood far away*- Despite having seen direct Divine intervention, throughout the three and a half years of "torment" upon the earth dwellers from the miracles of the

two witnesses (11:9,10), and now Babylon's final destruction, these commercial people are so materialistic that they do not repent. All they can think about is how much they have lost, and how tragic it is that such material wealth is now "laid waste". This is the power of materialism. It has destroyed so much faith in so many people, and we are to therefore be the more aware of its insidious power.

18:18 *And cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying: What city is like the great city?*- They are connected with faithful Abraham observing Sodom's burning; but although the great city is no more, they speak in the present tense as though it is still existing. This is a reflection of their grief at how much has been lost, both to them and in general terms. This is how stubbornly materialistic they are.

18:19 *And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying: Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her expense! For in one hour she is made desolate*- This casting of dust on the head is sometimes (as with the Ninevites), but not always, associated with repentance. It may be significant that there is no apparent record of the destruction of these merchants. Are we to hope that they repented? Perhaps the idea is that they have the possibility to do so. As noted earlier, their observing of the smoke of Babylon's judgment connects them with faithful Abraham, watching the judgment of Sodom. The vagueness as to whether this refers to repentance or not is perhaps because this is yet unknown- for these people have freewill, and shall make their own decision regarding repentance after Babylon's judgment. But their weeping contrasts with the rejoicing of the believers (:20). Their particular weeping for their now redundant fleets of ships speaks of how their economies were tied in to servicing Babylon with luxury goods; and now that was suddenly, in an hour, no more. Their whole economic structure was useless. And despite all the evidence of Divine involvement and all the evidence of His visible involvement in this earth again, they could only see the immediate and the material, what was right before their eyes. And tragically that is how the majority of people are today.

18:20- see on Jn. 7:24.

Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you saints, and you apostles, and you prophets. For God has judged your judgment on her- All the surrounding nations did to Israel shall be done to them. This explains the links between the seals [the judgments on Israel at the hands of their neighbours in the last days] and the trumpets and vials, which speak of similar judgments coming upon Israel's enemies within the land / earth promised to Abraham. The saints may be Israel (Dan. 7:25); the prophets would be the two witnesses of chapter 11. The "heaven" would refer to the Heavenly, Angelic representatives of those who were killed and tormented by the beast during her three and a half year domination of the earth / land; for John had seen them in his visions of the heavenly throne room, and now he sees them rejoicing. What the beast did during his brief domination is now done to him. So the saints and Christians in view are particularly those who endured that.

We can consider the AV here to be correct: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her". "On *[ek]* her" is the same Greek phrase as in :4, "come out of *[ek]* her". The idea could therefore be that the watching faithful rejoice that God has avenged those who came out of her [Babylon]. "For God has avenged you who came out of her" would be a fair translation. "Rejoice *over* her" could simply mean that those in 'heaven' stand *epi* or simply above Babylon, watching things play out. This implies that some will in fact

ome out of Babylon, and this accounts for all the statements to the effect that although the time for judgment has truly come, there are still repeated efforts to elicit repentance even after the time of opportunity has closed. *And some respond*. The rejoicing in Heaven can then more comfortably connect with the Lord's teaching throughout Lk. 15, where rejoicing in Heaven is associated with repentance. Their joy is therefore not simply at judgment of Babylon, but that some had come out of her. And this would explain why the rejoicing 'heavens' address specifically those who came out of Babylon: "For God has avenged *you* who came out of her". Continually, we see that God is a Saviour and like His Son, takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rejoices to save His people, however small a minority they may be.

18:21 *And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall never be found again*- Jeremiah's prophecies about Babylon had been cast into the Euphrates tied to a stone (Jer. 51:63). But this is the fate of Babylon. There is a parallel between the word of prophecy, and Babylon; so sure is it of fulfilment.

The same judgment is for those who make little ones stumble (Mt. 18:6). Such behaviour is the same as Babylon's obvious apostasy. The Lord taught that the believer who makes his brother stumble should have a millstone hung around his neck and be cast into the sea (Lk. 17:2). This is exactly Babylon's judgment (Rev. 18:21). The unloving in the ecclesia will be treated like the unloving world whose spirit they share. The rejected will weep and gnash their teeth (Mt. 25:30)- and be sent back into the Babylon-world, where they are also weeping and angry (Rev. 18:15,19). As the tree of Babylon will be cut down, so will the rejected be (Dan. 4:14,23 = Mt. 7:19). As Babylon is burnt with fire (Rev. 18:8), and indeed the whole 'world' too (2 Pet. 3:10), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:40 etc.). It seems the rejected saints will share the judgements of Satan, the beast, the antiChrist. Thus Babylon has a millstone tied around her neck and she is thrown into the sea (Rev. 18:21), just as the judgement of the rejected saints is described (Mt. 18:6). They will be ground to powder by the stone of Christ (Mt. 21:44), just as he will fall on the nations of the Babylon confederacy and grind them to powder (Dan. 2:34). The Lord will appoint his unwatchful servant a place of condemnation "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). This is understandable once we appreciate the idea that there are only two Kingdoms, God's and Satan's. The unworthy were effectively in Satan's Kingdom, therefore they will suffer the judgement that is prepared for it. Therefore we *must* separate from Babylon, Satan's Kingdom, or else we will receive her judgements (Rev. 18:4). Likewise the condemnation of the apostate in Israel is very often described in the language of the judgements on the surrounding kingdoms (e.g. Joel 1:5,10-12 = Is. 16:10; Ez. 16:37-39 = Rev. 17:16; Jer. 16:9 = Rev. 18:23; Jer. 49:4 = Jer. 31:22; Jer. 51:27 = Joel 1:4; 2:1; Jer. 50:13 = 19:8). The cup of judgement that Israel will drink will be given to the Arab nations who have afflicted her (Is. 51:23). This is all the principle of Rev. 18:6; as the latter day Babylon does to natural and spiritual Israel, so it will be done to her. Apostate Israel are often described as if they are their neighbours- they share the same judgements, because they have effectively sold their birthright. Israel "sat... as the Arabian in the wilderness" (Jer. 3:2). Judah would be punished along with Egypt, Moab and Ammon, the circumcised with the uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25,26). Thus Rom. 9:8 describes faithless Israel as "the children of the flesh", with allusion to Arab Ishmael; and Gal. 4:23 likewise. The early chapters of Romans reason that both Jew and Gentile receive the same judgment, because both have sinned. The judgements on the nations are all described in similar language, whatever time or place they were in.

Thus Babylon's judgement in Rev. 18 is based on the judgement of Egypt as recorded in Ez. 32:4-10, and Egypt's judgement of Ez. 29:4 is that of Gog in Ez. 38:4. The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10). There are so many examples of this. Surely the point is that fundamentally, all the nations of the world, in whatever time and place, are all fundamentally the same Kingdom of Satan, and will suffer the same destruction by the Kingdom of God. Likewise the Kingdom of God to which we belong is not limited by time or geography.

When God described Nineveh as a "great city", the very fact of its size elicited a desire to spare it. And of course we meet the same phrase in Revelation, where a condemned Babylon is described as a "great city". This was not God gleefully preparing to destroy a huge city. He surely had Nineveh in mind when He inspired those words. This was, and will be, a God whose very heart is touched by the tragedy of sinners having to be punished, and who is open to a change of purpose if they will repent. Thus the latter day appeal to "Come out of her!", whether we understand 'Babylon' as false religion, the Moslem world, the world of sinners or whoever, is rooted in God's spirit of passionate love towards Nineveh. As Jonah "cried" against Nineveh, so God 'cries' against Babylon (Rev. 18:2). We who make that appeal in these last days should be reflecting here on earth the mind of God in Heaven; not merely pronouncing doom and gloom against 'Babylon', but warning them of God's stated intentions towards them *with a heart that bleeds for them and seeks their repentance.*

The writer of Psalm 137, sitting angry and frustrated by a Babylonian riverside, with his guitar hanging on a willow branch, being jeered ("tormented" Ps. 137:3 RVmg.) by the victorious Babylonian soldiers who had led him away captive… he felt *so* angry with them. Especially when they tried to make him sing one of the temple songs ("sing us one of the songs of Zion"). And, as a bitter man does, his mind went from one hurt to another. He remembered how when Babylon had invaded, the Edomites hadn't helped their Hebrew brethren (Obadiah 11,12). They had egged on the Babylonian soldiers in ripping down the temple, shouting [in a chorus?] "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation". And so in anger and bitterness this Jew prays with tears, as he remembered Zion, "O daughter of Babylon… happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock" (:8,9 RV). God read those angry words as a prayer, and in some sense they will have their fulfilment. For these words are picked up in Rev. 18:8,21 and applied to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Daniel 2:44, at His return. He will dash in pieces the Babylon-led people that oppose Him.

18:22 *And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute players and trumpeters shall never be heard again in you, and no craftsman of whatever craft shall ever be found again in you, and the voice of a mill shall never be heard again in you*- An allusion to Solomon's temple, confirming the religious nature of 'Babylon'. This fits the first century application to Judaism, and to a latter day application to Jihadist Islam, which claims to be the true Judaism. Craftsmen and creative people of all sorts will have been brought to Babylon, enthroned in Jerusalem, both to build it and continue servicing it. Mills were operated by slaves; those Jews and Christians being abused by this latter day Egypt / Babylon. But that shall be no more.

18:23 *The light of a lamp shall never shine again in you, and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall never be heard again in you*- The Old Testament basis for this is not simply the judgments upon Babylon, but also those upon Jerusalem at the hand of Babylon (Jer. 7:34; 16:9). For latter day Babylon shall be built in Jerusalem; see on 16:19. So it is appropriate also that what Babylon did to Jerusalem shall be done to her. This all suggests that Babylon shall desolate and judge Jerusalem in the latter days and then in turn be judged for doing so. Jerusalem will fall to her enemies, as Zech. 14 and the Lord's Olivet Prophecy clearly require.

The contrast is with how the Lord Himself will be the eternal light of Jerusalem, the city of God (22:5; Is. 60:19,20). A new Jerusalem shall come down from God out of Heaven to replace the burnt ruins of the Babylon system there.

For your merchants were the princes of the earth; and with your sorcery were all the nations deceived- All the princes of the earth / land were influenced by her wine, making them drunk with a fanaticism against Israel and true Christians. This radical jihadist propaganda was accepted by the merchants because it made them wealthy by serving the demands of Babylon. We can therefore see the West accepting her sorcery to some extent, for purely economic motives. Although the ten horns / kings of the land are to be destroyed, they are here associated with the "merchants", those not within Babylon itself, but serving her.

18:24 *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth*- No one religious system is guilty for the blood of every martyr over time. The more sensible reference is to the blood of the believers slain in the earth / land promised to Abraham, during the latter day tribulation. "The nations" in view are those within the earth / land of Babylon's dominion: "At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth trembles, and the cry is heard among the nations" (Jer. 50:46). The nations in view are those of the earth / land. The deaths of all Jews and true Christians in the earth / land during the tribulation is the direct responsibility of the Babylon system.

The reference is also to Judaism and Jerusalem, in whom was found the blood of the faithful (Jer. 2:34). In the first century context, it is Jerusalem-based Judaism which is in view. But in the last days, it is Babylon-Jerusalem, in that the whore of Babylon and her beast makes its blasphemous capital in Jerusalem.

REVELATION CHAPTER 19

19:1 *After these things I heard what seemed to be a great voice of a great crowd in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power, belong to our God*- John is seeing the Angelic representatives of the believers in his vision of the heavenly throne room. This is the same "great crowd" of 7:9 (s.w.), those who had endured the tribulation of the beast's domination. But the lives of believers are hid with Christ in God; the Lord is in the bosom of the Father. Therefore those 'in Heaven' don't refer to the departed souls of believers, but rather to the believers who are in heavenly places in Christ. This is a common NT theme. By contrast, the earth dwellers of Revelation are those who suffer the latter day judgments. The believers are here spoken of as praising God because the literal articulation of salvation in

Christ is now clearly about to be revealed. It could be that the whole metaphor of believers 'in Heaven' is used in Revelation because it is their guardian Angels who are in view, who represent them before God, individually and as collectives, of ecclesias and groups throughout history at particular points and circumstances.

19:2 *For true and righteous are His judgments*- The awful loss of life and gross destruction is recognized by them as not only necessary but righteous. For we have noted how often the Babylon system was given the chance to repent.

For He has judged the great prostitute, she that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged the blood of His servants shed by her- It's hard to imagine any single entity corrupting literally the whole planet, right into the jungles of Amazonia and onto every island of the Pacific. The more natural interpretation is that the earth refers to the land, a more limited area of the planet's surface- the land promised to Abraham. The behaviours of the whore are either throughout all history, or at a more limited period of time. That period of time is more naturally, within the context of Revelation, the last days. The kings of the earth / land who were influenced by the whore would then refer to the kings of the land area promised to Abraham, influenced by the wine of her jihadist teaching.

"He has avenged the blood of His servants" shows that the cry of those persecuted in the last days within the land of Abraham (Rev. 6:10) has now been answered.

19:3 *And a second time they said: Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever*- The impression is of a sacrifice being offered, although the allusion is to the rising smoke of Sodom. Even in the destruction of the wicked, God is glorified. His judgments are a way of glorifying the principles of His Name, and not the lashing out of an offended Deity. The "great crowd" are as it were watching this, and thus are to be connected with faithful Abraham watching the smoke of Sodom arising.

19:4 *And the twenty four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sits on the throne, saying: Amen. Hallelujah!*- See on :1. The Angels join in with the same praise which their human charges are also making. Thus believers and Angels are presented in parallel. For the Angels in Heaven represent believers on earth. It is in this sense, in a practical, mechanical sense, if you like, that truly, man is not alone, but God is with us. But now at this juncture, Angels and believers are united together in praise by the resurrection.

19:5 *And a voice came from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God all you His servants, you that fear Him, the small and the great*- We have just read of the elders, living creatures and the "great crowd in heaven" doing just this. This appears therefore to be an appeal to others, on earth, to do what the Angels of Heaven are doing. This is a theme of Revelation- that those who believe are in league with the Heavenly Angels, who are fellow servants with them. Or it could be that again, Revelation is simply not chronological, but a kaleidoscope of images. We would then have explained here in :5 how the situation in :1 [praising God] came about.

19:6- see on Rev. 6:9.

And I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great crowd, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns- This is surely the crowd of :1, referring to the believers. But their voice is mixed with the voice of waters and thunders, the voice of God, which speaks of the intensest manifestation of God through the Angels. Again the impression is given of believers and Angels united, their sounds and voices

mingling together as they see the end coming which they both so earnestly desire. God of course reigns now, so their praise that "He reigns!" is therefore a re-statement of what they already believed in their mortal lives, but with so much more power and insight. And this will be so true of much of our talking and praising in the Kingdom age.

"The almighty", AV "omnipotent", is the Greek *pantokrator*, a term used within the imperial cult for the utter omnipotence of the Caesars. We see here another swipe at the imperial cult, which would have made the book of Revelation forbidden literature. And we reflect that it was first given to John on Patmos, exiled there for his resistance to that very cult.

19:7 *Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb comes, and his wife has made herself ready*- The collapse of time around the Lord's return means that it is unwise and impossible to construct chronologies of events around His coming. But the decorum of the symbol here means that the judgment of God's enemies slightly precedes the marriage of the Lamb; His wife is now described as putting on her wedding clothes (:8), and the invitation of guests (:9). But some texts read "Has come".

If this voice includes that of those who endured the beast's domination and abuse during the tribulation (see on :1), how can they refer to the Lamb's wife as if this is an entity separate from themselves? Perhaps they now behold the resurrection of all the faithful from history, and realize that the bride has now been fully assembled. Or again, we should just not let such chronological issues disturb us; for this is apocalyptic, a merger of various images, and not a timeline of events.

We note that the bride makes *herself* ready, but with the gift of fine linen clothes of imputed righteousness (:8). Her part in all this is to believe in the imputation of His righteousness and white garments to us in Christ. The word for "prepared" is so often used of how the Father and Son have prepared our place in the Kingdom for us (Mt. 20:23; 25:34 "the Kingdom prepared for you"; Lk. 1:17 "to prepare a people for the Lord"; Jn. 14:2,3 "to prepare a place for you"; 1 Cor. 2:9 "What God has prepared for those who love Him"; Heb. 11:16 "God has prepared for them a city"). The work of preparation is done by Him; all we have to do is say yes to it. All our righteous acts are as filthy rags. But having said "yes" to His grace, we respond by doing good works; and it is that response which makes us beautified in the Lord's eyes. And yet the fine lined which "is the righteous acts of the saints" (:8) is itself "given to her", just as the wedding garment was given to the guess in the parable.

19:8 *And it was given to her that she should dress herself in fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints*- In contrast with how Babylon likewise was dressed in "fine linen" (see on 18:16). The suggestion therefore is that Babylon is quasi-religious and appears highly moral, when actually it is morally delinquent. This is exactly what we see in Jihadist Islamism. There is clear reference to the Jewish priesthood, and the description also connects with the white clothing of Islamic religious leaders. The fine linen is given to her- it speaks of imputed righteousness (see on :7). The “righteous acts” of the saints will be publicly arrayed before all (Rev. 19:8)- by none other than the Lord. All their good ‘acts’ will be revealed to all. And yet that righteousness is what they are clothed with by Christ- perhaps suggesting that their good deeds will be presented in a heightened form, as imputed righteousness, which would explain why the righteous will be shocked that the Lord could speak so highly of them (“When saw we thee…?”). But the work of God, the action He requires, is to believe in His imputation of righteousness (Jn. 6:29).

19:9 *And he said to me: Write, Blessed are they that are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb*- See on :7. There seems a difference in category between those destroyed by judgments, the Lamb's wife, and the invited guests. Presumably the guests are those who are not believers but are not destroyed in the judgments; and these are now invited to participate in the Lamb's wedding. And who amongst those who survive Armageddon would not attend? This may speak of the conversion of the remaining population of planet earth. Another option is to see the guests and the bride as the same- but they are spoken of separately in order to bring out different aspects of the typology. Perhaps we are to see the wonder of grace- that the guests, the homeless and marginalized attracted by a free meal, are transformed by the kaleidoscope of images into the bride herself. No wonder John falls down in :10, overcome by the vast grace of the picture. The Bible was written largely for illiterate people, who are very visual. The images are not always to be interpreted separately- e.g. the guests represent X, the bride represents Y, and the Lamb's wife represents Z. Rather are the images developed and re-birthed, they merge and transform in a kaleidoscope of images. And so I suggest the guests become the bride herself. The bridesmaids of the 'wise and foolish virgins' parable are asked to be the bride. That whole parable leaves begging the question: 'And where is the bride?'. The answer may be that the bridesmaids become the bride.

And images are also subverted- the image of a wedding banquet for the son of a powerful person immediately suggests that the guests are also wealthy. But in fact they are the homeless. And likewise guests with tears on their cheeks is a subversion of the wedding banquet image. It was [and is] these subversions of images which have such power with the illiterate, and it often takes the literate a long time to correctly interpret the text exactly because they are missing the issue of imagery being subverted.

The blessedness of those invited is allusive to the parable of the great supper in Lk. 14:15-24. Invited guests typically brought a present with them when they attended. But the element of unreality in the parable is that those who were finally the guests had nothing to bring, and were invited by grace alone. Likewise the prophecy of the Messianic banquet in Is. 25:6-9 has some elements of unreality to it. Not only is the quality of the wine twice emphasized, but it is a banquet which involves the destruction of death, and the host wiping away tears from the eyes of the guests: "In this mountain Yahweh of Armies will make to all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of choice wines, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined choice wines. He will destroy in this mountain the surface of the covering that covers all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces. He will take the reproach of His people away from off all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it". The "all peoples" who are invited are the same "all peoples" who have death ended for them. The language of God Himself wiping away tears from all faces is used in Revelation about the situation at the Lord's return. A marriage supper is supposed to be an event of unalloyed joy; but at this supper, the guests come with tears, the tears of post traumatic shock rather than of sorrow, and are comforted over the meal. In one sense, "many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom" (Mt. 8:11). But that reclining will be after having had tears wiped from our eyes. The imagery of a wedding feast is of extreme joy- for a few hours. It is perhaps the image of the happiest point in a person's life cycle. Even childbirth is not the same image of unalloyed joy. But the entire Kingdom of God is

symbolized by the wedding feast. This will be an eternal joy, not a cusp of emotion which then fades away. "Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads".

These things are all prefigured in the breaking of bread meeting. The Lord clearly saw the breaking of bread meeting as a foretaste of that future supper: "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk. 22:16-18). All types of people, all wired differently, every personality type, from every ethnic group, are breaking bread at one table- from Heaven's perspective. And woe to those who seek to break up that wedding banquet by a closed table policy which turns the Lord's table into a political weapon. The same Greek word is used for the marriage "supper" as for "the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). John uses the word in his account of the first breaking of bread as a "supper" (Jn. 13:2,4).

The Messianic banquet will be in full view of the rejected, as was the style of banquets in those days: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:28,29). To see this banquet as observers but to be cast out of it... this will be unbearably painful for the rejected, to the point that they gnash their teeth in anger against themselves for having rejected their own part in that table. At the very least, we should be eager to participate at the breaking of bread; for it represents our eagerness to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are guaranteed a place at the Messianic banquet- it is not an eternal unknown for us. We have been invited, and are now living out our acceptance of the invitation by breaking bread now: "Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom" (Lk. 22:29). According to the parable of the wedding feast, those left outside the Kingdom's feast will be there because they allowed the cares of this life to lead them to refuse the invitation to actually attend it, despite having given an in-principle agreement that they want to be there. Or those beggars who considered the invitation to not be relevant to them because they were too dirty, sinful and marginalized. They couldn't believe that His grace was as good as it sounds- that they, the marginalized, who could bring no gift to the banquet, were really being invited just as they were.

And he said to me: These are the true words of God- This recalls how in Jn. 19:35 John struggles to get over the utter truth of the words. This is all so wonderfully true.

19:10 *And I fell down before his feet to worship him, and he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers that hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*- The Angels are right now serving the same Lord we do; our work for Him is done in invisible partnership with them. The preaching or testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, says Rev. 19:10. I understand this to mean that our testimony to Jesus is in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets. For Rev. 22:6 associates the God of the holy prophets [a phrase referring to the Old Testament prophets in Lk. 1:70 and Acts 3:32] with the same God who is with us in our witnessing to Christ. And Rev. 18:20 speaks of those prophets rejoicing in the last day together with all preachers of the Gospel. This is why incidents from the lives and teaching of the Old Testament prophets are repeatedly alluded to in the New Testament and applied to all of us. James 5:10 puts it bluntly- the prophets are to be taken by us as our examples. Jeremiah was warned: "Be not dismayed of *them*, lest I dismay *you*" (Jer. 1:17 RV). This is alluded to by the

Lord when He tells us that if we are ashamed of Him and His words, then He will be ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26). The connection surely indicates that the Old Testament prophets and the spirit of their commissioning is intended to apply to us today in our fulfilling of the great commission. Thus the prophets become our pattern for witness; they are our "brethren the prophets" (Rev.22:9). And so an understanding of them becomes programmatic for our witness today. Our audience, the world in which we live, is in essence that in which the prophets lived. Isaiah was up against the attitude that "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" (Is. 22:13)- and Paul quotes that passage as relevant for all Christians who hold the hope of resurrection amidst a world that does not (1 Cor. 15:32).

The Angel had made prophecies, and John felt that this was something so wonderful that it separated him from the Angel. But John like us was bearing "the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9). The same essential spirit which was in the prophets is in all those who in *their* spirit or attitude bear the witness of Jesus. Hence the prophesying Angel encourages John not to worship him, but rather to recognize that he is John's "fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book", i.e. all believers (Rev. 22:9). And again, this was radical stuff for the initial audience of the Apocalypse. They were being told that they had the prophets as their brethren, and on account of their spirit / attitude of bearing the testimony of Jesus, the same spirit which was in the prophets was in them. The very act of bearing witness to Jesus in our spirit / disposition is in fact to have the same spirit in us which was in the prophets and was the basis of their prophetic witness. This makes the prophets our "brethren", not distant white faced 'saints'. See on Mt. 8:22.

19:11 *And I saw the heaven open*- This introduces the seven final visions. One of the keys to understanding Revelation is to realize that it is structured as a series of visions based around the number seven. It must also be understood that as with many Old Testament prophecies, the book of Revelation is not strictly chronological in its fulfilment. Sometimes we read something which is actually the final picture, and then we read how this situation came about. At other times, we find a series of visions give us as it were 'snapshots' of different aspects of the same process. The seven final visions are introduced by the rubric "And I saw...". It is my suggestion that they each show different aspects of the process of setting up the Kingdom. All references are to Revelation unless otherwise stated. The thoughtful student of the final chapters of Revelation will realize that there are difficulties in 'fitting in' the usual view of the Millennium as a thousand year reign with the information presented there. The suggestion is made in these notes on chapter 20 that the "thousand years" simply means 'a very long time', and refers to eternity. This solves the problem that a rebellion at the end of the 'Millennium' would contradict Is. 9:7; 60:18; Jer. 3:17 and other passages which teach that "they shall learn war no more" after the Kingdom is established. The wrath of God is finished when the seven *last* plagues are poured out (Rev. 15:1 RV), at the Lord's return, i.e. at the *beginning* of the 'Millennium'. At the coming of Christ, the powers represented by the dragon and beast are defeated and chained up. The dead are raised and judged. The rejected join the dragon in the 'bottomless pit', an area on the borders of the land of promise, i.e. the initial geographical extent of the Kingdom. Here they are restrained, but once the Kingdom is established, perhaps after a period of 7 years or so, they 'attack' the land of Israel, where the Kingdom of God has been established. They are then destroyed. The Kingdom then continues eternally. The descriptions of a judgment seat in these final

chapters are all related to the same judgment seat, i.e. that when Christ returns. The OT prophecies of a 'Millennium' with mortal people in it either apply to the setting up period of the Kingdom, or they are to be read in a more figurative way.

And beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon was called Faithful and True- A clear reference to the Lord Jesus, who will now bring about the true, faithful fulfilment of God's promises (Rev. 3:14). He was "the faithful witness / martyr" (Rev. 1:5) in that He suffered at the hands of a beast system, and can thus especially identify with those believers slain by the beast in the final tribulation. John has been allowed a peek into the heavenly throne room. But now heaven itself opens, and the Lord Jesus emerges from there to return to earth.

And in righteousness he judges and makes war- The same presentation of the Lord Jesus as both a warrior and a bridegroom are found in Ps. 45:3-6. There He is pictured as going forth to make war in all His glory for the sake of "truth, humility and righteousness" (Ps. 45:4). There is a powerful juxtaposition of ideas here- He goes forth in glory on behalf of humility. It is the humble believers who will have been persecuted and slain, and now the Lord of humility goes forth in all His glory for their sakes.

19:12 *And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems*- The seemingly invincible beast with his seven diadems now seems so puny compared to the Lord.

And he has a name written which no one knows but him- We likewise will have a unique name known / appreciated only by us (2:17). No-one can enter into the Lord's personal sense of resurrection and reward; there will always be an unreachable, untouchable element in Him throughout eternity. Surely this makes our relationship with Him the more appealing.

19:13- see on Heb. 12:24.

And he is dressed in a garment sprinkled with blood- This alludes to Joseph's blood drenched coat and Is. 63:2; the basis upon which the Lord executes judgment is that He died for us, and His garments were literally blood sprinkled at the crucifixion. He Himself said that His qualification as judge is because He is "son of man".

And his name is called The Word of God- John reminds us of this title for the Lord because in His actions at the time of judgment and establishment of the Kingdom on earth, He will be the full manifestation of God's word, a word which shall then come to its final climax. Note that "the word [*logos*] of God" is a title of the Lord Jesus. So many misunderstand Jn. 1:1-3 by failing to realize this. That word is God, etc.; but it is a *title* of the Lord, His "Name", rather than he Himself personally.

19:14- see on Mt. 24:28.

And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses- Remember that the Lord returns to earth with the Angels, and not alone. However the armies in Heaven also refer to the faithful, who are presented as with God, their lives hid with Christ in Him who is in the bosom of the Father. John has seen them represented by Angels in his visions of the heavenly court room.

Clothed in fine linen, white and pure- In contradistinction to the white clothes of the jihadist sheikhs of 18:16, whose white linen was not pure but mixed with all the trappings of materialism.

19:15 *And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should strike down the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron*- The language of the Lord Jesus at His return (Ps. 2:9); and yet it has already been quoted in Revelation about

how we shall do the same (2:27). See on 12:5. All that is true of the Lord Jesus personally shall be true of us who are in and with Him.

And He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the anger of God- Anyone doing this would have red clothes, spattered with red grape juice. The connection is with His appearance at the crucifixion; see on :13. The cross was "the judgment of this world", and now that judgment is articulated. He judges because He went through the tribulation of the cross.

19:16 *And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written*- A reference to His sword, through which He has become Lord of all human lords and kings (Ps. 45:3)? The allusion is to the way in which names were inscribed on the hilts of swords. His thigh is therefore put for the sword which is on His thigh. For He is presented here as a horseman.

King of kings and Lord of lords- As with many aspects of teaching and language, it is often difficult for us to appreciate how radically revolutionary they were in the first century context; and in essence they should lose none of their radicalness with us. David Bosch observes: "Christians confessed Jesus as Lord of all lords- the most revolutionary political demonstration imaginable in the Roman Empire". Philip Yancey likewise: "As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, its followers took up the slogan "Christ is Lord", a direct affront to Roman authorities who required all citizens to take the oath 'Caesar [the state] is Lord'". It hurt, it cost, to recognize Him as Lord. And so it should with us. Men and women died for this; and we likewise give our lives in response to that very same knowledge. There is a tendency, which the Lord Himself brought to our attention, of calling Him Lord but not doing what He says. To know Him as Lord in truth is axiomatically to be obedient to Him (Lk. 6:46). The reality of the Lordship of Jesus is used in Revelation (19:12, 16) to encourage the brethren to continue fearless in their witness despite persecution. Jesus is Lord of the kings of the earth; He has control over the world; therefore, no human power can harm us without His express permission and purpose. The exhortation of Ps. 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in “holy attire" because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled (Ps. 110:1,3,4 RVmg.).

19:17 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying*- The Angel represents someone or some body of persons standing within the sun of the Lord Jesus, the sun of righteousness which has now arisen. The appeal is made on His behalf by some others- maybe us, or natural Israel, appealing to the nations who have survived Armageddon.

To all the birds that fly in mid heaven- I have suggested on :9 that the guests invited to the marriage are not the same as the Lamb's wife, and these guests refer to the unbelievers in the world who are not destroyed in the judgments upon the world. They are here described as in mid heaven, between earth and heaven. The "earth" dwellers are judged; those "in Heaven" are the believers, their lives hid with Christ in Him who is in the bosom of the Father. Those in between these groups would then appropriately refer to unbelievers who have not heard the Gospel and who are spared the latter day judgments upon the earth. But now they are invited to take their place at the Lord's table.

Come, be gathered together- I have suggested above that the birds could refer to the Gentile nations now invited to the marriage supper as guests. But birds of prey

being gathered together is the language of Ez. 39:17-20, where they are invited to assist in the destruction of the ten nations led by Gog who come up against Israel.

To the great supper of God- This Messianic banquet is prefigured in the breaking of bread. We should invite unbelievers there, just as unbelievers are invited to the ultimate banquet (see on :9 and :17). To exclude people from it is serious indeed. It is a means of witness and invitation to participation.

19:18 *Eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bondservant and small and great*- "Small and great" is the same language used about those who accepted the mark of the latter day beast in Rev. 13:16. The allusion is clearly to the similar scene in Ez. 39, where the victims in view are the Islamic host of Israel's neighbours led by "Gog". These are the same group who are pictured in Revelation as the kings of the land promised to Abraham, who come forth to dominate God's people and land in the last days. The emphasis upon "flesh" suggests this is to be viewed as a sacrifice- the great sacrifice which Yahweh has in the Muslim territories of "Edom" (Is. 34:6). The connection with the marriage supper of the lamb (:9) is perhaps in that the believers have their supper, as the Lamb's wife, and those who are not judged to destruction are invited to theirs as wedding guests but not as the bride; or it could be that these are in fact aspects of the same supper. The Messianic banquet is therefore an open table to those not yet believers, in order for them to come to faith. The Lord's table should be used in the same way today, for it is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet of the last day.

The kings refer to the kings of the earth / land who have given their allegiance to the beast / Babylon. Those invited to eat their flesh are clearly a different category to those who have been slain, and I suggest they refer to the unbelievers left on planet earth who have not yet sided with Christ and yet are not part of the Babylon system.

19:19 *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army*- We have already had several visions of the total destruction of the beast; this may be another one, going back to explain how the blessed situation spoken of earlier in this chapter has been achieved. Or it could be that Babylon has been destroyed, but the beast apparently still exists; just as the dragon loses power in chapter 12 but re-emerges in the form of the other beasts. It could be that her capital city is destroyed but the wider system still exists. Or it could be that such a reading is still too much within space-time constructs, and it seems these dimensions will be somewhat collapsed in the events around the Lord's coming, making chronological sequences of events worthless to predict.

The horns on the beast are “the kings of the earth”, but these kings and the beast arise out of the earth and the sea [the nations around the earth]; and in line with Daniel 7, this is the land promised to Abraham. The connection with 2 Chron. 20 and the other references to Israel's neighbouring enemies 'gathering together' invites us to see the beast as a primarily Arab organization. If there is a detailed allusion here to the 2 Chron. 20 scenario, Jehoshaphat (against whom the opposing kings initially gathered together) would represent Jesus, and Jehoshaphat's army would tally with the resurrected saints. In this case, the final onslaught will be after the return of Jesus. We saw this in chapters 11 and 12; the dragon is cast out of political power, but with just a short time left, goes forth to make war with the woman. In passing, note the differentiation between the leaders in this conflict and their armies: "The kings of the

earth, and their armies... him that sat on the horse (Jesus) and against his army". This would suggest a specific hatred of the Lord Jesus which is separate from, although in addition to, their antipathy towards Israel and the Christian believers. It may also be possible to see in the separation between "the kings of the earth, and their armies" a certain degree of coercion, or difference of motivation, between leaders and people.

Christ goes out to make war (:11), and the Beast and his armies go out to make war against Him- head on conflict. We have gone back in time, as it were, to have another vision of the final conflict, although this has been presented in various ways in earlier visions. This is war with Christ- He is already crowned, 19:12. Likewise the invasion of Ez. 38/9 is after Christ's return, when Israel dwell safely, and we have the Psalm 2 scenario of the Lord enthroned in Jerusalem being attacked by armies. Perhaps the revived beast wants to recapture Babylon-Jerusalem from Him after it has been destroyed (see on 16:19). In this case, we see the limited value of visible miracles; they will have seen plenty of them, but are so blinded by materialism that they wish to still defy the Divine and attempt to recapture Jerusalem.

The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies 'gather together' to fight against Christ. This may be the gathering of 16:13,14; they are gathered together by the power of the false miracles despite all the evidence of true miracles before their eyes. Thus v. 20 mentions how "the false prophet that wrought miracles before [the beast]" is captured with the beast- the scene of 16:14.

19:20- see on :19 and Rev. 13:17.

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet, who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur- There are many connections between Revelation and John's Gospel. These miracles are imitations of the miracles of Christ, for which John uses the same phrase (Jn. 2:11,18; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30). Thus the false prophet is an anti-Christ, a fake Christ with fake power and fake validation. Despite the presence of Divine miracles at the time, as there have been for three and a half years from the two witnesses of chapter 11, people believe what they want to believe. Visible miracles are not conclusive nor bound to elicit true faith; as our Pentecostal friends need to take note.

The destruction of the beast by fire is Babylon's destruction too by the same method; it is that spoken of in Dan. 7:11; Is. 30:30,33. The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. This is the lake of 20:14,15; 21:8- where the unworthy one time believers are thrown. Thus the punishment of the rejected and that of the world is the same; and therefore there must be a separation *now*, lest we be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:29). "Burning with brimstone" / sulphur recalls Sodom- where the unworthy believers shared the same fate as the 'world' around them. Lot's wife was turned into salt, as was the surrounding country (Lk. 17:29). "The lake of fire" will be in the presence of Christ (14:10)- not underground. "Cast alive" suggests torture; cp. 14:10 "tormented". Others are simply killed outright by Christ's word of command (20:21). This would suggest that even among the unresponsible there are degrees of punishment. Casting into a pit and fire as punishment compares with Babylon's persecution of Daniel and his friends. What Babylon does to others shall be done to it. Note too how the Assyrian is described in Is. 30:31-33 as being thrown into a lake of fire- just as the future beast will be (Rev. 19:20). See on 2 Thess. 2:8.

19:21 *Slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse*- The Lord's destructive power will involve words of command rather than He

literally, personally slaying the wicked. We need not therefore imagine us personally killing the members of the beast system. And we have noted several times that their destruction is largely at the hands of each other. Even the coming down of fire and sulphur may be due to their own nuclear weaponry backfiring upon them. The "all men" whose flesh is to be eaten by those in mid-heaven, the Gentile world, are the remaining followers of the beast and false prophet. This eating by fowls is equated with burning in the lake of fire, or Gehenna (Rev. 19:20,21). Several passages in Jeremiah associate the mauling of carcases by fowls with destruction in Gehenna. This creates the image of the beast being ravaged by the 'fowls' of either natural Israel (as they represented in David's speech to Goliath) or the nations once confederate with 'Babylon', as they seem to represent in Daniel.

REVELATION CHAPTER 20

20:1 *I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand*- If Scripture interprets Scripture, then this has to have connection with the Angel who descends and opens the bottomless pit in Revelation 9. This Angel unleashes locusts who bring terrible destruction upon the earth / land for five months, and the Angel morphs into a leader called Abaddon. The Angel may therefore refer to a literal Angel of Heaven who represents an individual upon earth; for all upon earth, good and bad, have Angelic representation in the court of Heaven. The same scene is before us here in chapter 20; an Angel binds and then releases the dragon for "a little time" (20:3), the "five months" of Rev. 9. In my notes on Revelation 9, I have tried to demonstrate that the situation envisaged there suggests an Islamic outpouring of fury upon the earth / land in the very last days. Revelation is not strictly chronological; it is apocalyptic, not a chronological timeline progressing from beginning to end. Our European, linear thinking minds yearn for such tidy chronological progression and we tend to seek to force prophecy into such a structure. But we are dealing with Hebrew, Semitic thought- and moreover, the apocalyptic genre. The various visions refer back to each other, explaining in more detail how the various earlier pictures are arrived at. The events of Revelation 9 refer clearly enough to the events of the last days, at the Lord's second coming; and not to events at the end of a Millennium.

20:2 *And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan*- This description is found only in Rev. 12:9, where this entity is cast out of 'Heaven', i.e. a place of power and rulership, at the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth at Christ's second coming (Rev. 12:10). This is precisely the picture here- that when the thousand years [the Kingdom] is established [AV "fulfilled"], then the dragon is bound and then released for a short time. At the time of the second coming of Christ, this dragon / serpent / evil / satan entity has "but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). This is the "little time" which the dragon is released for in 20:3. Revelation 12 has left us with the dragon deposed from power but about to get madly furious for a little time. Now Revelation 20 is explaining the details; that final mad fury of the dragon is in fact precisely under Angelic control. And that will be a great comfort to those who live through that period of the dragon's madness; things are not at all out of control, he has been bound and now briefly released by the Angels of Heaven. If we ask *why* it has to be this way- perhaps we are to conclude that the releasing was in order to give

the dragon an opportunity to repent. Because throughout Revelation, we encounter this amazing hallmark of Divine activity with even the most desperately evil of men and systems: He wishes to give them every chance of repentance. But in this case, the dragon abuses it, and meets his rightful end in total destruction.

And bound him- The chaining of the devil/ dragon/ serpent in 20:2 probably refers more to the binding of the manifestation of sin in the political devil/ dragon/ beast/ serpent of 12:7 than to abstract sin. Revelation is a message from the Lord Jesus. He had earlier spoken of binding and burning the sons of the Devil at His return (Mt. 13:38,39). He uses the same words here- the Devil will be bound and burned. But that binding and burning envisaged in Mt. 13 clearly speaks of events at His return, and not at the end of a Millennium. The Lord uses the same figure of 'binding' to describe how the condemned *people* at the final judgment will be 'bound hand and foot' by the Angels and then destroyed (Mt. 22:13)- at His return, not at the end of a Millennium. Notice that Satan's deceit of the nations and all of his powers were totally in control of God (Rev. 20:2,3,7). Satan is not a free agent to act as he wishes, without regard for God. Rev. 20:1–3 is surely based upon Is. 24:21,22, which prophesied that the kings of the earth / land will be gathered together, imprisoned in a pit and punished. It is these very human "kings of the earth" who are described in the more figurative language of Revelation as "Satan". Isaiah 24 is talking about the time of the Lord's return to earth, and not any scene at the end of a Millennium.

The idea of shutting up in the abyss is taken from Is. 24:22,23: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days, they shall be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." The context refers to the events of the Lord's coming, and not 1,000 years after it.

For a thousand years- Most numbers in Revelation are symbolic, so it seems unwise to think that this number is literal. I have earlier, elsewhere argued for a literal Millennium, but closer reflection on Revelation 20 has led me to question that view. Because the allusions to other parts of Revelation and other Scripture all speak of these events happening at the Lord's return to earth, not to anything at the end of a 1,000 year period. Further, the Bible was written *for* us and not directly *to* us; it was written *to* its primary audience and in their language. The Jewish audience first receiving this message would have understood the "thousand years" as a reference to the eternal Kingdom of God on earth, and not to a limited Millennial reign of Messiah for 1,000 years. See too my comments on :5 *The first resurrection*, which happens when the "thousand years" are "ended", or as the Greek better means, 'established'. This is a stubborn problem of interpretation for those who hold the traditional Millennial reign view. The figure of 1,000 may be connected with the size of the Most Holy Place, 10 x 10 x 10 cubits, which is alluded to in the description of the new Jerusalem: "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (21:16).

I suggest that here again we have an example of Scripture alluding to contemporary incorrect ideas and deconstructing them. The Jews until about 150 B.C. believed that Messiah would return and establish His Kingdom on earth. But influenced by their humiliation under the Romans, they came to believe that the world was too evil for

Messiah to return to, and that it required a 1000 year period of purification by the Jews before Messiah could return. Slavonic Enoch 22–23, which has been dated at around 50 A.D., stated this specifically. Revelation was therefore written with this idea current in the surrounding Jewish world. I suggest that this incorrect view is being alluded to and deconstructed, by stating that Messiah will come at the *beginning* of the 1000 years and 'purify' the earth forcibly by figuratively 'chaining' Satan. Thus Messiah is to come and purify the earth Himself, rather than the Jews having to purify the earth for 1000 years before Messiah could come.

The following difficulties with the classical view of a Millennial reign are taken from Harry Whittaker:

(a) The prophecies of lasting peace in the kingdom of Christ are quite explicit: "they shall learn war no more".

(b) Also, there is to be lasting godliness: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 3: 17). "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders" (Isaiah 60:18). "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7).

(c) Rebellion against immortals is so palpably silly. By comparison modern nuclear armament, which every Bible reader can see to be a lunatic policy, has calm reason on its side. For, armed with the big bombs, there is always a thin chance that you will devastate the other half of the world before it does the same to you. But for nations, who have had a thousand years' experience of divine power and immortality, to calculate that their puny strength can win against God presupposes a mental deterioration to kindergarten level during the millennium.

(d) The practical problem insists on obtruding itself - where will these rebel nations get their weapons from? Swords will have all been turned into ploughshares.

(e) "He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15: 25). The words imply a steady progress towards complete godliness. The idea of a great boil-up of rebellion at the end is surely most difficult to reconcile with this.

(f) A massive rebellion at the end of a thousand years would stamp the reign of Christ as a failure. To think that the end of all his efforts in teaching, guidance, personal influence and benign rule (to say nothing of the immortal aid of men like Moses and Paul) is to be "We will not have this man to reign over us" - this is just incredible to any who settle down to consider it seriously. Jesus accomplished his work as Prophet, Sacrifice and High Priest perfectly. Can anyone be happy that his work as king is to end in failure? - for can a long, long reign which ends in turbulent rebellion be reckoned as a success?

(g) A rebellion such as is described in Revelation 20 does not arise in five minutes. Even a triviality like the Suez episode in 1957 called for weeks of detailed organization, which could not be kept secret from the rest of the world. Nevertheless one is asked to believe that Christ and his immortals will know nothing at all of this mighty Gog-Magog uprising until it bursts upon the world. The only alternative seems to be that, knowing all that is being secretly concocted, they will pretend to ignore it, so that the rebels may be lured to their own destruction. Would any reader be happy about the morality of such a proceeding?

(h) It is sometimes postulated that if the visible authority of Christ were to be withdrawn for a time, then - human nature being what it is - rebellion would be almost certain to ensue within a short while. But does Scripture speak of any such withdrawal of the Messiah's authority? This seems to have been invented specially to cope with a

big difficulty. On the other hand, Isaiah is explicit that "thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light" (60:20).

(i) The coincidence of the names Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 with that of the leader of the great confederacy of Ezekiel 38 does not seem to have been given its proper weight. With any other Bible problem such a coincidence would shout for the two to be equated with each other. Then may it not be said that any interpretation which does line up these two prophecies as having the same fulfilment has a much stronger claim to acceptance than one which severs all connection between them and instead inserts a gap of a thousand years? or is "Interpret Scripture by Scripture" to stand as a sound principle everywhere except in Revelation 20?

(j) Revelation 15:1 R.V. The Vials are described as "the seven plagues which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God." The logical conclusion from these words is that the judgement of the Gog-Magog rebellion takes place before the outpouring of the Vials is concluded.

(k) Has the difficulty ever been properly faced that this amazing rising against all that is good and beneficent is spoken of in Scripture in one place only? Are Christadelphians to copy Mormons, "Jehovah's Witnesses" and such, in their disreputable habit of confidently basing major beliefs on one passage of Scripture? Have we, the people of the Book, not yet learned the elementary lesson of mistrust in our own powers of Bible interpretation? We believe what we believe about our "First Principles" not because of one text of Scripture but because of the massive over-all testimony of many passages. Shall we then go back on this thoroughly sound attitude here, and this, concerning verses in the Book of Revelation, of all places, the book about the interpretation of which there is less room for dogmatism than any other in the Bible?

To these I would add the fact that 21:4 says that death shall be no more. The passage in Rev. 21 is full of reference to descriptions of the establishment of the Kingdom at Christ's return, when the bridge meets the bridegroom (21:2). If death itself ends when the bride and groom meet at the Lord's return, then this settles the issue. There will be no more concept of death after that. It cannot be that there will be no more death if a mortal population still exists. Death is ended by death being thrown into the lake of fire here in chapter 20. This is the same as death being no more.

As to what Revelation 20:4 does not mean, in terms of those who wrest it to support the idea of a cosmic satan literally existing; see my comments in *The Real Devil*.

20:3 *And threw him into the abyss*- The same word as in Lk. 8:31,33, where the demons ask Christ not to send them into the abyss; the parallel record says that they asked not to be sent out of the land of Israel (Mk. 5:10). Also Rom. 10:7 uses the abyss as a term for the lands beyond Israel (it is referring to Dt. 30:13). The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area outside Israel from where the beast comes (i.e. the Arab world?) is where it is returned to for punishment. I have suggested in commentary on chapter 9 that the abyss may refer to a distinct geographical area in or on the edge of the earth / land promised to Abraham.

And shut it- The same word is used of how the door is shut around the faithful believers with whom Christ rejoices at His return (Mt. 25:10). There is a brief, appropriate period of intimacy between Christ and His people, during which the

dragon cannot do anything.

And sealed it over him- The same word is used about how the final seven thunders of calamity upon the earth / land are "sealed" (Rev. 10:4). This seems to refer to a brief period in between the Lord's return and when He resumes dealing with the dragon system.

That he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished- Loosed a little season once eternity (the "1000 years") is established. The same word translated "finished" is translated to accomplish; to establish, build up (Lk. 22:37; Gal. 5:16; James 2:8; LXX: Ruth 3:18; Is. 55:11; Dan. 4:30). Consider the usage of the word elsewhere:

- Luke 22:37: "This that is written must yet be accomplished in me."
- Galatians 5:16: "Walk ye in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
- James 2:8: "If ye fulfil the royal law ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye shall do well."
- Romans 2:27: "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee who ... dost transgress the law?"
- Ruth 3:18: "the man (Boaz) will not be in rest until he have finished (i.e. accomplished, achieved) the thing this day."
- Isaiah 55:11: "My word ... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please."
- Daniel 4:30: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built".

After this he must be released for a little time- Gk. "loosed" (AV), which connects with the theme throughout Revelation of the loosing of the seals and various judgments which are required before the scroll of the book of life is fully unsealed / loosed (Rev. 5:5; 9:14,15). This loosing is required for the scroll of life to be fully opened; it refers to the time of the Lord's return and not the end of a Millennium after His return.

The Lord spoke in parables so that Israel would be deceived and therefore would not come to salvation (Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10 cp. Acts 28:26). This fact is hard to get around for those who feel God isn't responsible for deception. Isaiah spoke likewise (Is. 6:9,10; 29:10,11). The Angels will work in such a way as to allow the world to be deceived at this time (Rev. 20:3,8).

The "little time" is that of 6:11 and 12:12- the time of persecution just before the Lord's return at the end of the three and a half year tribulation.

20:4 *I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed*- Surely this must be connected with the promise made to the disciples in identical language- about their reigning at the beginning of God's Kingdom on earth (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30), at "the regeneration", when the Son of Man likewise takes His throne in glory in Jerusalem, "in my Kingdom".

Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands- This is replete with reference to earlier descriptions in Revelation of those persecuted and slain during the great tribulation just prior to the Lord's return.

They came to life- The group in view, the disciples and those who perished during the great tribulation, are resurrected separately. We have seen this implied in notes on 11:12 and 12:5.

20:4 *Then I saw thrones*- Saints sitting on thrones is Dan. 7:22; the throne of the beast is cast down, and judgment thrones given to the faithful.

And seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed- "And judgement was given unto them" (AV). This is Dan. 7:22: "And judgement was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom". This is clearly at the start of the Kingdom, at Christ's return, when the beast enemy of Israel is destroyed. This would also be the time of Ps. 122:5-8: "For there (in Jerusalem) are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David ... Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. For my brothers and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you".

Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years- The jihadist State will be a strictly religious entity, keen to take the predictions and commands of the Koran and Hadith as literally as possible. Their crucifixions of their enemies are in strict obedience to passages like Sura 5.36: "The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified… Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the Hereafter theirs will be an awful doom". And the jihadists likewise are careful to obey the commands to behead enemies: "When you encounter the unbelievers on the battlefield, strike off their heads until you have crushed them completely; then bind the prisoners tightly," (Sura 47). The UK *Daily Mail* reported of ISIS: "They lined the streets with the decapitated heads of police and soldiers". Beheading is now a well-known method used by the jihadists, popularized by their videos of beheading Western hostages. We note that it is the fate of those who do not worship the beast or accept his mark in Rev. 20:4. Apologists claim that the Koran doesn't support these beheadings; but it does. *Sura* 8:12 says that beheading can be used in order to psychologically terrify the non-Moslems: "I will cast dread into the hearts of the unbelievers. Strike off their heads, then, and strike off all of their fingertips*". Sura* 47:3 is similar: "When you encounter the unbelievers on the battlefield, strike off their heads". Beheading is justified in some of the hadith on the basis that Muhammad ordered the beheading of 700 Jews in Medina for allegedly plotting against him. It is therefore to be used specifically against God's people. Until recently, it seemed impossible that such a method of death would be literally used- but it is now becoming known worldwide that it is indeed being practiced and gloried in within the entity that is taking over the land promised to Abraham. It must be noted that Islam is the only major world religion today that legitimizes beheadings.

Rev. 20:4 says that there will be a special blessing for those who were beheaded for the sake of Jesus, and this involved them in not worshipping the beast or receiving his mark. The short term fulfilment of this was in the beast as the Roman empire. But the Roman Empire only beheaded *citizens* (e.g. Paul); non-citizens were killed in other ways, e.g. by crucifixion, throwing to wild beasts. Mentioning beheading was therefore purposeful. The text could more easily have said 'martyred' or 'killed'. The blessing in view, in the first century application, was therefore particularly for Roman citizens who refused to accept the faith of their own empire, for the sake of Christ.

The climax of all Bible prophecy, however, is not in history; it is in the literal coming of Christ to earth. In the last days, therefore, Rev. 20:4 must have its final and ultimate fulfilment. But the incipient fulfilment in the days of Rome guides us towards understanding that final fulfilment. I suggest therefore that this class of latter day martyrs refers specifically to those who are citizens within the area controlled by the latter day entity known as the beast. Those who do not submit to its rulership will be beheaded. And we are already seeing that happening in the area, with roads lined with heads. And we see the jihadists forcing Christians and Yezidis to convert to Islam, or to face the sword- quite literally, in beheading. They stated themselves in July 2014: "We offer them three choices: Islam; the *dhimma* contract—involving payment of *jizya*; if they refuse this they will have nothing but the sword". The blessing of Rev. 20:4 is for those who endure this for the sake of Christ and witnessing His word in Christ to them. "The word of God" refers to the preaching of the word; the word is designed by its very nature to be preached.

It could be that it is those who perished during the tribulation who now sit on thrones of judgment to judge those who persecuted them, some of whom died during the tribulation, but are now raised to face judgment and the second death.

20:5 *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended*- This could refer to the rest of the believers throughout history; or, as suggested on :4 and :13, to the members of the beast system who died during the tribulation who are now raised to be judged by those whom they slew. We must note that all of Revelation is specifically about events in the earth / land promised to Abraham, and much of it is specifically about those who live and die during the three and a half year tribulation there.

They are raised when the Kingdom, "the thousand years", is 'established' or as the word is translated misleadingly, in most versions, "ended". The Kingdom is "ended" in the sense that it is established. I have shown on :3 above that this Greek word certainly bears the translation "established" or "set up". When the Kingdom is established, the dead are raised; and there will be a period in which the Lord is with them, whilst the dragon is restrained in the abyss.

This is the first resurrection- The resurrection of the dead, specifically those killed during the tribulation, is when the thousand years are established ["ended"] is the first resurrection. This is a decided difficulty for those holding the traditional view that there are two resurrections, one at the start and one at the end of the Millennium. For here it is stated clearly that the first resurrection is when the 1,000 years are "ended". I suggest there is little option but to recognize that "ended" is an unhelpful translation, and the sense is rather "established, set up" rather than "ended". The text never speaks of a 'second resurrection'. *Protos*, "first", admittedly *sometimes* implies the first of a series, but it can also mean 'the one big and essential thing'; as in "seek *first* the Kingdom". It could even be argued that the usage of *protos* suggests there is no other resurrection to be thought of at all! The only other Bible verse which speaks of two resurrections is in Jn. 5:29, where the Lord speaks of a resurrection to life- perhaps the "first resurrection"; and a resurrection *at that same time* of the unworthy "to death", spoken of here in Revelation as "the second death".

20:6 *Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power*- The "second death" could refer to those who die in this life responsible to God, having not responded to Him; are resurrected and judged at Christ's return; and then are punished with death, the second death they will have

experienced. But the specific reference here is to the members of the beast system who die during the tribulation and are raised to judgment by those whom they killed, judging on the Lord's behalf. The "first resurrection" is that which happens when the 1,000 years are "ended" or, as I suggest it should be translated, "established". The promise not to be hurt by the second death is made to believers of our age (Rev. 2:11)- it occurs at the judgment when Christ returns, not at the end of a Millennium. The second death is symbolized as a lake of fire, into which the dragon is also cast and thus destroyed permanently (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). This second death will in fact be the destruction of death itself, as there shall be no more death after death itself is destroyed (20:14). Yet the second death is threatened to those of this age who do not respond to the Gospel after hearing it (Rev. 2:11). This second death will happen at Christ's return, for that is when we shall be judged, and not at the end of a 1,000 year period. The rejected go away into figurative fire and destruction- at the Lord's return. Not at some point 1,000 years after that.

But we should consider the possibility that "the second death" is alluding to how that term is used in the Jewish targum on Is. 65:5,6,15, remembering the text of Isaiah 65 is often alluded to in the final chapters of Revelation. There, "the second death" is Gehenna- which the Lord uses as a picture of condemnation at His return.

20:7 *And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be released from his prison*- He was "captured" (19:20) and imprisoned, just as Babylon had been a cage or hold / prison for others (see on 18:2). Again, "finished" should be translated "established". Satan is released from the abyss as outlined in Revelation 9- which clearly refers to the events of the second coming. See on 20:1 and 20:2.

This overall sequence of judgment on the kings of the earth, gathering them into a pit, shutting them up, then their revival and final destruction and then the unchallenged, eternal reign of Christ is the same sequence as in Is. 24:20-23. Very significantly, Psalm 2 has a similar picture, of Christ ruling amidst his enemies, "the kings of the earth / land" (cp. Rev. 19:19), who then decide to cast away the cords with which Christ has bound them (Ps. 2:3). This is exactly the scene of Rev. 20; the enchained remnants of the first invasion, along with the rejected saints, being loosed from their chains and surrounding Jerusalem. Interestingly, Psalm 2 describes them throwing off their chains, whilst Rev. 20 says that their chains of condemnation are loosed. Presumably this means that they try a rebellion against the Lord Jesus which he 'lets' succeed. The language of Rev. 19:15-18 combines allusions to both Psalm 2 and also Ezekiel 38- as if to imply that they both prophecy of the same invasion, i.e. that after Christ has returned.

20:8 *And shall come to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog*- The similarities with Ez. 38/9 are so strong; an unsuccessful invasion of God's land when His people are in "peace and safety" (a phrase elsewhere used about the Kingdom), and destruction by fire. According to the usual view of Rev. 20, this similarity means absolutely nothing. This cannot be correct exposition. There must be a connection; surely this must refer to the same invasion? It would be the scenario of Psalm 2, where the nations of the land come against the Lord and His people in Jerusalem, after the type of the Assyrians surrounding Hezekiah in Jerusalem. Gog in Ezekiel 38 refers to an individual, not a nation. Is this man Gog to lead an attack against Jerusalem at the beginning *and* end of a 1,000 year reign?

"Shall come to" should be as AV: "Shall go out"- implying the bottomless pit is a geographical area? Satan deceives the "nations"; but 21:1 says that when the Kingdom

is established, there will be no more sea, no more nations. Therefore this must be appropriate to the beginning of the Kingdom. During the setting up period, the nations come up to worship Christ, as often prophesied in the O.T.; however, they are described as entering into the city (21:24-27), i.e. attaining immortality through their faith and obedience. The dragon "will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth/ land" (RSV). The Gog / Magog invasion comes from those dwelling in the "isles" (Ez. 39:6); but this Greek phrase often means Gentile areas on the borders of the land (Is. 41:5; Jer. 47:4; and "the isles" in Ezekiel refer to lands bordering the land of promise). Abraham was from the sides of the land of Israel (Is. 41:8,9), the margins of the land of promise- from where the final invasion will come. There is triple emphasis on his deception (:3,8,10). He continues the work of the false prophet, after the false prophet is put into the lake of fire. The dragon carries on his work; the false prophet is Babylon (19:20), who also deceived (18:23). The bottomless pit, where the rebellion comes from, is therefore at the borders of the land. The Kingdom of God is fundamentally based upon the land of Israel.

The dragon was a deceiver back in 12:9, and still is, as Jezebel in the early church deceived (2:20). The dragon of chapter 12 is cast down at Christ's return; the description of the dragon being cast into the pit is an amplification of this. When the dragon is thrown down in chapter 12, he persecutes those of the land (natural Israel?) and the sea (the nations?) for "a short time" (12:12)- the "little season" of 20:3? The dragon is cast out of heaven in 12:9- meaning that he is thrown out of the 'heavens' of the land of Israel (or the temple specifically), into the earth / world.

Rev. 12	Rev. 20	Comment
The dragon persecutes the woman for 3½ years		The tribulation before Christ's coming
Thrown out of the temple / land of Israel (heaven) to the earth / rest of the world	Dragon cast to the abyss	Christ comes to throw the man of sin out of his place in 'heaven' (2 Thess. 2)
There for a while until he realizes he has a short time	Chained	Setting up of the Kingdom
Makes war with the saints for another 3½ years, replicating the holocaust, also involving suffering for the sea (nations) and the land-dwellers (natural Israel?)	Makes war with the saints; aims for Jerusalem.	Rebellion; the invasion of Ez. 38 and maybe Joel 3; the desire for the temple in Joel 3 would then be another similarity between the rebellion and the invasion

	prior to Christ's return.
Destroyed by fire	The Ez. 38/39 invasion is destroyed in two stages; five sixths are destroyed first, then the final sixth- by fire.

To gather them together to the war. The number of them is as the sand of the sea- They are gathered to "*the* battle" (RV)- the final battle which the OT prophets so often mention. They are a false seed of Abraham, as the sand of the sea. Jihadists claim to be the true seed of Abraham, and Jews and Christians are the false seed.

20:9 *And they went over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them*- They compass Jerusalem- s.w. Lk. 21:20. As they did during the invasion of the earth / land promised to Abraham prior to Christ's coming, so they will do in this re-enactment of it. The rejected saints and defeated jihadist armies will make the rebellion of 20:9. This will connect with the rebellion of Korah and his company of rejects against the encampment of God and His faithful people- which was also destroyed by fire. The lake of fire / bottomless pit / second death all seem to be parallel. This final, futile attack is spoken of briefly in 12:17; see note there about the parallels between Revelation 12 and 20. This is the scenario of Psalm 2, where the Lord is enthroned in Zion and then attacked; and of Ezekiel 38, where Gog comes down in an unsuccessful invasion against an Israel already enjoying the Kingdom conditions of dwelling without bars and gates and at peace.

20:10 *And the Devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where are also the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever*- The dragon is in the abyss and deceives the nations which are there. The devil will deceive during the rebellion as it did in the period of the tribulation before the Lord's return (12:9; 13:14; 18;23; 19:20). The devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet already *are*. This suggests that their punishment lasts until the Kingdom is established, and until the "little season" of the rebellion is finished; the "short time" of desperate persecution of the woman after the dragon has been cast out of heaven / power in 12:12. Thus it would seem that the punishment of the wicked and rebels is to exist for some time into the Kingdom age. A number of passages tend to agree with this. The righteous will go forth from the borders of the promised land and look at their carcasses (Is. 66). The rejected saints go to the same place (20:15), condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11). The devil and beast will be cast to the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), as will all the rejected (Rev. 20:15); they will go to the same place. As Satan is bound (Rev. 20:2), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:30; 22:13). This will be the antitype of Zedekiah being bound in condemnation (Jer. 52:11).

The beast and false prophet have a specific destruction promised them- the lake of fire which is the second death (:14). If death is their destruction, then they cannot be consciously tormented for ever. "Torment" translates a Greek word which simply

means "pain", and does not of itself imply eternal torment. Their destruction will be in "the lake of fire", which is a specific geographic location upon earth, probably Gehenna just outside the Jerusalem which they have tried to recapture. But all the earth shall be filled with God's glory throughout the Kingdom's eternity, so it is inconceivable that this is a literal description. The "forever and ever" translates *aion* which can mean a period of limited duration, an 'age' which has an end. That age would then refer to the age in existence until the Kingdom of God is fully established on earth. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and so He will not be tormenting people for ever; note that the word "hell" doesn't occur here. "Day and night" invites comparison with the fact that there shall be no night in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 22:5); perhaps this is mentioned as if to say: 'Their torment will indeed be painful and constant, every day and night of the old age / *aion*, until the Kingdom of God is fully established on earth and there shall be no more night'.

20:11- see on Heb. 2:3.

And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them- 20:11 is amplified / repeated in 21:1. This is about the judgment at the second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. Earth and heaven fleeing away (cp. 6:14) refers to the passing of the old human system. "There was no place found for them" alludes to Dan. 2:35 about the beast system being destroyed at Christ's second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. This is surely the new heaven and earth of 21:1; that of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13, which will be established at Christ's return.

The fleeing away refers to how along with the beast's remnants, the rejected believers will slink away from the Lord's presence (1 Jn. 2:24 Gk.). The whole heaven and earth of this present world will likewise flee away from the face of the enthroned Christ (Rev. 20:11; Is. 2:21). Fleeing away is a characteristic of both the unworthy and also the world which they loved. In some sense the world will come before the judgment seat of Christ to be rejected (Dan. 7:9-14).

The great white throne judgment must refer to a judgment at the end of the 1,000 years if we follow the classical Millennial reign view. But Harry Whittaker points out some of the serious problems with this:

1. The earlier visions in this set of seven certainly concern events at the beginning of the Millennium. It would be strange if this series is so broken up that a gap of a thousand years is to be read between the fulfilment of some and of the rest.
2. 20:11: “I saw ... him that sat on the throne, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.” The heaven and earth, which flee away, must be the old human order (compare Revelation 6:14). Is there much point in such a description if this judgement takes place a thousand years after the earth and heaven fled away?
3. “…and there was no place found for them” is a phrase quarried out of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Daniel 2:35). Again the words suggest the work of Messiah in destroying the kingdoms of men. There is little relevance to the end of Messiah’s kingdom.
4. 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Isaiah 65:17and 2 Peter 3:13 are equally emphatic that this is the setting up of the kingdom of Christ.
5. The allusions in ch. 21: 2, 9 to “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” are difficult to harmonize with a time when all are redeemed. It is impossible to believe that the Bride waits a thousand years for union with her Lord. This new Jerusalem is “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”. The symbolism requires reference to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” at the time of his coming. The context of

Revelation 19:7-9 puts this conclusion beyond argument.

6. 20:12: “and the books were opened: and another book ... which is the book of life.” These are unmistakable allusions to Daniel 7:10 and 12:1. Would anyone argue for an application of these passages to the end of the Millennium?

7. 21:3: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” This is a very slightly modified quotation of Ezekiel 37:26b, 27, the time of reference of which is again unmistakable.

8. The description of the New Jerusalem includes this: “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it ... they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it” (21: 24, 26). Will there be “nations” and “kings of the earth” when Christ’s reign has been concluded?

9. The same passage has a long series of undeniable allusions to Isaiah 60: “The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it ... And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there” - these are two examples but the whole of ch. 21 :22-27 should be studied. Again, the question has an easy answer: What epoch does Isaiah’s prophecy describe? Then what does Revelation 21: 22-27 refer to?

10. A similar argument can be based on Isaiah 65. Without direct quotation, no less than eight points of contact can be traced between the second half of that chapter and the first eight verses of Revelation 21. So it is reasonable to assume that the two Scriptures are about the same thing. What is Isaiah 65 about?

11. Ch. 22:2: “And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” So at the time spoken of there will be nations to be healed!

20:12 *And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works*- The opening of the books is that of Dan. 7:10; 12:1, which concern the start of the Kingdom age, not the end of some 'Millennium'.

Another book was opened, which is the book of life- The scroll of life is only opened once all the seals are loosed. These seals all refer to events leading up to the Lord's return. The book does not remain sealed until 1,000 years after His return. The reference is to the judgment seat at the Lord's return.

Judged out of the things which were written in the books- When Christ opens the books of His people (Rev. 20:12; as if each saint has a book written about him recording his life), He does this through discussing with our guardian the details of our life. Perhaps the Angels with have literal books with them; we pointed out earlier that the Angels do seem to use their facility for reading and writing.

The judgment seat is described as if literal books are written each day we live, and these will be opened and considered by God at the last day, in order to decide whether to give us the reward of the Kingdom or not. When we survey the total of God’s revelation, it is evident that this is not to be taken literally. There will be a judgment, the result of which will be proportionate to the way we have lived our daily lives. But God (through the Lord Jesus) will not need to weigh up evidence. The books were written before the world began in the sense that God knew then who would be in His Kingdom. It is almost impossible to suggest that there will be literal scrolls unrolled. The idea of scrolls was no doubt used because it would have been understandable by those who were first inspired with God’s word. Yet this is how God reveals the judgment to us; in human terms which we are capable of

understanding. We are not explicitly told that there will not be literal scrolls, or that God will not need to weigh up evidence to decide whether we will be in the Kingdom. Moses (Ex. 32:32) and Nehemiah (Neh. 13:14) perhaps saw the judgment in this literal sense, but this does not mean that there will be actual scrolls unrolled.

But there is another possibility. As suggested on :4 and :13,14, the resurrection and judgment here may refer to the beast's members who died during the tribulation. They are judged against what they did to those whose names are in the book of life; and it is those whom they killed, whose names are in that book and who are now alive, who judge them, according to what is written in the other book concerning what they did during the tribulation.

20:13 *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and every man was judged according to their works*- But 21:1 says that in the new heaven and earth, there is no more sea. If 20:13 refers to the end of the Millennium, then 21:1 must likewise. But the coming of a new heaven and earth is a figure repeatedly used about the establishment of the Kingdom at the Lord's return. And 21:2 says that this is the time when the bride meets her husband, the Lord Jesus. This is at the Lord's return, and not 1,000 years later.

The sea giving up the dead doesn't refer to dead bodies floating upwards; the sea refers to the nations under the beast's dominion (17:5), which gave power to the beast and upon which it sat (see on 13:1). The sea in this sense won't exist after the Kingdom is established (21:1); therefore this refers to the judgment at Christ's return and not at the end of a thousand year period. Is the bottomless pit to be equated with the lake of fire? A place of punishment? The rebels are punished and then those who survive (i.e. those deserving more punishment) are sent back to this area, where they are punished for a long time, day and night for ever (20:10). But there will be no day and night as such in the Kingdom (21:25; 22:5). Therefore we must take this description of their punishment figuratively.

It could be that this giving up of the dead by "the sea" refers to how those who participated in the abuse of Israel and the believers during the tribulation will not escape final judgment; they will be resurrected and judged for what they did, and destroyed with the second death. This would explain why this is a judgment for "works", when works in that sense are irrelevant to those saved by grace. This group will be raised to answer for their evil works during the tribulation, and then be punished with the second death.

20:14 *And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire*- The destruction of death is paralleled with the second death, which occurs at the judgment (21:8), when Christ comes. The second death can't happen twice, at the start *and* end of the 'Millennium'. What is in view here is events at the Lord's return and the establishment of the Kingdom, not at the end of some 1000 year period. Death, sorrow etc. (21:4) are destroyed for *us*, the believers; this is believer-centric language. Likewise "men" in 21:3 refers to the believers, not all human beings then alive (some will still be enduring punishment).

20:15 *And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire*- The idea of being found written in a book is common in the narratives of the restoration, which looked forward to the final restoration of the Kingdom. Only those "found written" in the genealogies could be Levites in the re-established Kingdom (Neh. 7:5); those corrupted by their time in Babylon were excluded. And specifically it is those Jews who spiritually survive the final tribulation, the time of trouble in Israel such as never was, who are found written in the book and delivered

(Dan. 12:1). It is those written in that book who will not have worshipped the beast during the final three and a half year tribulation (13:8; 17:8). Some will tragically have had their names removed from that book (3:5). Again, the purview of the teaching in this chapter is specifically about the believers and unbelievers in the earth / land promised to Abraham during the tribulation period.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*- This is the situation presented in 2 Peter 3. The present system ["heaven and earth"] passes away at the Lord's return, and is replaced by the new one of the Kingdom age. I emphasize this because Rev. 21 is about the situation at the time of the Lord's return- and not some point 1,000 years after it. This means that the statement that "death shall be no more" (:4) is true at this point- of the Lord's return to earth and establishment of the Kingdom. If death is truly "no more" in the new system ["heaven and earth"], then there can be no 'mortal population' during the next 1,000 years. In other words, the theory of a Millennial reign needs to be radically re-thought, because as it popularly stands it is simply contrary to the text of Scripture.

And the sea was no more- "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Is. 57:20). The sea refers to nations in 17:15, and as noted on 13:1, to the nations immediately surrounding the earth / land promised to Abraham who gave power to the beast and Babylon system. We read later in chapter 21 of how the nations enter into the new Jerusalem- the unbelieving, ignorant world at the time of the Lord's return are given the opportunity to come enter into the city of God, where there is only a new Israel, and no national differences. So this would be explaining how the situation where there is "no more sea" / nations came about. However it may be that the point of contrast is with the fact that in the Kingdom age, the source of water will not be the sea and its role in the water cycle, but rather the water which emerges from Zion (Rev. 22:1). The book of Revelation also seeks to subtly undermine the commonly accepted views of evil, by showing that all the beasts, dragons, demons imaginable are in fact not radical, free-ranging evil [as many imagined both then and now], but rather under God's very tight control; they are playing their role within His purpose, all leading towards the final end when sin and evil will be no more on earth. "The sea" was feared by the first century world, as being the source of monsters and evil. Rather than trying to argue that actually, that's nonsense- Revelation 21:1 instead teaches that whatever our beliefs are about "the sea", it will ultimately be no more when Christ returns.

The language of this whole section in 21:1-8 connects with Is. 65, concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not after the Millennium. Heaven and earth pass away, the former (Gk. *proton*) things pass (:4)- the things that were once first place now pass. In 20:13, the sea gives up the dead; and this is applied to the 'end of the Millennium' by those who believe in a Millennial reign. But here in 21:1, "the sea" no longer exists at the start of the Lord's reign- for it is at this time that the bride meets the groom, and the Kingdom is established. Hence 20:13 must be interpreted as referring to some time around Christ's return; see my notes on chapter 20.

Revelation of the situation after the Millennium would surely be inappropriate, if not impossible, for us to receive in this dispensation. The context of Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 is set in chapter 20. The earth and heaven flee away when Christ sits on the throne, "and there was found no place for them" (20:11). This is almost quoting Dan. 2:35 concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not the end of a 1000 year period. In place of this heaven and earth, a new heaven and earth appear in Revelation 21:1. This is the language of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13 concerning the second coming. In this context, John sees "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:2,9). The church is only a bride at the time of the second coming, seeing she marries Christ at the marriage supper. At this time, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death", sorrow etc. (Revelation 21:4). The church will not be afflicted by these things during the Millennium; this must refer to Christ's return. Likewise the gift of the water of life (Revelation 21:6) is at the judgment at the second coming. The idea of former things (e.g. death, tears) passing away in 21:4 is one of many connections in Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 with Isaiah's prophecies of the second coming (Revelation 21:4 = Is. 60:20; 65:19; Revelation 21:25 = Is. 60:11,20). Revelation 21:7 speaks of the time when the faithful believer will receive his inheritance. This surely refers to the judgment at the second coming (Mt. 25:34). Revelation 22 has a number of connections with Revelation 21 which would indicate that we are to see Revelation 22 as also referring to the start, rather than the end, of the Millennium (e.g. Revelation 22:14, 21:27; 2:7). "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2) is another obvious example. "They shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5) is the language of Dan. 7:18,27 concerning the judgment at Christ's return.

21:2 *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*- see on 1 Thess. 4:14. The whole prophetic metanarrative of the Bible is in many ways a tale of two cities- Babylon and Jerusalem. There are times when Babylon masquerades as Zion- a false city of God with a false Messiah leading her. Babylon / Babel was a city built to reach *unto* Heaven, in contrast to the true city of God which *comes down* from Heaven (Gen. 11:4 cp. Rev. 21:2). And there are times when Zion in her apostasy has appeared as Babylon. But in the final conflict of the last days, these two cities will be literally pitted against each other. Natural Jerusalem will be where Babylon makes her throne (see on 16:19) and will be destroyed by fire and sulphur; but then the new Jerusalem comes down upon her ruins. It was in Babylon where Nimrod first built the tower of Babel, the first organized rebellion against God; and it was there that God first entered into open judgment of flesh and humanity *en masse*. And it is here likewise that His purpose with sin and His true people will likewise be fulfilled. Babylon was also called Su-anna, “the holy city”. Yet “the holy city” is Jerusalem, thus making Babylon a fake Zion, although she is briefly built on the site of Zion. Herodotus says the city was square, just as new Jerusalem. We have shown elsewhere that the events of the Babylonian invasion are typical of the last days. That invasion was “the time of [Israel’s] trouble” (Jer. 11:12), clearly typical of Jacob’s latter day “time of trouble”.

We must continually remind ourselves that the Bible was written for an initial, primary audience. And we must seek to enquire what it meant for them. The primary audience of Revelation was Christians, particularly Jewish Christians, under persecution and pressure from both Roman and Jewish systems. In the decades leading up to the Jewish War and Jerusalem's destruction in AD70, there was a growing wave of nationalistic fervour which clearly dragged away many of the Jewish Christian converts. "Jerusalem" for them was the symbol of everything Jewish, it

stood for their mother city, to which one always spoke of 'going up' to. The initial purpose of Revelation was to help them see that holy space has been redefined. It is "the heavenly Jerusalem" which is significant (Heb. 12:22). The city of the Lord Jesus is "the *new* Jerusalem", and not the old one (Rev. 3:12 "the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God... my new name"). Identity with a city was very important in the Greco-Roman world. Jewish identity was to be with the heavenly Jerusalem, and not the earthly one. Gal. 4:25,26 is clear: "Jerusalem which now is... is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all". Revelation speaks of the *new* Jerusalem as the ultimate reality, and therefore the *old* Jerusalem is delegitimized, or at best obscured in significance. This was also of great comfort to those who lived through the destruction of the temple in AD70. This was the end of the world for many Jews. But Jewish Christians who had grasped identity with "the *new* Jerusalem" would not be fazed by it. Their 'city identity' was not with any earthly city. Likewise the preservation of the temple spoken of in Rev. 11:1,2 was to be understood as spiritual preservation of the spiritual temple, the people of God. The destruction of the literal temple would've highlighted this interpretation. Those who had grasped the spirit of Christ would not have had their faith shattered at all by the events of AD70. Whereas those who had become caught up in the spirit of Jewish nationalism would've been driven to despair as all their hopes for an immediate Kingdom of God came crashing down. But those who grasped the spirit of Revelation would have understood that in fact the "new Jerusalem" has no need of a temple at all (Rev. 21:22).

The supreme city of identity in the Roman empire was Rome itself. And in that context, "Babylon" is presented as Rome. All that was aspired to and provided a sense of eternity and stability... is repainted as a whore about to be judged, something totally disgusting and fake. The New Jerusalem, Jerusalem "that is above", is presented as "mother of us all". There was to be a completely different locus and center for life, hope, identity and aspiration. And that in essence is true for God's people of all ages.

Made ready as a bride- "The bride" is married at the marriage supper (19:7-9)- not at the end of the Millennium. Therefore this is about the setting up of the Kingdom at Christ's return. The marriage supper of the lamb is at the Lord's return, not 1,000 years after it. The same words are used in Rev. 19:7 about the preparation of the bride. Therefore this vision, during which it is declared that death has ended (:4), is at the Lord's return. The destruction of death is spoken of in chapter 20 as being when the 1,000 years are established [mistranslated with the sense of "expired"]. Yet here in chapter 21, death ends at the time of the marriage of the lamb. There is thus no place for any theories of a 'mortal population' in the Kingdom of God. In the 1st century application, John the Baptists attempted to prepare [s.w. "made ready"] the bride, but this failed in that Israel crucified her Messiah (Lk. 1:17 s.w.). The marriage supper, the Kingdom, has been "prepared" from the beginning of the world (Mt. 22:4; 25:34;) and through the Lord's death (Jn. 14:2,3). It is the bride who is not ready. The implication is surely that once the bride is "prepared / made ready", then the marriage supper begins. The preparation of the bride is through the baptism of the last converts, and the spiritual preparation of those who are baptized.

The adornment or making read is surely of good works and spiritual fruits, by which we adorn the teaching of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5). In this we see the significance of works. The Lord will marry us because we are His beloved, of His sovereign choice. But in response, we adorn ourselves as best we can for Him who

has so loved us. And yet the greatest adornment is the white garments of imputed righteousness which are given to us (see on 19:8).

21:3- see on Jn. 1:14.

And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them- This is stating the same wondrous truth three times. God shall indeed live with us on earth. Heaven shall come to earth. This is all an allusion to Ez. 37:26,27, concerning the time of Christ's return. If God lives with us at Christ's return, how will He be shielded from the 'mortal' population? This problem disappears if the 1000 years is seen as a description of the Kingdom itself. Seeing God's face was what motivated Job, and John seems to allude to it as the final consolation in 1 Jn. 4.

"The tabernacle of God", being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us, is all evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfilment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Revelation 21:3 is saying that at the second coming the principle of God manifestation will change in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us. Let's really try to be broad-minded enough to take this on board.

The other references to "God himself" are to Yahweh personally, rather than to Christ: Is. 45:18; Jn. 5:37; 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:18,19; Eph. 1:5. Indeed, those N.T. references seem to point a difference between "God himself" and Christ. So isn't it lack of spiritual vision- perhaps even of faith - that makes us wriggle against the idea of God Himself, in person, living with us? The idea of God Himself dwelling with men in the tabernacle (temple) of the new city of Jerusalem is a clear reference to Ez. 48:35, which says that the name of Jerusalem in the Millennium will be "Yahweh is there". These ideas doubtless also have reference to Yahweh's promise to David to build an eternal house for Yahweh's Name. This verse seems to teach that God Himself, in person, will descend to earth with Christ. This might sound altogether too incredible. But think about the idea. The King Himself (= God) comes to see the guests at the wedding of His Son (= Jesus; Mt. 22:11). "God himself" here either means God Himself or God manifest in Christ. "God himself shall be with them" seems to me an odd way of describing Christ's second coming. God will "be their God". I would just about be willing to concede that this might apply to God manifest in Christ - but for one significant fact: this Revelation 21:3 is packed with O.T. allusions which explicitly refer to God the Father.

And be their God- God promised Abraham that through Christ, His seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed: "To be a God unto... your seed... I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7,8). The seed is Christ, and the "God" is Yahweh. Let's not confuse them. Now in Revelation 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This would mean that this idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

21:4- see on Mt. 25:37-40; Rev. 20:14.

And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes- The same word is used in Acts 3:19 concerning sin being blotted out at Christ's return. The tears are for our sins (sorrow likewise is connected with sin in Is. 53). Will we have an emotional breakdown straight after the judgment? The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that he hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome. We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away from judgment clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay". Therefore if we honestly, genuinely feel that we won't be in the Kingdom, well, this is how in some ways the faithful will all feel.

The tears that will be wiped from our eyes are those associated with "the former things" of this life, and also the emotion associated with our acceptance. But it can't be that it means we will never have the emotion of sadness ever again. For God is made sad, grieved at His heart, even now. And we are to share *His* nature. Consider for a moment the *emotion* which we will feel after being granted Divine nature. Malachi says we will be like stalled animals, who are fed, fattened, kept in small dark pens to be killed… who then suddenly break out into the daylight, and go prancing away through the meadows. This will be our leap of joy and taste of true freedom. Yet the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome.

God's comfort to the oppressed is that He will wipe away their tears (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Revelation speaks particularly to those being persecuted. And "wipe away" is the word used in the LXX for the wiping away of evil people and systems from the face of this earth (Gen. 7:4,23; Ex. 17:14; Dt. 9:14). But it is also used of the wiping away of our sins (Ps. 51:3; Is.43:25). The two ideas go together. The final comfort will be that truly we have been forgiven for our own serious sins; and also, in the same comfort, there is the assurance that the evil of sinful men has also been permanently taken away.

And death shall be no more- The end of death is portrayed in Revelation 20 as death being thrown into the lake of fire, which is also the second death. The second death is for those rejected at the judgment at Christ's return. Their punishment with death is therefore the end of death; there will be no more death after that because the curse of death upon Adam's race will be ended. There is no possibility therefore for a 'mortal population' after these things. If there is to be no more crying or pain after the Lord's return, we are scarcely to imagine that there will be exactly these things at some supposed 'second judgment' and 'second condemnation' 1,000 years later.

1 Cor. 15:54,55 likewise speak of the end of death: "But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to fulfilment the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?". The quotation is from Is. 25:8, which concerns events at Christ's return- not at the end of the 1,000 years. The end of death will therefore come at the resurrection- when Christ returns. And that is what is being taught here in Rev. 20 and 21.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more- The Greek for "pain" specifically refers to labour pains. This is all the language of the curse on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. It fits into a theme of paradise being restored. But labour

pains are also used with regard to the experience of the believers during the tribulation. As ever in Revelation, there is especial relevance to the believers who are persecuted and die during the final tribulation in the earth / land promised to Abraham. It is they who have experienced death, sorrow and labour pains.

The first things are passed away- The parallel is with the passing away of the first heaven and earth (:1). The 'heaven and earth' is therefore a figure for "the former things". *Former things*... Defined in Is. 48:3,4,5 as God's prediction "from the beginning" that Israel would sin and be judged by Him with exile. When we read that the "former things" will no longer be remembered, and that both God and man will "remember not the former things" (Is. 43:18), perhaps the same reference is in view. Rev. 21:4 predicts that in the Kingdom age, there will be no more tears because "the former things are passed away", literally, 'they are behind'. That may appear obvious, a needless statement of a truism- that past things are past. But the suggestion is that then we will totally realize that our sins are behind us, as God has cast them behind His back. The connection between tears, sorrow and "former things" is a powerful psychological insight into the human condition- sorrow, tears, depression etc. are all connected with our awareness (however subconscious) of human sin, both our own and of others. When we finally grasp that all sin is indeed behind us, then there is the basis for a life without tears. And that is at least theoretically possible even now, if only we will see our sins and perceive them as God does- as past. But we must of course deal with the sins of others in that same way. God's emphasis in Isaiah is that He has "declared" the former things from the start. All our sins in one sense were known to God from the beginning, and He knew how to deal with them.

God (this is important) made Joseph forget all his "toil", his mental sufferings (Gen. 42:51). This was a miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. Has God done the same to Christ now in His glory, as He will to us one day soon (Rev. 21:4)? Yet the Lord will be factually aware of His sacrifice and the associated pain. God presumably did not obliterate Joseph's memory cells, but He made him "forget" the pain. This is surely what God has done to Christ, and what He will do to us: take away the pain on a psychological level whilst still leaving a factual awareness. Is it too much to suggest that even now, God is ready and willing to do something like this?

21:5 *And he that sits on the throne said: Behold! I make all things new. And he said: Write! For these words are faithful and true*- All things will be made new at the Lord's coming, and yet those in whom the new creation is worked out already have all things made new in their spiritual experience (2 Cor. 5:17,18).

The utter literality of all this was emphasized to John, when he was told: "Write! For these words are true and faithful". The almost fantastical description of God Himself wiping away all the tears that are in (Gk.) the eyes of men... this really is true and faithful. It could be that the wonder of the idea of meeting God in person... boggled John's mind to the point he wondered whether he really was intended to write this down, doubting whether all this could be really true. And he exactly represents our feelings.

21:6 *And he said to me: They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to him who is thirsty from the spring of the water of life*- We, now, take the water of life (22:17; Jn. 4:14; Mt. 10:8). The picture surely is that at this time, we receive literal immortality. It speaks of the Lord's return and not the end of some point 1,000 years afterwards. It is at this time, when we receive immortality, drinking the water of life, that death itself ends. So there will

be no 'mortal population' after that. And yet as John's gospel stresses, we can right now drink of that water of life; we can receive the gift of the spirit, of the Lord's mind and thinking, of His life; so that we can begin to live now the kind of life which we shall eternally live. And the Greek tenses could imply that throughout eternity we are continually given, in an ongoing sense, to drink of this water of life. It is life as He has it, and not just the one-time gift of immortality.

The "freely" giving of the water of life recalls the river Pison in the garden of Eden, which means 'freely flowing'. There are allusions galore to Eden through the final visions of Revelation- for Eden shall be restored and the curse lifted.

21:7 *He that overcomes shall inherit these things*- The letters to the churches begin Revelation by repeatedly promising that "he that overcomes" will be recompensed at Christ's return- no suggestion is made that the recompense will be 1,000 years after His return (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). The Greek word translated "overcomes" occurs nowhere else. The reference here is therefore to the time of Christ's return; and it is at this time that death will be ended (:4), i.e. cast into the lake of fire. If death itself is destroyed at the Lord's return, there cannot be any mortal population during a supposed 1000 year reign which commences at His return.

And I will be his God and he shall be my son- An application of the promise to David about Messiah to each one of us who is in Christ (2 Sam. 7:14). The wonder of our eternal living will be that we shall relate to the Father as the Lord Jesus did. The prospect offered to us is very much in terms of *relationship* with the Father and Son, without being disturbed by personal sin and the possibility of sinning; rather than a presentation of a literal picture of a physical, materially optimal existence. Galatians 4 teaches that we are more than adopted sons; we become the actual begotten sons of God through the work of the Spirit. And when the Lord returns, this shall finally come to full realisation.

21:8 *But for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their share shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur; which is the second death*- The language of murder, fornication, lying, sorcery and idolatry has all been used in Revelation of the beast / Babylon system and their various associated acts such as the false prophet. It is they who shall be destroyed in the second death; implying that they shall be raised to judgment even if they died during the tribulation. I have suggested in chapter 20 that the descriptions of resurrection, judgment by those who they killed, and destruction in the second death all refer specifically to this category.

These people are those of 20:15, those of 22:15 who are placed (geographically?) outside the encampment of the people of God in Jerusalem, perhaps to be literally burnt in Gehenna outside the city.

But just as apparently 'petty' sins [by secular judgment] are juxtaposed alongside apparently 'major' ones in Paul's writings, so here, the "fearful and unbelieving" are categorized alongside the abusive members of the beast system. Those who won't believe the good news of salvation in Jesus are in the same category as those society would characterize as serious sinners, the abusive members of the beast system. But before God, they all have the same final end. Note that the disciples, whose names are on the foundations of the new Jerusalem, were once both fearful and unbelieving (Mk. 4:40). Indeed they are described as "unbelieving" several times (Mt. 17:17; Jn. 20:27; Tit. 1:15). The point is that those who were once like those outside the city are in fact the foundations of the city.

And yet the language used here is also used about the behaviour of some within the church. The same words are used about believers in 1 Cor. 5:9,11; Heb. 12:16; 13:4. It means that in essence this is how God sees some in the ecclesias. I wonder how many of them will have literally done those things. Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that this is how their other deeds and attitudes were counted in God's sight. Or does it show that far more people than we expect will be classed as responsible to judgment? And it's noteworthy that those who won't believe are in the same category as these more 'awful' sinners. For we are either saved or rejected, there is no third road nor category.

21:9 *And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the bride*- We are introduced to the idea of seven last plagues, and thus an expectation is set up that we shall now see some awful catastrophes poured out on earth. Instead, we have a vision of the bride and her Kingdom glory. I suggest this is purposeful; we are being shown that the Lord's focus is upon the salvation of His people. The punishment of the wicked is incidental to that, and not something He at all revels in. Perhaps the idea is that the final attack against Jerusalem is made whilst the Lord and His bride are within it. And His focus is upon enjoying the beauty of His bride rather than the necessary destruction of the invaders through those seven last plagues. Maybe the seven last plagues, like the seven thunders, are potentially prepared but do not actually happen; see on 10:4.

21:10 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high*- The 'height' of the mountain likely refers more to its glory than its literal altitude. Zion and / or the mount of Olives was the great and high mountain in the Jewish thought in which Revelation is presented. And Acts 1 and Zech. 14 envisage the Lord Jesus returning to that mountain. The exact chronology of events need not concern us; not only will the meaning / experience of time likely be changed, but the chronology must to some extent be open, because the repentance of various groups will be possible. The final outworking of events will take that into account.

And showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God- Literal Jerusalem as the capital of Babylon will be destroyed; a new Jerusalem will literally come down to replace it. But this is not a pile of new stones, but more essentially the glorified believers, who as explained on 1 Thess. 4:14 come as it were with the Lord Jesus at this stage.

21:11 *Having the glory of God. Her light was like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal*- Jasper appears in various colours, representative of the varying individual beauties of the believers, refracting the Lord's light in unique and beautiful [to Him] ways. The Hebrew idea of 'jasper' is 'polishing', and it is that process which is underway in our lives at this moment.

21:12 *She had a wall great and high, having twelve gates; and at the gates were twelve angels, and the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written thereon*- The 12 gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem are identified with 12 Angels, whereon are written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. This suggests that the tribes of Israel are reflective of the situation in Heaven, where there are Angels representing each tribe. This identity between heavenly Angels and the believers they represent on earth is a common theme in Revelation. This connection between Angels and Israel is commonly found in the Old Testament. Dan. 8:24 speaks of Israel as “the people of the saints” (RVmg.), although v. 13 speaks of “the saint” (RV “holy one”) as an Angel. 1 Sam. 17:45 parallels the Angelic hosts, and the hosts of Israel’s armies; they were to follow where the host of God went, just as David’s army had to follow the

sound of the cherubim "marching" over the mulberry bushes (1 Chron. 14:15). And whilst we follow where we are led, we are identified with our Angels to the extent that what is done to us is done to them. To defy the armies of Israel was thus to defy the armies of Heaven (1 Sam. 17:45). Thus the four faces of the Angel cherubim were reflected in the four standards of the camp of Israel; the people were intended to "keep in step with the Spirit", following where they went, as they had done in the wilderness years. They were to walk "each one straight before him" (Is. 57:2 RVmg.), as each of the cherubim went straight ahead (Ez. 1:12). And we too are to follow where our Angel potentially enables us to go. The Angel went in to Jericho to take the city; and the Israelites went "straight" ahead, following the Angel, and thus took the city (Josh. 5:13,14; 6:20).

21:13 *On the east were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates and on the west three gates*- What is the significance of this order? It is not a circular view, i.e. not clockwise nor anticlockwise. Perhaps it is in conscious difference to the order of the gates of the city as given in Ez. 48:31-34, which goes north- east- south- west, i.e. in a clockwise direction, starting from where the hands of the clock would naturally begin, i.e. at the north. The many differences highlighted with the Ezekiel temple visions seem in order to make the point that contrary to Jewish expectation, that temple would not be literally built at the Lord's return. The new Jerusalem will be altogether beyond such literalism.

The square nature of the city (:16) is perhaps to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is open to all peoples from all quarters; and the unbelieving nations who were not destroyed along with Babylon will now equally be able to enter God's Kingdom.

21:14 *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*- Those men were so weak in their lifetimes, but out of such weakness were made strong. John must have been shocked to see his own name there. We can assume that the device to replace Judas with Matthias in Acts 1:26 was therefore eternally accepted. The tragedy is that the name of Judas could have been there, but it was removed, just as names can be deleted from the book of life.

21:15 *And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city and the gates of it, and the wall of it*- The allusion is clearly to the measurements of the new temple given in Ezekiel 40-48. But the details and dimensions are so different, and those emphasized differences [see on :13] climax in the statement that there is "no temple" in the new Jerusalem (:22). It all seems designed to underscore the point that the temple of Ezekiel's prophecy is *not* going to be built at the Lord's return. It was a potential, conditional prophecy of what could have been at the restoration from Babylon, which the Jews failed to actualize.

It's worth reflecting on the significance of how the same words for "reed" and "measure" are used in Rev. 11:1, where John is bidden measure the temple with a reed. But there is no record of him doing so. Now, an Angel does make the measurements, not just with a "reed" but with a "golden reed", the gold maybe speaking of faith brought to completion. Perhaps John represented the lack of faith and obedience which precluded the Lord's Kingdom coming in the first century. Likewise it was a lack of faith which precluded the building of the temple which Ezekiel had seen measured out with a reed. Hence the difference in reeds- the one in Rev. 21:15 is a *golden* reed, speaking of faith.

21:16 *And the city is laid out as a square, its length is as great as its breadth, and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand stadia*- This is clearly not to be

taken literally. And so one wonders why the insistence on reading 'one thousand years' as a literal measurement in this very same section of Revelation.

The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal- As were the dimensions of the most Holy, and of Babylon, which was rebuilt briefly on the site of Jerusalem. The perfect congruence of the design reflects how in this life, each of the component parts is being brought into perfect symmetry with the others. This would be one explanation for the inter-personal friction which so many have experienced as a result of their Christian walk. In the bigger picture, this was all necessary to make us fit together so perfectly in eternity.

The square nature of the city (twice emphasized) is perhaps to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is open to all peoples from all quarters; and the unbelieving nations who were not destroyed along with Babylon will now equally be able to enter God's Kingdom. The temple was not a cube, but the Most Holy Place was (1 Kings 6:20). The idea may be that the new Jerusalem is not just a temple, but the entire city is the Most Holy Place, with God Himself present there with us. For the personal presence of God in the new Jerusalem is a repeated theme. The implication of Zech. 14:20,21 could be that the holiness of the temple and the Most Holy is going to be extended to the whole city of Jerusalem, confirming the impression here that the new Jerusalem is in fact a temple: "In that day there will be on the bells of the horses, HOLY TO YAHWEH; and the pots in Yahweh's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh".

21:17 *And he measured the wall of it, one hundred and forty four cubits*- Again, numbers are not to be taken literally. The idea is clearly of 12 x 12, the foundations of Jacob's twelve sons mixed with those of the twelve apostles, maybe speaking of the perfect fusion of Jew and Gentile. We may well wonder why the new Jerusalem has a wall; for a wall is a symbol of protection, and implies some are within, and others without. The wall is 144 cubits high, but the city itself is 12,000 stadia high (:16). The wall and the city are not therefore identical. The wall is given quite some attention here. If sin and evil are no more, the idea of protecting from external threats seems inappropriate. I therefore would focus more on the sense of security. We shall be eternally secure. No more niggling doubts as to our salvation. No more fear of sin, but eternally secure within God's love.

The measurement of a man, which is also an angel's measurement- The parallel between men and Angels would suggest that now the believers have become as Angels (Lk. 20:35,36). This would suggest a reference to the time of the Lord's return, when there will be this change from humanity to immortality and Angelic nature. John has seen Angels representing believers in the heavenly throne room, and now they are united. The wall is "great and high" (:12) but 144 cubits is not a huge height for a city wall- only 216 feet / 65 meters. The walls of Babylon were almost double that, and in the context, Babylon is set up as the antithesis of the new Jerusalem. And the wall seems very low compared to the height of the city itself, which is "twelve thousand stadia", about 340 miles (:16). The point may be that what is small by man's measurement is great by God's; and that is perhaps the idea behind the enigmatic comment that a man's measurement is also an Angel's measurement in this city. Babylon was famed for its walls, but they are nothing compared to the walls of the new Jeruslaem. Because the walls of God may appear to man far smaller, but are "great and high" by God's standard.

21:18 *And the building of the wall was of jasper*- Why a wall? It can hardly be for protection. Perhaps there will eternally be a sense of separation between light and darkness, saved and unsaved, which we do well to be aware of now too.

And the city was pure gold, like pure glass- See on :21 *pure gold*. Glass was not totally transparent in John's day, but he saw glass as if it were transparent, and had the impression this was in fact transparent gold (:21). Yet gold by its nature cannot be transparent. In these paradoxes we have reflected the wonder of the whole thing. The city of God, the Kingdom of God, is transparent- it is *open*. The gold, the wonderful reality which by its nature is closed and dense, is also amazingly open and transparent. For a theme of these visions is that the unbelieving world [those not destroyed during the last judgments] are invited to come in to the Kingdom, to the community of believers, the Jerusalem which is above which has now been revealed on earth. The gates are open day and night, the wall is there- but transparent; the city itself is the ultimate image of openness. The bride and the Lord Jesus are urging the nations to come into it. No longer do the 12 tribes of Israel define membership- the symbolism of 12 x 12 gives the impression of an innumerably greater openness. The spirit of that openness is to be seen in us today.

21:19 *The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones*- The allusion is to the temple in Jerusalem, whose precious stones had made John and the other disciples so awestruck (Mk. 13:1). That was all to be replaced by a spiritual temple. Instead of the names of donors and other leading lights within Judaism engraved on the precious stones, now the names of the humble disciples are to be written. As the bride was adorned (:2), so the same figure is used here. The adornment is surely of good works and spiritual fruits, by which we adorn the teaching of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5).

The first foundation was jasper. The second, sapphire. The third, chalcedony. The fourth, emerald- See on :20.

21:20 *The fifth, sardonyx. The sixth, sardius. The seventh, chrysolite. The eighth, beryl. The ninth, topaz. The tenth, chrysoprase. The eleventh, jacinth. The twelfth, amethyst*- The stones echo the spirit of the High Priest's breastplate. Within the city, therefore, is the heart of the High Priest. The thinking, spirit and heartbeat of Jesus is the all-consuming characteristic of the community within those walls, as it should be of us today.

21:21- see on Mt. 7:6.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each of the separate gates was of one pearl- The gates are open constantly (:25), and even if shut, the glory passing through the pearl would have given the effect of the pearl being transparent. This fits with the otherwise strange image of transparent gold (see on :18). The gates are open; but why are there gates, therefore, and why are they effectively transparent? It is in order to teach something to the nations who witness Christ's return. They must recognize that there is indeed a wall and gate to be passed through, but it is effectively open and transparent to them, such is the Lord's will that they should enter in.

And the street of the city was pure gold, as if it were transparent glass- Gold cannot by nature be transparent. John is struggling in words to convey what he saw and the impressions which arose. As with the language of demons, we have an example here of how the Bible uses human language and at times records things from the limited perspective of observers on earth.

21:22 *And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it*- This seems almost purposefully intended to teach that the temple outlined in Ez. 40-48 will not be built at the Lord's return. See on :13. The dimensions of the city, measured by a reed as was used in Ezekiel's vision, are specifically different from those in Ezekiel's temple vision. I suggest Ez. 40-48 was command rather than prediction; it was what could have been if the returned exiles

had built it. Revelation was given in the first century, at the time when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. This was no small tragedy for Jews and Judaism. Revelation's message is that Jerusalem and the temple are not necessary in the new order of things; there will be a new Jerusalem, comprised of the believers; and no need in any case for a temple.

In John's Gospel, the Lord states that He is the temple / tabernacle which was to be taken down in His death and rebuilt in His resurrection. Our abiding in Him is therefore abiding within the temple; for He has prepared for us an abiding place in that spiritual house through His death (Jn. 14:1,2). As discussed on :2, this replacement of the temple by the Lord Jesus had huge significance for the primary audience of Revelation. For the destruction of AD70 was going to shake the world and faith of most Jews, including Jewish Christians. But those who correctly perceived the message of Revelation would not have been at all fazed.

21:23 *And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it*- The sun and moon were created partly in order to give a sense of time and seasons, not least the Jewish feasts. Grasping God's view of time means that we will see the Kingdom as immortality, not everlasting life. The eternity of our future existence is not the big theme of the Bible; it is "God manifestation, not human salvation", in the words of John Thomas. The process of eternity, the life and Kingdom of God, is already going on now; the tree of life *is* now (not 'will be'; Greek tenses are precise) in the midst of the paradise of God, at least from God's perspective (Rev. 2:7). We will have no need of the sun, for the light of God's glory will replace our concept of time (Rev. 21:23). Indeed, "the time of the end" can be read as "the end of time" (Dan. 12:4,9). There will be "time (Gk. *chronos*, the idea of time) no longer" (Rev. 10:6). The image of Dan. 2 is destroyed together by the Lord's return; each metal in some sense exists at his coming. Rather than meaning that each of those empires must have an end time revival, this may be teaching that the whole concept of human history and time will be ground to powder by the advent of the Kingdom. One day, when we are then with the Lord, will be like a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8)- there will be no comparison between our present view of time and what will then be. The ploughman shall overtake the reaper (Am. 9:13)- which may refer to the collapsing of time, rather than just being a figure of fecundity. Before people pray, they will be heard (Is. 65:24- although this is our present prayer experience too, Mt. 6:8). Our focus should therefore be more on the *quality* and *nature* of the Kingdom life, rather than the mere eternity of it.

For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb- This seems to imply their physical presence. There was no 'candlestick' [Gk.]- no temple and temple furniture was necessary. This was radical reasoning for the first century Jewish audience, dominated as they were by the temple cult.

21:24 *And the nations shall walk by the light of it, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it*- Revelation 20 has described a period of time when the dragon is chained. It could be that during this period, a chance is given to the nations outside of the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is the focus of Revelation and Bible prophecy. And they respond by realizing that indeed their wealth and glory is nothing (:26), and come up to Jerusalem in repentance of their materialism, where they are invited to the Lord's table. See on 19:18. The previous kings of the earth / land had supported Babylon / the beast and were now no more. But they will be replaced by leaders who bring their glory to the Lamb rather than to Babylon. The glory they

bring in to the new city is surely not physical gifts; but giving glory to God through repentance and commitment to Him.

God dwells in light (1 Tim. 6:16), and this new city will have light from God, through Christ (21:11,23; 22:5)- because Yahweh Himself will be there. Perhaps some of the intensity of that light will spread out to the surrounding world, so that the nations call Jerusalem the place where Yahweh is (Ez. 48:35).

21:25 *The gates of it shall in no way be shut by day (for there shall be no night there)*- Representing the tribes of Israel (:12). They will be continually open to Gentiles entering in and joining with them. There would be no more Jewish exclusivity of the type which troubled the believing community at the time Revelation was given. There will finally be nothing and nobody untouched by the light of the Lord Jesus. And yet John's gospel presents the Lord as the total light of our lives now; in this sense we can live the eternal life now. But again we enquire why there would be gates in an eternal city, in a situation where ultimately there are none left 'outside'. The next verses could suggest that this is because in some way, there will always be an openness for others to enter. We can only speculate who those 'others' might be. But perhaps the gates remain as an eternal reminder that those within the city had at one point entered it. This is the huge significance of baptism, and of entering through the narrow gate in this life, as well as into Divine nature at the Lord's return.

21:26 *And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it*- The idea of entering the city (:27) which represents the Kingdom of God is found in the Lord's teaching of the camel passing through the needle gate in order for a rich man to enter the Kingdom. There is the same message here- the wealth and glory of the world must be sacrificed in order to enter in. See on :24.

21:27 *There shall in no way enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life*- As noted earlier, there is an intended contrast between the descriptions of the city in Rev. 21 and 22 seem to contradict those given in Ezekiel 40-48:

Revelation	Ezekiel
21:27 Only those in the book of life can enter	45:6 the city is for natural Israel (Zech. 8:5- children play in the streets). 44:11; 46:9 ordinary mortals enter it.
21:25 City gates never shut	44:1 Gates shut at times
22:5; 21:23 Glory of God is the light, eclipsing sun and moon	45:17; 46:1,3 Moon shines in the city
22:14 those who enter the city eat the tree of life	mortal priests inside the city
21:22 no temple in the city	a temple in the city

The true temple has already been sprinkled by Christ's blood.	45:20 This temple needs regular cleansing ("so shall ye reconcile the house") by sprinkling of blood.

These are just some of the many disparities, yet both cities are said to be built on a great mountain. The language bids us look back to Ezekiel's temple- and realize that it is *not* going to be built at the Lord's return. Such literalism will be far out of place once the Kingdom is established in all its glory.

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

22:1- see on Jn. 1:14.

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb- The throne of God and Jesus will be in Jerusalem. The river of life proceeds from there. Whilst I fail to see a doctrine of a Millennial reign taught in Revelation, it's clear that after Babylon is destroyed and Christ and the saints are enthroned in Jerusalem, there is a period of time during which the surviving mortals have the opportunity to identify themselves with the Kingdom and be immortalized. The water of life thus flows out to them, and they are urged to drink freely of it, thereby finding immortality. Likewise the tree of eternal life offers its fruits to them in :2; all they have to do is take it. And both the Lord Jesus and us His bride urge the peoples to come into the city of God, through the gates into the city of eternal life (:17). It may be that in order to eat of the tree of life they must first "wash their robes", undergoing a kind of baptism experience (:14). There may be some literal element of fulfilment of the prophecy that a fountain will be opened in Jerusalem where sin can be cleansed (Zech. 13:1).

The New Jerusalem described here is clearly presented as the capital city of the true Christian. This was another counter cultural stab at the cult of empire, whereby Rome was to be seen as the eternal mother city. To go to Rome was seen as the ultimate pilgrimage, with Caesar's palace perceived and imaged as the most 'holy' place on earth. All this is subverted by presenting the New Jerusalem, replete with the actual throne of God Almighty, as the ultimate city of identity. So Christians who lived within the Roman empire were not to see Rome as their capital, nor for that matter "Jerusalem that now is"; but rather the heavenly Jerusalem "which is above".

The new Jerusalem comes down from Heaven, clothed as a bride. The city is therefore people. Just as "Babylon" is people, so is the new "Jerusalem". The wall is 144 cubits high, combining the 12 apostles with the 12 tribes of Israel. The wall too is representative of people. This needs to be understood, lest we fall into some kind of excessive literalism regarding the physical city called Jerusalem. Indeed, Paul's connects "the Jerusalem that now is" with bondage and condemnation, rather than salvation. The "Jerusalem that is above" is free, and for freedom has Christ set us free. We are that city. Revelation is full of pictures of the triumphant, victorious believers "in Heaven", and then pictures of them "on earth" under persecution and suffering.

There is no conscious survival of death. The believers "in Heaven" are not alive. But they are assured of salvation, and so the God who is outside of time sees them as they shall eternally be. But on the ground, they are suffering. The new Jerusalem 'coming down' therefore means that the salvation now assured for us, and the nature of which is currently being worked out in Heaven, will then be turned into reality on earth. Right now, our reward is being prepared; the nature of eternity, our part in the 'new city', reflects our own chosen path, our works, the nuances of our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus which we are now developing. In this sense it is a reward prepared for us, and we will be given according to our works (Rev. 22:12), although salvation itself is by grace and not works. What the Lord is now working with us to prepare will then be transferred, from heaven to earth. This all may be represented by a physical entity appearing in Jerusalem from heaven, to replace the abomination built there by the antiChrist. Although *contra* that is the bald statement in Rev. 21:22 "And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it". This was clearly aimed at the way the primary Jewish audience of Revelation were being sucked back in to the temple cult of Judaism. But any such future physical entity is of small moment compared to the far greater spiritual reality which that would represent.

He who overcomes will be made a pillar in that new temple / city: "He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name" (Rev. 3:12). Clearly the temple and the city are parallel. It is a city which is a temple. And we are now that temple. The apostles are now the foundation stones of that city just as we are pillars within it. But there is a present dimension to all this. We can be pillars now within it (Gal. 2:9); and we are now the temple of God. The temple [which is the city] is now being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets: "You are fellow-citizens [as if living in a city state] with the saints and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone. In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22). Heb. 12:22,23 is clear: "But you have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven". This is what Revelation calls the "new Jerusalem". We are now like Abraham, walking in search of the city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Hebrews specifically mentions these things in view of the impending destruction of the city and temple in AD70. The point is, that at the Lord's return, what we are now in prospect will be revealed and manifest in ultimate terms, visibly and actually upon this earth.

22:2- see on Rom. 5:12.

In the midst of the street thereof. And on both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations- The righteous man is right now like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does (in this work of preaching?) shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). These words are quoted in Rev. 22:2 concerning our holding out of life to the mortal population at the Lord's return. The conclusion? If we witness now we are living the Kingdom life now, and therefore we will be perpetuated in that time.

Rev. 21 and 22 seem to describe a "wood of trees of life" (22:2- A.V. 'tree' must be wrong because the 'tree' is on either side of the river), watered by the river of life proceeding from the mountain of "the throne of God and of the Lamb". There was a mountain in Eden, seeing there were four "headstreams" there, and it seems fitting to suggest that God's throne was on this same mountain before the fall. So whilst the picture is of Eden restored, there are differences- there will be a whole forest of trees of life, and no liar will be within the restored paradise, i.e. there will be no serpent, no possibility of sinning. Which means paradise indeed.

"The healing of the nations" suggests a process of time after the Lord's return during which the nations are healed, perhaps physically from the effects of the judgments, and spiritually.

The situation here is part of the description of the new Jerusalem. But already in this life, the tree of life "is" in God's paradise: "To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). Just as the new Jerusalem in one sense exists. But these things will be made physically manifest upon earth when the new Jerusalem is as it were transferred to earth at the Lord's return.

22:3- see on Rev. 21:27.

And there shall be no curse any more, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein, and his servants shall serve him- One option is "No more cursed one", alluding to the serpent. No more possibility of temptation and sin; and that would indeed be attractive to all who are spiritually minded and frustrated at their own propensity to failure.

The final chapters of Revelation so often parallel God and “the lamb" (e.g. Rev. 22:3). The Father was so deeply united with the Son in His time of sacrificial offering. See on Jn. 19:19. The descriptions of the new city of Jerusalem in the prophets and Revelation can be better understood once it is appreciated that Eden will literally be restored in that area. Zech. 14:8-11 lays the basis for the descriptions of the city in Revelation, and includes the main elements of Eden- "living waters" ('Hiddekel') going out from a "Lifted up" mountain in Jerusalem, with "no more curse" there, v.11 (the phrase "no more utter destruction" is translated like this when it is quoted in Rev. 22:3).

The removal of the curse of itself suggests that this world is not going to be destroyed; but the curse will be removed, reverting things to how they were before the sin in Eden. This is also the implication of "I am making all things new" in Rev. 21:5. The old is not destroyed totally, but made new. The word for "new" is not *neos*, meaning new in time or quality, but *kainos*, which means newness in nature or quality. The new heavens and earth are clearly based on the idea of the creation of heavens and earth in Genesis 1. But there too, we have pre-existing matter being re-ordered, and something beautiful emerging from chaos. And this is how things shall we at the Lord's return; and this is our personal hope. "We shall be changed", but not totally destroyed into some kind of nirvana / non-existence. Salvation is personal, and so we can see continuities between our present existence and how we shall eternally be. In this we see the paramount importance of personality; for who we are now is who we shall eternally be. "The spirit shall be saved". The new Jerusalem is likewise us now, "in heaven" in God's plan and purpose, which must 'come down' and be more materially and tangibly manifest upon earth. This fits with the repeated teaching that the Kingdom of God will be a restoration of the Kingdom of God as it was historically. The Lord Jesus will "restore again the Kingdom to Israel". The first heaven and earth "passes away", but that is parallel with "the former things are passed

away" (Rev. 21:1,4). Likewise "no more sea" (Rev. 21:1) is hardly literal; it refers to the environment out of which the evil beasts arise (Dan. 7:3; Rev. 13:1,6,7). Nowhere does the Bible teach the literal destruction of the earth.

22:4 *They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads*- The reference seems to be to God Himself. This is in the context of the allusions to the situation in Eden being restored. The result of sin was that Adam and Eve went away from the face of God whereas they had previously seen it (Gen. 3:9-11). It is all about relationship with God without barrier. Throughout Revelation 21 and 22 there is a distinction made between God and "the Lamb". This further suggests that the references to "God himself" are *not* to God manifestation in the Lamb, but to Yahweh Himself. "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" indicates that "His face" and "His name" refer to the same being. The Name which will be in our foreheads will be that of Yahweh, the Father, not Christ (Rev. 3:12; 14:1). Therefore it is *His* face which we will see. Of course there is *some* reference here to 'seeing' in the sense of understanding, which is how we see the Father now. But then our fuller mental comprehension of the Father will be reflected in our physical vision of Him. Is. 25:6-9 speaks of how God's people will enjoy a feast in Jerusalem at the Lord's return, the veil will be withdrawn from their eyes, all tears will be wiped away, and then "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God... this is Yahweh". There is a parallel between physically seeing God and having the veil of our present incomprehension removed. The fuller understanding which we will then have will be reflected in our literal seeing of God.

The seeing of God's face is parallel with having His Name or personality in our heads, in the centre of our minds. This is what will make the physical seeing of His face appropriate.

The Name of God in the forehead contrasts with the name in the forehead of Babylon. Here we find continued the idea that the city of Babylon is the antithesis of the new Jerusalem. But neither are literal cities; they are women, one a prostitute and the other a bride; they represent the world and the church. There is no third group, and the two systems can never assimilate into each other. They are radically opposed. And this is the situation between the believer and whatever form of 'Babylon' surrounds them. The harlot Babylon has jewels, as does the new Jerusalem. The unclean things and abominations within Babylon (Rev. 17:3,4) are the very things which are outside the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:6). The new Jerusalem has names belonging to it, which are in the book of life (Rev. 21:27); the names associated with Babylon are not in the book of life (Rev. 17:8). Again we see that these cities refer to people and not to geographical locations.

22:5 *There shall be night no more, so they do not need the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give them light*- The candle, symbol of God's word (Ps. 119:105) will no longer be needed by the faithful, because "the Lord God shall give them light". Our personal, direct contact with God will replace the ministry of the Bible and indeed all God's manifestations and communications as we now have experienced them. Personally seeing God's face means that we need no other form of illumination. But the parallel in Rev. 21:23 says that "the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it. For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb". "The city" is the "they" who are God's servants (:3). The light God will give is the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. But we now see that same glory, albeit through a glass darkly (2 Cor. 4:6); just as we are in a sense the city now.

The allusion is to the prophecies that Zion's light shall be everlasting and shall eclipse the need for sun and moon (Is. 30:23-26; 60:1,2,19,20). But that everlasting light shall shine "day and night", according to Is. 60:20. So we are not to think that the literal heavens shall be destroyed. But the message we get is that the spiritual shall far eclipse the physical, although the physical shall remain. All pictures of the Kingdom of God which focus heavily upon the physical [ideal climate etc.] are simply missing the Biblical emphasis- which is upon relationship with God, and His glory.

And they shall reign for ever and ever- This continues the allusions to Eden and the restoration of the situation there. Man will again see God's face (:4), as he did there. But the intention was that Adam in Eden would reign over all creation (Gen. 1:26). This intention is now going to be realized- for ever.

22:6- see on Jer. 23:18,22.

And he said to me: These words are faithful and true- It seems the Angel sensed John's struggle to accept the reality of it all. See on 21:5 *Write!*

And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place- Perhaps this continues the theme noted in :5; that now we shall be face to face with God, there is no need for any more manifestation of Him to us through things like His word. His Spirit was in the prophets, but now the God whose Spirit that was- is with us face to face.

His servants- We are given the same simple title in :3. We will eternally serve Him, and so we have begun the eternal life now, in so far as we serve Him now. The present experience of the eternal life is a major theme in John's writings.

22:7 *And behold, I come quickly*- These words would be appropriate to the Lord Jesus, so we assume that He spoke them; or that the Angel so intensely represented the Lord that he could appropriately say them. The Lord's quick or soon coming could refer to the suddenness of His coming, implying the need for constant readiness for it on our part. Or the idea may indeed be that He is coming "soon", in that all believers are to live as if the second coming is imminent. And the Lord could have come "soon" after John's time, had Israel repented. The Olivet prophecy and many New Testament references certainly support that possibility. But because of the unreadiness of the bride, the lack of repentance in Israel and lack of spiritual fruit in the church, that coming has been delayed to our days.

Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book- The book is hardly a list of commandments, and this particular section of Revelation is a description of the awesome destiny awaiting God's people by grace. So the reference is not really to 'keeping' in the sense of keeping commandments; nor can 'keep' be twisted to mean 'keep the right interpretation of...'. Perhaps the idea is that blessed is he who believes these wonderful things and keeps the reality of them far further than merely seeing the vision, being visually awed, and then slipping back into the humdrum of the mediocre religious life.

22:8 *And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things*- The "these things" don't therefore refer to the entire vision, but to what John saw prior to falling before the Angel. Presumably the reference is to the amazing vision of eternity in 22:1-5. Faced with these eternal realities, our natural response should be to fall down and worship.

22:9 *And he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers the prophets, and with those that keep the words of this book. Worship God!*- This shows that the Angel was a prophet. This title does not only mean one who foretells future events, but in Biblical usage refers more to one who

ministers the word of God under inspiration; the Angel was therefore responsible for inspiring the Bible like the prophets (Old and New Testament ones) were. Note too how the Lord describes the Angels as “servants” (Mt. 22:13), using the common description of the prophets as Jehovah’s servants- as if He saw a close connection between Angels and prophets. See on 2 Cor. 3:6.

22:10 *Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. For the time is at hand*- The implication would be that the interpretation of Revelation would be sealed until the time for fulfilment was at hand. Daniel was told the same about his prophecies (Dan. 12:9). This fits with much other Bible teaching, to the effect that prophecy will be understood at the very end of time, just before its final fulfilment in the Lord's return. The flagship verse concerning the opening of our eyes to latter day prophecy must be Dan. 12:4,10: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and knowledge (of Daniel's prophecies) shall be increased... many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This is all in the context of the Angel rejecting Daniel's plea for insight into his own prophecies. All he was told was that they would be fulfilled in the far distant future, but he was comforted with the thought that the faithful at that time would understand. That the fulfilment of all the latter day prophecies will be understood fully in the very last days is implied in Jer. 23:20: "In the latter days you shall understand it perfectly". The "it" refers to "the intents of [God's] heart" revealed in His prophetic word. It is no accident that the Apocalypse ends with words which clearly allude to the closing words of Daniel. John falls at the Angel's feet, as Daniel did. The Angel then says: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of *this* book (unlike Daniel's, which was sealed): for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still (cp. "the wicked shall do wickedly")". The implication is that the book is sealed for those who are a long way from the time of fulfilment; hence John must not seal the prophecy *because* its fulfilment is near. Thus Dan. 12:4 LXX reads: "Seal the book until the time of its accomplishment"- *then* it will be unsealed and the meaning become apparent. The primary application of Revelation is to the events of AD70; the implication is that the righteous understood the pattern of events then because of this book. There is a repeated stress throughout the NT epistles on the need to understand and get true knowledge (1 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18), perhaps with special reference to Scripture like the Olivet prophecy and Revelation; likewise 1 Tim. 3:1,16; 4:1,2 encourage Bible study in the 'last days' leading up to AD70. The need for understanding and study at that time is reflected in our last days. Paul told the Thessalonians (in the context of AD70) that he didn't need to tell them about the times and seasons because they already understood the prophecies so well- but they needed rather to make sure that their lifestyle was appropriate to their understanding (1 Thess. 5:1-5). The situation in AD70 is a type of the true "last days". Therefore the understanding of Revelation will not be sealed just before its second and major fulfilment in the second coming of Christ. In the same way as Daniel's prophecies will be opened to us in the last days, so must the book of Revelation, because the understanding of Revelation is so bound up with the meaning of Daniel. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" suggests that this true understanding of prophecy motivates the faithful remnant in holding on to a righteous

lifestyle. Time and again Israel are condemned because their lack of *understanding* of the prophecies led them into sinful behaviour (Dt. 32:29; Ps. 94:8; Is. 44:18).

As to the time being "at hand", see on :7.

22:11 *He that is unrighteous, let him continue to do unrighteousness, and he that is filthy, let him remain filthy, and he that is righteous, let him continue to do righteousness, and he that is holy, let him remain holy*- This verse appears to be stating the obvious and axiomatic, but probably the idea is that God will confirm people in the way they wish to go. Seeing the reference is to the time of the very end (:10), the idea may also be that once the Lord comes, we cannot change our ways. Now is the time to do that. We will as it were be frozen as we are.

22:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

Behold, I come suddenly- See on :7. The suddenness / quickness of judgment is a major Biblical theme. The suddenness of how the wicked had shot words like arrows at David (Ps. 64:4) is matched with how "suddenly" they will be struck by God's arrow in judgment. Judgment will be "sudden" (Ps. 64:7); and that may be part of the idea behind Rev. 22:12 "I come quickly / suddenly". Judgment will be a sudden surprise for the wicked, but something long and slowly awaited by the righteous. The Lord's coming will be as "thief in the night" for the wicked, "at an hour you do not expect", in that it will be unexpected, catching them off guard (Lk. 17:26-30; Mt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2,3 "While people are saying, 'Peace and security,' destruction will come upon them *suddenly*"). The sudden nature of Divine judgment is a major Biblical theme. We think of the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira; Miriam's immediate leprosy after her complaint; and the sudden nature of the coming of the flood and judgment upon Sodom. It was sudden in the sense that the judged people were hit by it as a surprise. Hence calamity or judgment from God comes suddenly (Prov. 3:25; 6:15; 24:22; Ecc. 9:12). "It shall be at an instant, suddenly" (Is. 29:5), like a bowing wall "whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant" (Is. 30:13). God's historical judgments have likewise come "suddenly" on those who experienced them, even though God's people expected them. We think of Babylon "suddenly" being destroyed (Is. 47:11; Jer. 51:8; Hab. 2:7), just as Babylon "suddenly" destroyed Judah (Jer. 4:20; 6:26; 15:8; 18:22). The suddenness was in the experience of the judged people; the righteous were aware of the judgment coming and saw it coming.

And my reward is with me- The reward has been prepared for us in Heaven (Mt. 5:12). In this sense the new Jerusalem descends from Heaven- to us.

To repay everyone for what he has done- Gk. 'according as his works shall be'. It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry. Solomon's prayer stated that when Israel properly repented, God would then "render unto every man according unto all his ways" (2 Chron. 6:30). Our Lord here definitely applied these words to the work of His second coming. His allusion to Solomon's prayer should be proof enough that the time of His full apocalypse is related to the time of Israel's repentance. The "everyone" in view is not only the believers; the phrase 'according to works' is found in Rev. 18:6 about the judgments upon Babylon according as their works have been. We noted on 20:13 that the judgment according to works may specifically be a reference to the judgment of those who persecuted the believers during the tribulation. For the believers are not judged according to their works in that salvation is not on the basis of works, although it is also true that our works will have eternal consequence.

22:13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*- The Lord Jesus is appropriating to Himself the titles of His Father, as used in Is. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. Those statements that God is "the first and with the last" are all in

the context of assuring a doubting Judah that really, God has saved them. We sense from the encouragement to John to really record all this, and the repeated reminders that these words are true and faithful, that the Lord's people will struggle to grasp the wonderful truth of all this. Right through the process, from our foreknowledge at the beginning to the "last things" of our final salvation- He will have been in the process.

22:14- see on Mk. 10:25.

Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to eat of the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city- The reference may be to baptism, and belief in the efficacy of that washing. On this basis we will have the "right" to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone. We are "meet" to be partakers of the inheritance, we walk worthy of the Lord Jesus unto all pleasing of him (Col. 1:10-12), the labourers receive the penny of salvation, that which is their right (Mt. 20:14). We are either seen as absolutely perfect, or totally wicked, due to God's imputation of righteousness or evil to us (Ps. 37:37). There is no third way.

This parallels the city and Eden by equating having "right to the tree of life" with entering "in through the gates into the city". Rev. 22:3 tells us that the throne of God will be in "it" - i.e. the wood of life (not the river- see context), as in Eden God's throne was in the garden, which garden was presumably a wood of trees and little else ("of every tree of the garden..." -other plants are not mentioned), in the same way as the new Eden is composed solely of trees of life. The invitation "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" is mirrored in "take the water (lit. take from the stream) of life freely" - the stream being that of Eden. Rev. 21:27 stresses that no serpent -"whatever works abomination or makes a lie"- will enter the new Eden as it did before. The midst of the new Garden will be the throne of Christ, who in every way will then be the tree of life and knowledge. This will be paradise restored, but without the possibility of sinning. Paradise indeed.

22:15 *Outside it*- We all worry as to whether we shall be left outside the Kingdom. This description of those outside is helpful in this regard. All are urged to enter, the gates are open constantly, the Spirit and bride both urging entrance, the water of eternal life can be drunk freely, a whole forest of trees of life offer their eternal fruit to all regularly, the wall around the city is transparent. Only those who don't want to be there will not be.

Are the dogs- One subtext of these visions is the criticism of Judaism and legalism. "Dogs" are elsewhere used to represent those who teach circumcision and who return to the Jewish law (Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22).

And the sorcerers- Literally, poisoners. All these categories of the condemned have one thing in common- they entice others into sin and damage others, after the pattern of the serpent in Eden. The message is that paradise will be restored but with the major difference that there will no more be tempters and enticers to sin. *Pharmakeus* could perhaps dynamically be translated as 'drug pushers'. But the reference is to how the system of the beast and Babylon is guilty of all these things, spreading her sorceries, fornication, idolatry and lies to all the peoples in the earth / land during the tribulation.

Idolaters- Those who worship images, and Revelation has much to say about those who worship the image of the latter day beast.

Lovers and practisers of falsehood- Those who love and create lies. Given all the allusions to paradise restored, this must refer to the serpent in Eden.

22:16 *I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star*- This statement of the obvious seems to be another example of how the utter reality of these things is being emphasized. This is not fantasy or wild dreaming, there is an eternal truth to this message of the Kingdom. And the message is to be shared with "the churches", initially the seven [representative] churches of chapters 1-3.

The Lord is both the offspring of Jesse and David, and also "the root of Jesse" (Is. 11:1,10). This is another way of saying that He is the alpha and omega of all things. All this wonderful plan was planned for us from the beginning and shall come to fulfilment. Barnes helpfully comments: "Not the root in the sense that David sprang from him, as a tree does from a root, but in the sense that he was the “root-shoot” of David, or that he himself sprang from him, as a sprout starts up from a decayed and fallen tree - as of the oak, the willow, the chestnut, etc. The meaning then is, not that he was the ancestor of David, or that David sprang from him, but that he was the offspring of David, according to the promise in the Scripture, that the Messiah should be descended from him. No argument, then, can be derived from this passage in proof of the pre-existence, or the divinity of Christ".

22:17 *And the Spirit and the bride say: Come! And he that hears, let him say: Come!*- The whole spirit of the Lord Jesus is to invite others to come and share His salvation. He that hears will say to others "Come". This refers to the redeemed community and the Lord Jesus urging the survivors of Babylon's judgments to come within the city of salvation. Those who 'hear', i.e. believe, will invite others to 'come', in the spirit of Zech. 8:21. There is a wonderful theme in these last visions of urging others to accept the great salvation presented. The water of life can be freely drunk, the gates of the city are open constantly, and the Spirit ["the Lord the Spirit", the Lord Jesus] and us the bride urge others to enter. In the immediate context of this chapter, the reference would be to the mortal nations who survive Armageddon who are urged to enter the Kingdom which has been established in Jerusalem.

And he that is thirsty, let him come. Let him that desires take the water of life freely- The 'free' nature of the gift of eternal life fits into the general impression given in these visions that the community of salvation is so utterly and easily open to all, and the only qualification is that we 'desire' to be there; that we are those who 'thirst' for the water of eternal life. This goes back to the Lord's opening teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; that salvation is freely available quite simply for those who really want it. Our desire to 'be there' should therefore be the passion of our heart, our defining emotion and wish. And we shall be satisfied.

22:18 *I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, that if anyone shall add to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book*- The reference is not to the whole Bible, it is specifically to the words of the prophecy of the Apocalypse. The only other time the Greek text talks about 'adding things' is in Acts 15:28 where we read of the tendency to add things to salvation by faith alone. I have suggested that the language of the New Jerusalem and the open temple is all to be understood in the first century context in which it was given. For the admission of non-Jews to a largely Jewish Christian community was a live issue.

The picture presented here is of an eternal salvation where literal Jerusalem and its temple are surpassed by the reality of the Kingdom, and the 12 tribes of Israel are no longer to be understood literally. So I suggest with that background, the idea here is that the great salvation just presented is available to all, freely. And anyone who adds conditions to that shall be excluded from it; and likewise any who detract from the vision by not believing it. For the fearful and unbelieving are listed in Revelation alongside the whores and sorcerers who shall remain outside the new Jerusalem.

Yet the plagues written in the book have specific reference to latter judgments upon the Jews and upon the supporters of the beast in the earth / land promised to Abraham during the three and a half year final tribulation. Islam adds to the prophecies through claiming that the Koran and Hadith were given after the time of Revelation; and first century Judaism added to God's book by elevating their laws and traditions to effectively the same status as the words of God un the Bible.

22:19 *And if anyone shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written of in this book*- That disobeying the law of God is effectively adding to it was clearly brought home to Israel: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Dt. 12:32). The command to Joshua to "observe to do according to all the law... turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 1:7) is probably reiterating the command not to add ("to the right") or subtract ("to the left") from the law. Rev. 22:18,19 is based on these passages.

Only those once written in the book of life can have their names taken out of it. The idea of taking away therefore refers to believers who fall away. In the last days especially, as the tribulation unfolds, it will be tempting for believers to downgrade the book of Revelation, and not to accept the plain teaching about the need for separation from the beast, even if it nets death and persecution. There will be a particular temptation then to "take away" from this book.

22:20 *He who testifies these things says: Yes. I come quickly. Amen*- See on :7. This could mean that the return of the Lord was all set up and possible in the first century, but was delayed due to human failure to meet the required conditions. It could equally mean that He will come suddenly, unexpectedly for many; and the key characteristic of the faithful is that we should be ready for His coming. Acceptance of His 'imminent' return is a feature of Christian life; we are to live expecting the end to come very soon.

The idea of delayed fulfilment of that which was expected imminently is, however, part of God's entire revelation. On one hand, the delays are because of human failure to meet required preconditions, e.g. the spread of the Gospel to all the world before the end comes, the fruit of repentance on the fig tree of Israel, spiritual fruit in the body of Christ, etc. And yet we have to note that throughout Revelation, we have visions of the "end"; as if that end is approached but not quite reached. Because then we go on to read of further events which must happen. There are gaps between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals, and again between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets. The impression given to someone listening to the book being read would have been of 'strange delay'. We may take relief when we hear that there is to be "delay no longer" (Rev. 10:3-6); but then we go on to read of a three and a half year period of witness amidst persecution (Rev. 11:3). So promise of the end, followed by delay, and then another cycle of the same... appears to be part of God's style. It may well reflect human failures to meet preconditions. But it may also

simply be His style in history, in order to bring things to an even greater climax when the Lord finally does return.

Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10) is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon".

Come Lord Jesus- There is little point in praying for His coming if it is set for a date set in stone that cannot be altered. The calendar date of His coming is therefore not set; because it depends upon our prayers.

22:21 *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen*- Given the awesome eternal future prepared, it is appropriate we are reminded that this is all by absolute grace. Yet "grace" often carries with it the idea of the gift of the Spirit, and this is a major theme in John's writings. He wishes all readers to accept that gift, the presence and power of the Lord Jesus with us; which is the essence of life now just as it shall be of the life eternal.